Section 4: Recommendations for a renaissance of country parks

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Recommendation	Action	Responsibility
1. Include country parks in local authority parks and greenspace strategies.	• The Country Park Network could identify good practice examples of country park inclusion in total greenspace strategies. • The Countryside Agency could utilise its position on the Joint Agency Group to promote the inclusion of country parks within local authority parks and greenspace strategies.	• Local Authorities • Countryside Agency • Country Park Network • Joint Agency Group • Strategic Working Group • Town and Country Planning Association
2. Ensure the continuity and enhancement of the country park image.	• The self-audit database will help to promote an improved and more consistent standard of service delivery. This, in turn, will have a positive effect on the country park image.	• Parks Management • Strategic Working Group • Countryside Agency • Country Park Network • Tourist Boards
3. Develop incentives that encourage all country parks to participate in the renaissance programme.	• The findings of this study could be widely disseminated by the Country Park Network. Incentives could include improved access to funding and use of awards, such as Green Flag. • Liaison with Green Flag • Further research into funding opportunities.	• Green Flag • Countryside Agency • Country Park Network • Strategic Working Group • Other External Agencies and Bodies • Any relevant funding body
4. Create a shared vision which could help to unify the family of country parks and focus attention.	• A draft vision should be used to stimulate discussion, through the Country Park Network, and lead to a vision that can be adopted by all country parks	• Parks Management • Country Park Network • Countryside Agency • Strategic Working Group
5. Prioritise the role of country parks in linking the town to the countryside.	• Additional research is required to demonstrate the contribution that country parks could make towards achieving this objective and to identify good practice examples.	• Country Park Network • Countryside Agency • Strategic Working Group • Parks Management

6. Include a core set of 8 activities in the work programme of all country parks: i) The Countryside; ii) Education; iii) Interpretation; iv) Recreation and Sport; v) Sustainability; vi) Biodiversity; vii) Heritage; viii) Events and Festivals	• The Country Park Network could be used to identify examples of good practice in each of the essential topic areas and to disseminate the information.	• Country Park Network • Countryside Agency • Strategic Working Group • Local Authorities • Parks Management
7. Adopt a set of minimum quality/service standards for all country parks.	• The Country Park Network could conduct consultation to develop the minimum standards and promote their adoption by park managers. The Network could then identify good practice examples. The self-audit database can reinforce this process.	• Country Park Network • Strategic Working Group • Countryside Agency • Parks Managers • Tourist Boards
8. Address 'people' as well as 'place' in all country park work.	• Complete Quality of Life Capital pilot studies and disseminate the information. • Conduct additional research into the training needs of park staff and opportunities available.	• Delivery Group • Country Park Network • Strategic Working Group • Countryside Agency • Training Providers • Parks Managers
9. Promote to relevant bodies the ability of country parks to assist in achieving social agenda objectives and targets	• The Countryside Agency could establish a strategic working group comprising all relevant bodies • The Countryside Agency could extend an invitation to Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales and DoE Northern Ireland to link with the strategic working group. • The Country Park Network could provide secretariat services and identify country park-based projects that clearly address specific objectives.	• Countryside Agency • Strategic Working Group • Country Park Network • Other External Agencies and Bodies • Parks Managers

10. Market and promote country parks, the services they provide and the benefits they offer.	• Encourage all country parks to utilise the self-audit database to provide essential data. This data could assist in the production of a country park register and promotional guide.	• Countryside Agency • Country Park Network • Local Authorities • Tourist Boards • Parks Managers
11. Establish a delivery group to link strategic development to operational implementation.	• The Heritage Lottery Fund and Quality of Life Capital pilot studies could form a delivery group with the Country Park Network and other relevant operational bodies. • The Country Park Network could provide a secretariat and disseminate the information.	• 3 x Heritage Lottery Fund pilot studies • 3 x Quality of Life Capital pilot studies • Strategic Working Group • Countryside Agency • Country Parks Network

Appendices

Appendix 1: The history and development of country parks

Summary

Country parks were originally founded to protect sensitive areas of the countryside from the perceived threat of a mass of urban car-borne day-trippers. The concept of the country park, as a place to provide countryside based recreational opportunities, clearly struck a chord. With substantial support being provided by the Countryside Commission, the initial slow start to the establishment and designation of country parks soon accelerated. Predominantly working in partnership with local authorities the Countryside Commission had, in two decades, successfully established around 250 country parks.

The support offered by the Commission was extensive: in addition to high levels of financial support to purchase land and establish park infrastructures, they also offered advice and guidance, and provided an officer contact point for every park. The support they offered was comprehensive and to a level rarely seen since. The overall package of support was of course irresistible and local authorities recognised a good opportunity when they saw one. The rush to establish country parks was not particularly strategically driven, and the criteria for designation was liberally interpreted, resulting in the creation of a broad range of country parks that were dispersed throughout the country. Whilst the growth in country parks was rapid and not tightly controlled, many of the sites that were created were of high value. The majority of parks were located in the urban fringe and many designed landscapes were included alongside other sites of high historic or environmental value. Strategically important areas of land, ideally positioned to limit urban sprawl, were also included. The high numbers of country parks that carry either important historic, nature conservation and landscape planning designations verifies the high strategic value of the land that was included in the great rush to establish country parks.

The Commission's remit was not one of perpetually supporting social initiatives - its job was to develop the concept, demonstrate what could be achieved, and influence local authorities and landowners to create and manage them. Despite this remit, the level of importance the Commission awarded country parks can be seen by their continued support for a period of more than twenty-five years. Eventually the Commission's priorities began to move away from country parks to other social initiatives and this is evidenced in the Commission's publications and internal reports. The reprioritisation of the Commission's involvement coincided with sweeping reforms to local government and a period of reduced public spending. Consequently at the point at which local authorities were expected to absorb an increasingly large share of the cost of providing country parks , their ability to do so was being continually undermined. A period of decline and under-investment, characterised by stagnation and a lack of development, followed the Commission's withdrawal.

Amongst the Countryside Agency's current priorities, the interface between urban and rural communities now features highly. The Agency has correctly identified country parks as a resource that can potentially contribute to improving that interface, thereby supporting rural economies and interpreting rural issues to an urban population. In addition, country parks have the capacity to contribute to social inclusion and diversity

initiatives, another of the Agency's current priority areas of concern. The Agency must now determine how country parks can contribute to these important areas of work, what might prevent them from making an effective contribution, what resources are required to tackle and eliminate these barriers, and how these resources might be found.

David Lambert, of the Garden History Society, reviewed the history of country parks, from their creation in the 1960s to the present day. The 1968 Countryside Act introduced powers for local authorities to provide country parks. The starting point for this appendix pre-dates the introduction of the Act and includes: a review of relevant articles written at the time, a review of relevant government policies, a review of the Countryside Agency's archive of policy documents, including those inherited from the Countryside Commission, and face to face discussions with individuals who have influenced the development of country parks over the years.

Land publicly owned for recreation

Areas of countryside around urban areas were acquired by local authorities for public benefit throughout most of the twentieth century. Prior to the 1968 Act, other legislation was used to enable such projects which created parks in all but name. For example, 638 acres of the 17,000-acre Studley Royal estate were purchased by the West Riding County Council in 1965 under the provisions of the Open Spaces Act 1906. Emberton Park in Buckinghamshire, a water park based around disused gravel workings, was created on land acquired by Newport Pagnell Rural District Council and the County Council under powers provided by the Physical Recreation Act 1937. Normanby Hall had been offered to Scunthorpe Council by the owner for a peppercorn rent in 1964, and the Council was able to take the lease under the powers of the same 1937 Act and the 1944 Education Act.

Other noteworthy areas of land acquired to provide countryside-based recreational opportunities include:

- Wimbledon and Putney Commons – 1,140 acres acquired under an 1871 Act;
- Burnham Beeches – 540 acres, acquired by the Corporation of London in 1880;
- Epping Forest – the largest public open space in the London area entrusted to the Corporation of London through an 1878 Act;
- Hampstead Heath – 791 acres, managed by the Corporation of London since 1989 and acquired by its predecessors under acts of Parliament passed between 1871 and 1906.

These are just a few of the many examples of land that was acquired to provide recreational opportunities in an accessible countryside setting. Just like parks they provide recreational opportunities, protect vulnerable land and are important areas of nature conservation. Their appearance and landscape heritage value, like parks, is of paramount importance.

Further evidence of the demand for countryside-based recreation was provided by the creation of Forest Parks (under the 1949 Countryside Act), owned and managed by the Forestry Commission and, more recently, public access for recreational purposes to land owned by the utility companies.

Whilst there are similarities between these areas of land and parks, there are also distinct differences. For instance, there is a higher degree of commercialism with charges applied to many of the recreational activities. Generally the land in question is already part of the income generation capacity of the landowner; maintenance of the land is a cost that must be borne in order to continue business and any additional costs associated with public access can usually be met by charges made on visitors. Public access and environmental management provide the companies with positive publicity opportunities that again help to offset any costs incurred. However, there may be lessons and examples of good practice within the practices of these sites that could be applied to country parks.

The original idea of the country park, 1966-1968

In the 1960s there was a widespread perception, among many politicians and policy-makers, of an imminent crisis in the countryside. This was precipitated by several social factors, chief of all being the growth of leisure and recreation. In an influential article, Michael Dower wrote of what he called 'the fourth wave'.[1.]

'Three great waves have broken across the face of Britain since 1800. First the sudden growth of dark industrial towns. Second, the thrusting movement along far flung railways. Third, the sprawl of car based suburbs. Now we see under the guise of a modest word, the surge of the fourth wave which could be more powerful than all the others. The modest word is LEISURE.

The language is surprisingly pessimistic given that the growth in leisure was popularly viewed as one of the expected benefits of the widely embraced technological revolution of the 1960s. In 1971 a Countryside Commission report on country parks foresaw a threefold growth in countryside recreation in the next thirty years.[2.]

An increase in leisure time from one-and-a-half or two days per week to three or four days by the year 2000 was widely predicted.[6.] Both the Keele Pilot National Recreation Survey 1967 and the Government Social Survey's (GSS) *Planning for Leisure* 1969, saw a pattern of increasing population, increasing income, increasing mobility and a rise in occupational class and educational status.[7.] This was the golden age of 'the pleasure drive', the era of the *Shell Book of Britain* and the roadside picnic, with private cars becoming cheaper and the new road network expanding. The GSS survey recorded that 40% of those visiting Box Hill had started off without the intention of making it their destination, while half the remainder (30%) were going on to another place and 44% of visits to commons were incidental to the purpose of 'a drive into the country.'[8.]

This widespread belief in the imminence of a leisure society went hand in hand with fear for the future of the countryside's special qualities. New leisure and mobility were viewed as a threat as Dower had eloquently expressed.[10.] In 1974 the Countryside Commission's report, *New Agricultural Landscapes*, stated that, 'While some recreational activities and wildlife conservation coexisted with little conflict until recently, the increasing intensity of both agriculture and recreation now threatens their coexistence on the same land'.[11.]

1966 White Paper, 'Leisure in the Countryside'

A series of conferences entitled *The Countryside in 1970*, held in 1963, 1965 and 1970, helped to focus the sense of threat implicit in the notion of the Fourth Wave. The first

two prompted a Government response in the form of the 1966 White Paper entitled *Leisure in the Countryside*. **The White Paper proposed the establishment of country parks and picnic sites with three objectives:**

- to make it easier for those seeking recreation to enjoy their leisure in the open without travelling too far and adding to congestion on the roads;
- to ease the pressure on more remote and solitary places;
- to reduce the risk of damage to the countryside, aesthetic as well as physical, which often comes about when people simply settle down for an hour or a day when it suits them somewhere 'in the country', to the inconvenience and expense of those who live and work in the locality.

The Countryside Commission noted, in 1971, that these objectives 'do not reveal a very positive attitude to the encouragement of recreation'. The first is about preventing congestion while the second and third 'see country parks as part of a defensive strategy.'[3.] They embody the idea of country parks as a 'honey pot', which later became explicit.

The White Paper stated that the Government wished to address the needs of 'the family who want to spend a day or a week-end away from towns and can at present go to the coast, to the national parks and similar areas; or to a limited number of beauty spots or open spaces or country houses and gardens open to the public. These may or may not be at a convenient distance. Other areas may do just as well, and might be easier to reach. But at present there is no positive reason for going there, and there may be drawbacks; there is nowhere off the road to park the car, nowhere to picnic or ramble and nowhere for the children to paddle or play games'.

The first aim set out in the White Paper meant that the key considerations were accessibility by car and an ability to withstand the pressure of heavy use. But the defensive or containment function of the country parks - 'to ease the pressure on the more remote and solitary places' - was widely understood. As it was put by one contemporary commentator:

'If the increasing pressure on remote areas of the countryside is to be relieved before the scenery becomes a victim of its own beauty, alternative areas must be provided where recreation on a massive scale can take place without harm to the environment. To put it another way; if our national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty are to survive in anything like their present form, visitors from the town must be persuaded to use alternative spots for the enjoyment of the countryside.'[12.]

Country parks might even be located near to National Parks 'for those who slip through the net' and as a further defence against the countryside 'being invaded'. The aim was to 'concentrate car-based recreationists in certain areas … establishing recreation as another land use, together with agriculture and forestry.'[9.] The philosophy was symptomatic of the age's faith in planning and in a biddable nation. The author, Nan Fairbrother, landscape architect, wrote enthusiastically about country parks in her influential *New Lives, New Landscapes* of 1970:

'In the countryside urban recreation and farming now need this clear-cut division, for though there will always be country-lovers who find their own country way and keep their peace with farmers, urban recreation as such needs its own legitimate areas …Such parks should contain their users, and provided their boundaries are efficient, adjoining land can be safely farmed.'[13.]

The language hints at a view of country parks as secondary, expendable landscapes to be used in the defence of the deep England of the mountains and the real countryside - the National Parks and AONBs.

The Countryside Act 1968

The 1966 White Paper formed the basis of the Countryside Act 1968**. This was the first piece of legislation to deal with amenity and recreation over the whole countryside (the 1949 Act preceded it but had a restricted remit) and one of its key ideas was that of the country park.** The Act stressed the importance of two considerations:

- the location of the site in relation to an urban or built up area ;
- the availability and adequacy of existing facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside by the public.

The Countryside Act provided for central government to grant-aid the establishment of new parks and the improvement of existing ones. It also provided for grant-aid to private bodies or individuals running country parks. Eligible items included land acquisition; erection or repair of buildings; capital expenditure; litter-collection and wardening services.

The Act also established the Countryside Commission out of the old National Parks Commission. Section 1(2) of the Act defined the general role of the new Commission:

'to administer its powers for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside, and encouraging the provision and improvement, for persons resorting to the countryside, of facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside and of open-air recreation in the countryside.'

It is an imprecise definition and, as Zetter points out:
'it is clear that the twin objectives of conservation and recreation often conflict and securing the right balance is not an easy task. Country parks are one of the means of achieving this balance.'[3.]

Section 2(2) and (3) of the Act lay a duty on the new Commission to keep under review all matters relating to:

- the provision and improvement of facilities for the enjoyment of the countryside;
- the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside;
- the need to secure public access to the countryside for the purposes of open-air recreation.

It is worth noting that the Commission's remit clearly focused on visitors to the countryside rather than the rural community itself, and on the landscape - the aestheticised consumable - rather than the working countryside, or what would now be termed the rural economy.

Countryside Commission policy on country parks and picnic sites, 1969

Country parks:
The Countryside Commission's guidance, *Policy on Country Parks and Picnic Sites*, was published in 1969, and gives a useful snapshot of the initial idea of country parks. It set out criteria for recognition as a country park, which included:

- being readily accessible for motor vehicles and pedestrians;
- providing an adequate range of facilities including, as a minimum, parking facilities, lavatories and a supervisory service;
- operating as a single unit and being managed by statutory bodies, private agencies or a combination of both.

Priorities for funding would include:

- encouraging the increased capacity and management efficiency of existing country parks which are already fully used;
- encouraging the provision or improvement of country parks in areas where the present facilities appear inadequate. Indications of need were taken to be: a deficiency of recreation areas within easy reach of large city regional populations, pressure of use on existing facilities, traffic congestion, and damage to the physical environment of the countryside;
- encouraging the improvement of areas already in use for recreation which could be converted into country parks with a modest investment from central funds;
- encouraging development of country parks on land at present derelict or under-used, particularly where publicly owned, taking into account expected social benefits and the need for additional recreational facilities.

The guidance recommended that promotion and publicity would be essential to enable the whole concept of country parks to be widely understood and accepted, including providing a standard symbol for all recognised country parks. Recognition of country parks by the Countryside Commission was seen as important for:

- maintaining standards;
- assembling data on recreation facilities to assess priorities on grants;
- publicity and promotion.

Applicants were required to supply the following information: a) an assessment of the scheme or proposed site to see if it accorded with the criteria for country parks; b) an analysis of the function and type of country park; c) an assessment of the park in relation to regional provision and projected demand.
If recognised, the site was awarded the Commission's copyrighted symbol, with a systematic reappraisal every few years.

Apart from the reliance on private transport, the other notable characteristic is the emphasis on a strategic, regional approach to provision. It is also worth noting the intention to achieve reliable standards throughout all country parks sponsored by the Commission.

The Commissioners and their field officers interpreted the policy guidelines liberally, as a way of channelling funds into good projects. Thus, some country parks (Fell Foot and Long Howe) were actually established in National Parks, and country park status was also

given to sites which might not logically be thought as of qualifying (e.g. the twelve kilometres of disused railway line which became Wirral country park).

Picnic sites:
Picnic sites were part of the same legislation and grant-programme, based on the White Paper's suggestion that:

'There will be places in the countryside and on the coast where a country park would not be justified, but something better than a lay-by is needed by the family who want to stop for a few hours, perhaps to picnic, or to explore the footpaths or simply to sit and enjoy the view and fresh air.'

Picnic sites would be between an acre and twenty-five acres in size, with car-parking and litter-bins. Lavatories and water-supply were considered highly desirable but not essential. The 1969 guidance states that 'the difference between a country park and picnic site is essentially one of scale. Compared with a country park, a picnic site would be smaller, simple and informal, provide for less variety of recreational activities, and attract people for a shorter time. The precise dividing line must necessarily be an arbitrary one'.

The role of the country park

Recreation:
The role of the country park was to provide a location for what the Countryside Recreation Research Advisory Group categorised as 'informal countryside recreation', defined in 1970 as 'recreation, the main aim of which is relaxation which requires little in the way of special skill or organisation, which lacks any competitive element and which requires a countryside location for its full enjoyment'.

Zetter commented, 'The use of the word 'informal' stresses the spontaneous, unsophisticated nature of the activities which typically include picnicking, playing informal games, walking short distances and driving for pleasure. This last activity is of great importance because not only does it rank as a major activity on its own, but it is usually an essential feature of a trip involving other activities as well'.[4.]

The Commission stated in its 1971 report, *The Evolution of Country parks Policy* that 'the attributes of people who predominate in this type of recreation in England, speaking very generally, are that they reside in urban areas, are middle class, own cars and have young families'.[5.]

Protection of vulnerable land:
The use of country park designation as a means of protecting high quality landscapes, or strategic areas of open countryside, was not mentioned in early guidance from the Commission. It was not until 1987 that their potential for 'safeguarding existing parkland' was recognised (*Enjoying the Countryside - Priorities for Action* CCP235). However, in their liberal interpretation of the policy framework, the Commissioners and field officers always had this consideration in view and a substantial number of historic parks received grant-aid as a result of country park designation.[14.]

As a result, it is noticeable that parks located in historic parkland, the bulk of which were laid out before 1987, rarely cover the complete designed landscape. Many - e.g. Cannon

Hall near Barnsley, Camer Park in Kent, Coombe Abbey near Coventry, Langley Park in Buckinghamshire and Hardwick Hall in County Durham - extend to only a small part of the parkland. This has contributed to fragmented ownership and its concomitant problem of fragmented management.

Wildlife conservation
Compared to modern levels of interest, the habitat value of country parks was likewise little recognised in early thinking. Countryside Commission Board papers from 1971-1973, regarding country park grant applications, make little reference to wildlife conservation value or potential.[15.] A study in 1991 referred to important habitat-types being 'surprisingly well represented' in parks. Some parks, it went on, 'even contained or adjoined areas designated SSSI or local and national nature reserves'.[16.]

This omission has been well rectified by modern management planning which tends, given the education and training of many country park managers, to be strong on nature conservation. A recent study concluded: 'The quality of habitat management was found to be extremely high and none of the Parks visited fell below a satisfactory (Grade C) standard. At many sites there was tangible evidence of active management and enhancement works and considerable attention was often given to wildlife conservation interests. There were no instances in which recreational use of the parks appeared to seriously conflict with conservation interests, except in a few very localised cases.'[17.]

The development of the country park, 1968-1992

The creation and designation of country parks immediately after the 1968 Act progressed slowly but, between 1970-1972, it accelerated. This reflected not the founding of new parks but the increasing qualification of existing sites for the country parks symbol. There was a second dip after 1977 then a levelling-off for the next 14 years, albeit with some slowing down after 1987. By 1991, 210 country parks had been established.[16.]

Before the 1974 Local Government Act, the Commission was required to restrict its spending to two specific programmes, country parks/ picnic sites, and long-distance routes - without any general powers to fund other projects. As a result, a number of good projects, which did not really fall into the required categories, were included as country parks (for example, the stretch of disused railway which became the Wirral country park referred to above). While praiseworthy in channelling funds into good projects, this may have had the effect of blurring the image of the country park.

Partnership
A feature of the country park programme was the active partnership between the Commission, which would offer up to 75% funding towards a range of capital and revenue costs in a project, and the applicant. The latter was usually a district or county authority, or a consortium comprised of both, and sometimes other bodies. The Commission's involvement was as a genuine partner, providing not only some £14.5m in grant aid between 1974/5 and 1993/4, but also providing advisory and other support to a value estimated at between £1m and£1.5m. This support took the form of a Commission presence on steering committees and a contact officer for park staff, together with additional consultancy advice, research, training and publications.[18.]

By 1991, three very broad philosophical phases could be identified in the development of country parks:

- the aim of containment, which resulted from the fear of a recreation explosion in the 1960s;
- a reorientation towards social concerns and the country park user;
- a shift from the 'honey pot' role towards that of 'gateway'.[16.]

First phase: containment
By 1978, the 'honey pot' notion was seen as divisive and it was perceived that there was an urgent need to integrate recreation with other land uses. The basic premise of the honey pot concept proved false as the 1970s progressed. Fears that rural areas would be overwhelmed by townspeople proved to be unfounded in the wake of the oil crisis and the economic slow-down of the mid-1970s.[24.] In 1999, the Agency summarised the period thus: 'The main reason for encouraging the establishment of country parks was the desire to ease the pressure of public use of National Parks and other sensitive areas. There is no evidence that this happened'.[26.]

Second phase: social concerns and cuts in resources
In the early to mid-1970s there was a dawning 'recognition that country parks were failing to deliver countryside recreation to that part of the community (working-class city dwellers) most in need of it'.[16.] This period was characterised by initiatives such as subsidised transport schemes and active promotion beyond the existing participants. There were various recreation-transport initiatives from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s, encouraged by the Commission and by the Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation, but research showed that around a sixth of these had been abandoned by the mid-1980s.[24.]

The early emphasis in country park development had been on the provision of quiet rural surroundings with a minimum of facilities. However, after 1974, when the Countryside Commission published its *Advisory Notes on Country Park Plans*,[27.] a series of experiments into management techniques and studies of particular parks such as Cannock Chase and Tatton Park, led to more emphasis being placed on providing specialised facilities and the development of a promotional strategy. The emphasis on rural locations - often accessible only by car - diminished, in favour of urban fringe areas. From 1977 some of the Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation played a greater role in attempts to plan more strategically the distribution of country parks.[19.]

Advice on the importance of management plans for country parks, *Advisory notes on country park plans 1974,* which was the last policy guidance specifically on country parks issued by the Commission, included sensible advice and recommended that plans include:
- a reasoned analysis on the choice of the site for use as a country park;
- the existing management regime;
- other influences (observations of other bodies, neighbouring land uses, any planning conditions);
- an assessment of the salient factors and the implications for recreation development;
- a review of the purpose for which the park is to be set up and subsequently managed (in addition to informal countryside recreation, e.g. landscape protection);
- the broad types of recreation to be provided for;
- the extent to which information and interpretation is to be a feature of the park;
- the financial intentions (e.g. to provide a social service or to maximise income).

These excellent intentions were, however, stymied as local authority budget cuts began to bite in the late seventies and early eighties. It seemed likely that country parks suffered,

like urban parks, from the effect of rate-capping and then of spending-limits imposed by successive national Governments.[28.] Local Government reorganisation after the 1974 Act also had a significant impact on countryside management. Thus, by the end of the 1970s, the Commission was discovering serious problems of on-going resourcing by its partner organisations. Its 1978 report on a survey of management of country parks gave a depressing picture of dislocated management and under-funding.[29.] It also found a problem of split responsibilities between planners and estates, recreation and education; and a well-nigh impossible role for the head of the countryside section in trying 'to persuade urban interests to look outside their boundaries and to allay the fears of rural interests about the threat of mass recreation'.[30.]

In district councils, country parks were found to be 'way down the list of priorities' for the Recreation and Amenity Committee. Because a country park was often attached to another type of leisure resource, there was a tendency for a site to be managed by several different people. 'This separation might not be serious at the district level because the various departments are usually under the control of the Director of Leisure Services. Rivalry between departments appears to be strong, and one could see that in such conditions no coherent management or marketing strategy is likely to emerge; each section head is likely to continue in his traditional function at a distance from the customer.'[31.]

The 1978 report noted that 'almost all authorities are content to manage parks without reference to any outside interest group'. This was justified sometimes on grounds that it was undemocratic to involve interest groups, but mainly on grounds that 'the parks were too small; nothing much happened, and as a consequence there would be little for a committee to talk about.'[32.]

Budgeting was inconsistent and rarely cost-centred. There was a serious lack of money available for maintenance-works: the survey found that at only four out of 27 parks examined 'is there any significant element within the revenue expenditure for maintenance and minor capital work expenditure.'[33.] As for capital spending: 'The whole programme [of capital investment] has been knocked on the head in recent years by the cutbacks in capital spending and the cash limits imposed on local authorities by central government.'[34.]

Thus, on the one hand, awareness was growing of the need to expand from a resource-based approach to country parks to an outcome-based approach in terms of parks delivering on strategic aims. On the other hand, there was growing evidence of parks being undermined by lack of resources both for physical maintenance and development and for strategic planning.

At the same time the Commission, along with other government agencies, was suffering its own financial squeeze from central government.

The 1980s can be summarised as the period during which the impetus for creating country parks declined, as the Commission's reliance on the designation and its protection of the country parks symbol fell away. This apparent loss of interest was actually a reflection of a change in policy focus from site management to an area-management approach to problems in the countryside, a change flagged up in the 1982 Prospectus and developed in *Enjoying the Countryside: A consultation paper on future policies* (CCP225, 1987).[20.]

Third phase: gateways

The 1980s saw the rise of the concept of country parks as 'gateways' for the urban population to the wider countryside. It is clear from the contemporary documents that the phrase was meant to be understood both physically and metaphorically. In the 1987 consultation, *Enjoying the Countryside: a consultation paper on future policies*, published under the 'Recreation 2000' banner, the Commission stressed that the countryside 'is potentially available for all to enjoy.'[35.] **Yet in practice, countryside visitors still tended, as ever, to be white, middle-class car owners. The least frequent users were the unskilled or unemployed, those from ethnic minorities, those living in poor quality housing, and those dependent on public transport.**[38.]

In 1987, the Commission published *Policies for enjoying the Countryside* which, although it pointed out that country parks attracted only 10% of countryside visits at that time and drew attention to the fact that their cost fell predominantly on the public sector, nevertheless reaffirmed its faith in the ability of country parks to:

- take large numbers of visitors who want a convenient place in which to relax within reach of major centres of demand. This relieves the pressure of visitors on the surrounding countryside;
- be the venue for a range of sporting activities, especially water-based ones, which are enhanced by a countryside location. But sites must be large enough and managed so that the sports activities do not interfere with more casual use and the quiet enjoyment of the countryside;
- be the instrument for restoration of derelict land, and also for the continued maintenance of existing parkland, hence demonstrating one link between conservation and recreation.

It also added a new and important fourth function for country parks:

- **to be gateways from which the public can explore, via the rights of way network, the wider countryside beyond, with all its features of villages, churches and pubs, as well as farmland and woods.**[39.]

The sister report, *Enjoying the Countryside: priorities for action*, also published in 1987, added that there would be Commission support for new country parks where the proposals met some or all of the following criteria:

- there was evidence of demand which could not be managed on other open spaces in the area;
- access by public transport was available;
- the park could be used for a wide range of countryside activities, with particular attention to the needs of the disabled, the elderly, children and newcomers to the countryside;
- the park was a means of securing access to an attractive or historic parkland and to the maintenance of the landscape.

It also proposed new duties for rangers in terms of wider responsibilities for countryside management and the rights of way around the site, and closer working with highway authorities and countryside management services.[40.]

These criteria showed how far the country park idea had developed since 1966. There was now emphasis on public rather than private transport; the needs of minority groups and non-participants in countryside recreation; conservation of high-quality landscape; developing the idea of people-oriented rangering instead

of the old place-oriented wardening. This period represents a high-water mark in terms of promoting recreation, rather than merely managing it, as envisaged in the 1968 Act.

This was an affirmation of support and recognition of a new role for country parks. A target priority for action in 1987 was 'a new approach to country parks to be adopted over the next five years.'[20.] However, it was the rights of way system which became increasingly the main focus of the Commission's work on recreation.[36.]

Despite the affirmation of support, there was an cautious note in the consultation paper for Recreation 2000: 'We expect our support for capital works for new sites and for improvements in the quality and range of facilities at existing ones to be broadly maintained, but to decline as a proportion of the total recreation budget.'[37.] The Commission was, nonetheless, confident that Government would fund an increase in its total recreation budget. In the event, this was not the case. As a result, there was increasing financial pressure on grants to country parks. The following years saw spending on country parks decline.

The Commission generally made urban-fringe sites high priority but, even so, there was not much funding available - from the Countryside Commission or local authority partners - to implement the gateway idea. 'Thus, while the Commission's new policy was to promote the gateway role of country parks, it was no longer giving country parks priority for grant aid and, at the same time, it was withdrawing from grant-aiding rangers. This withdrawal can also be seen in relation to the Commission's range of training courses and publications.'[20.]

The gateway idea did not develop and seems to have shrunk to its purely physical role in terms of rights of way networks. Recent trends in the perception of the countryside and new thinking on social inclusion would make reviving the idea timely in relation to a renaissance in country parks.

Nature conservation

Country parks were originally established to promote recreation. However, good management of country parks has seen their oasis-value for nature conservation develop throughout the period since the late 1960s. Important habitats were often included in the new country parks - heathland, ancient woodland and marshland were well represented. A good number either were or became local nature reserves or SSSIs - a total of 28 nationally rare species were found in just the 62 parks surveyed in a study by Martin Hampton in 1991.[16.]

Importantly, recreation was not found to be at odds with conservation. Indeed, given user-surveys at the time and subsequently, which highlighted enjoyment of the natural character of country parks, 'conservation must be an aim if recreational objectives are to be fulfilled'. Hampton continues, 'the problems of compatibility are not as deep-seated or as widespread as might previously have been presumed … serious clashes are few and far between'.

Hampton concluded that country parks are in an ecological sense well-equipped to act as gateways, and that this can be reconciled with their role as 'recreation orientated sites which can absorb high numbers of visitors. There are still solid grounds for providing a network of intensively-managed sites, particularly in the urban fringe and particularly

aimed at those social groups which experience difficulty in gaining access to the wider countryside.'

Management
This period saw increasing awareness of the role of staff in visitors' enjoyment of the park. The Commission actively sponsored the new, American-style 'ranger' in place of the park-warden or keeper. The Commission grant-aided training opportunities and promoted a new range of visitor-oriented skills – interpretation, education, events and activities – as well as the technical skills of resource-management.

The Commission also continued to promote the use of management plans. Preparation had been a condition of grant-aid in most country park development stages. But the Commission was now emphasising the need to review and update plans as ongoing, working documents. Plan updating however appears to have been one of the first aspects of good practice which suffered as lack of local authority resources started to impact on parks.

Country parks 1992-1996

The early to mid-1990s saw the Commission increasingly interested in "customer care' in the countryside. Following the 1989 review of *Welcoming Visitors to country parks* (CCD 40), the Commission published *Visitors in the Countryside - Consultation Paper* in 1991 (CCP 341) which promoted means of improving visitor information and their confidence, understanding and care for the countryside.

Enjoying the Countryside: Policies for People (1992) undertook to 'develop a method to enable managers of major recreation sites to review the welcome offered to visitors in ways that lead to an improvement in the quality of the visitors' experience'.[41.] The text did not use the words 'country parks'. The promised methodology materialised in 1995 as the checklist published in the *Visitor Welcome Initiative*. It was however purely voluntary in nature and came with no associated grant package and no hidden agenda.[42.] It could be interpreted as the Commission's withdrawal not only from funding for country parks but also from seeing them as a distinct part of its own developing work-programme.

It should be stressed that **this was not an unplanned withdrawal: the remit of the Countryside Commission was that of a 'research-station' for new initiatives, conceiving them, testing them and then handing them on to enable it to continue pioneering.** In some respects, country parks had a better run for their money than most programmes, having dominated spending for a considerable period.

Although a review of recreation sites had been proposed in the 1991/92 Corporate Plan, it did not occur. They remained a specific corporate programme area, until dropped in the Corporate Plan for 1995/96 but this drift created 'a policy vacuum … in relation to country parks and picnic sites in the contemporary countryside recreation context'; it also created the widespread misconception that the Commission had 'abandoned the resource as well as the concept' of the country park.[21.]

A 1995 study concluded, 'It was not feasible to assess fully the impacts of the withdrawal of the Commission's support. However, investigations indicate that, while many local authorities and other management organisations are continuing to maintain and manage country parks and picnic sites at desired levels, for a substantial number the withdrawal

of support, together with cut-backs in local authority budgets, are having significant adverse implications.'[22.] The study noted that these combined influences resulted in:

- delay or abandonment of essential refurbishment and improvement schemes and the closure or 'moth-balling' of some sites or facilities;
- reductions in staff, services or visitor programmes;
- less priority within management agencies for countryside programmes and low staff morale;
- adverse implications for users - e.g. lower quality provision, fewer visitor programmes, risks to vulnerable groups resulting from fewer ranger patrols, higher charges.

Also, the reduction in the Commission's direct funding and support for recreation sites has:

- reduced Commission staff contacts with those involved in delivering countryside objectives on the ground and the Commission's potential influence on countryside recreation provision and management;
- resulted in many partner organisations inferring that the Commission no longer considers country parks, picnic sites and recreation sites as important components of recreation provision.[22.]

In addition to the effects of reduced Commission support identified in the 1995 report, it also reduced the amount and diversity of training opportunities available to park staff, particularly the visitor-orientated skills training so important to meet contemporary needs.

The study concluded that:

- country parks and, to a lesser extent, picnic sites are valuable components of local and regional recreation networks;
- the Commission's support has been vital to the successful initial development of country parks and picnic sites and their continuing management;
- country parks in particular, but also picnic sites, play important roles in the delivery of the Commission's and its partner organisations' countryside recreation, enjoyment, awareness and involvement objectives;
- there are substantial opportunities for enhancing the roles of many country parks and picnic sites in delivering countryside programmes and improving the visitor experiences they provide.[23.]

Despite the eloquent and well-reasoned advocacy for country parks continuing to have an important function and potential, the Commission's agenda moved on. The 1996 Ten-Year Strategy, *A Living Countryside,* although it referred to recreation sites, made no reference to country parks at all.[43.]

This period can be summarised as one of stagnation. Some country parks survived the withdrawal of Commission funding, others suffered. There was a widespread and disheartening misconception that the Commission no longer believed that country parks served a useful function even though it continued to support country parks and ranger services after the end of the capital grant programme in 1992. Commission thinking went on to other, newer projects, some of which were means to advance the socially progressive agenda of the mid-1980s in which country parks could have played an important role.

Country parks 1996 - 2000

The latter half of the 1990s was characterised by an absence of policy statements or direct financial commitment to country parks, although some of the Commission's publications offered useful good-practice guidance for managers with the resources to take up the advice. However, two pieces of extended research on the state of country parks were commissioned and, in 1999, the Agency gave evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee inquiry into town and country parks. Also in 1999, the Commission produced *Countryside Recreation: enjoying the living countryside* (CCP 544, 1999) and *Linking Town and Country: policies for the countryside in and around town* (CCP 546, 1999), which included mention of country parks. In 2000, the Countryside Agency Board considered a paper on *Designed Landscapes & Country parks*.

In 1997, a report, *Countryside Recreation Sites: Condition Survey* was compiled for the Commission by David Haffey of Countrywise consultants. This sampled 30 country parks and 20 picnic sites and concluded that 21 out of 32 management functions were performed to a high or moderate standard.

It also had three conclusions which looked at the appeal of these sites; their condition and the need for improvements; and the level of implementation of the Commission's 'Visitor Welcome Initiative' (VWI).

While the first conclusion, naturally enough was that the appeal resides in these sites' natural qualities and the opportunities they afford for recreation, it added that 'they often fail to meet expectations … in adequately informing people about these qualities and opportunities so that they can get the most out of their visit'. On condition, it concluded that 'there is not a general need for improvements to the physical condition of these sites, but there is a small but significant proportion of sites that would benefit from improved standards of maintenance in relation to infrastructure provision, such as footpaths and site furniture and presentational aspects such as litter and dog-fouling'. The report noted that the natural qualities of almost all the sites were being actively maintained and landscape and wildlife conservation appeared to be accorded a very high priority.

On the VWI, it concluded that, 'at the majority of sites, its basic recommendations are not being acted on, except where they happen to coincide with other management objectives … In general, managers do not appear to be taking active and deliberate steps to create a more welcoming environment.'[44.]

A couple of points about these conclusions need to be emphasised:

- The report's section on 'Access' addressed physical access questions rather than accessibility. It did not look at social inclusion, elderly or young people, or ethnic minorities.
- It is also worth clarifying the use of the term 'physical condition', which the report divides into management of natural habitats and site infrastructure. While conservation and enhancement of the former is a high priority, maintenance of site infrastructure was only 'of a reasonable standard, but in a significant number of cases there was scope for improvements both to the range and quality of facilities.' Haffey cautions against interpreting this as meaning simply a shortage of financial resources and records his impression that 'the problem appeared to be more a consequence of passive neglect and indifference than the application of inadequate resources.'[45.]

(On 1st April 1999, the Countryside Agency was created by the merger of the Countryside Commission and the Rural Development Commission.)

The Countryside Commission report *Countryside Recreation: Enjoying the Living Countryside,* published in March 1999, included in its list of tasks 'rejuvenating country parks '. It reaffirmed their strategic contribution, and also acknowledged that some country parks were showing their age. It set out a vision of a renaissance of country parks , on a par with the best equivalents in mainland Europe and North America, and stated that 'a new breed of country park should emerge providing for recreation, sport and health promotion.' It flagged up the need for development plans for country parks to enhance facilities and identify new ways of raising income through visitors, sponsorship, dual use and other means, as well as new sites to fill gaps in provision. Action by the new Countryside Agency would:

- identify best practice in attracting new sources of capital and revenue funds;
- define the standards of facilities and the welcome that country parks should offer;
- review national and regional patterns of provision.

It also urged action by others:

- local authorities and other owners of country parks should seek new investment, for example, from the private sector or the National Lottery;
- recreation and transport planners should create better physical links between country parks and centres of demand, with car free routes and public transport services;
- local authorities should use planning gain (such as Section 106 agreements) to release land for recreation near to expanding towns and cities.[46.]

It may be that (in the light of the 2002 Urban Affairs Select Committee report on the revised draft PPG17: *Sport, Recreation and Open Space*) the creation of new country parks is less important than the enhancement of existing parks, although the proposed strategic overview of provision by the Agency is welcome.[47.] It is clear that country parks still have the potential to play an important role in fulfilling many of the recreation policies set out in the report, along with other more recent initiatives such as Greenways, Community Forests and Millennium Greens.

Also in 1999, the Commission produced *Linking Town and Country: policies for the countryside in and around town*. This again acknowledged that provision and management of some country parks is still poor and suggested that private sector enterprises, such as canoe clubs, cycle hire or riding schools, could provide the trigger for revitalising some country parks.[48.] It advised that local authorities should:

- make better use of existing country parks near towns or establish more as gateways to the wider countryside, for example, by directing people on to the rights of way network, and;
- promote public/private partnerships for recreation sites.

It also proposed that:

- the Countryside Agency should identify best practice in attracting new sources of funding to country parks. [49.]

In its conclusion, the report stated that 'There is a need to link the parks to urban areas, with Quiet Roads, Greenways or public transport. High quality management is needed, plus flexibility to adapt to changing recreational needs and sporting activities'.[50.]

Later in 1999, the Agency gave evidence to the Environment Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee's Environment sub-Committee inquiry into Town and Country parks.[51.] The Agency opened its evidence with an emphatic statement that 'Country parks are now at risk of neglect and decline, just like urban parks were in the 1960s and 1970s. Action is needed now to ensure that they have a better future.' The Agency gave a ringing endorsement to the continuing relevance of country parks: 'We believe that they continue to provide a crucial place for people to visit and enjoy. Indeed, around 50 million visits are made per annum to country parks. They are unique in providing a safe environment. They are somewhere people can experience the countryside and have a sense of being away from it all, knowing what they can do, where they can do it and essentially feeling secure'.

The Agency affirmed its desire to lead a renaissance of country parks , stating 'we have an important role to play in continuing to promote country parks. '

The Agency identified three critical areas in achieving the required regeneration initiative:

- **funding** – the Agency called on Government to allocate National Lottery money for that purpose;
- **staffing** – the Agency highlighted the fundamental importance of adequate levels of on-site staff;
- **partnerships** – the Agency said there was a need for more innovation in bringing private, public and voluntary sectors into country park operation.

The Agency very firmly ruled itself out of a leading role in funding this regeneration, except in providing leadership on best practice. It also agreed that country parks are not sustainable under the current arrangements for their financing - 'a lot of them are at risk of serious decline and we need new sources of funding for their further development and maintenance'. The Agency stated that 'it is our role to generate enthusiasm, improvement, get that renaissance going. It is not our role to be on the ground further developing country parks. That has to rest with the local authorities and private bodies that own and operate them'.

Finally, the Agency was clear that country parks continued to have a place in their policy development, for example on countryside around towns, and that it was working on the preparation of standards. These would address 'the level of visitor welcome, the number of staff on site, the opening hours, a minimum level of facilities available on the site, a standard of provision especially in relation to information and interpretation, and the standard of signage and the standard of advertising' .

In response the Committee made the following recommendation:
'We welcome the Countryside Agency's continued commitment to country parks , but believe that a financial commitment is required in order to make its leadership effective. We therefore recommend that the Countryside Agency reviews its present allocation of resources to country parks and specifically considers offering grants towards the repairs which are now becoming necessary. In addition to the production of best practice guidance, we want to see the Agency keep the subject under annual or continuing review'.[52.]

In the following year, the Agency Board considered a paper on *Designed Landscapes & Country parks* , prepared by the Recreation and Tourism Branch. This proposed a joint programme with English Heritage to support designed landscapes and country parks. Such support the Paper stated 'meets two of the Agency's primary aims:

- to conserve a countryside of diverse character and outstanding beauty;
- to provide popular recreational access for local people and visitors.'[53.]

The paper also suggested that the Agency should:

- investigate the need to protect the investment that has previously been made in country parks , in partnership with the parks owners and operators.
- continue to offer help and advice, based on our proposed living cities initiative, in the context of the implementation of the Urban White Paper.
- make a bid in the comprehensive spending review, jointly with English Heritage, to start to meet some of the apparent neglect in designed landscapes through a grant scheme.
- apply for funds for a New Opportunities Fund project to make designed landscapes and country parks accessible to the needs of current generations.[54.]

The paper concluded by proposing as an aim 'To restore and conserve parks and other designed landscapes in rural areas as a significant recreational and tourism resource, improve their management as enterprising, vibrant and popular recreation amenities and secure training in the skills to conserve, restore and maintain these national assets'. The proposed objectives included not only restoration and improvement but also 'improved standards of management and visitor welcome in country parks'.[55.] In the wake of the Rural White Paper, the Agency defined its priorities in *Towards Tomorrow's Countryside*, January 2001, as:

- putting the countryside first;
- making the most of the countryside;
- reinvigorating market towns;
- creating village vitality;
- widening the welcome the countryside can offer recreation;
- creating better countryside around towns;
- securing the quality of England's finest landscapes;
- and helping people locally to care for their landscapes, landmarks and traditions.

Within these priorities, stewardship of the landscape is included alongside rural communities and the rural economy. The rural landscape is of course one of the countryside's greatest assets, and it is hard to imagine how any plan to support rural communities and rural economies could not include a regard for the landscape. Of the priorities listed above, none are at odds with the Agency's current efforts to bring about a renaissance of country parks. Potentially there is great scope for new initiatives based around country parks to dovetail with the Agency's stated priorities.

Appendix 1 references

1. Michael Dower, 'The Fourth Wave: the challenge of Leisure', *Architects' Journal* 20.1.1965.
2. J A Zetter, *The Evolution of Country Parks Policy*, CCP 48, 1971, p.4
3. ibid. pp.5-6
4. ibid. p.1
5. ibid. p.2
6. in E W M Holdaway, *The Country Park: an examination of its principles*, MSc unpublished thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1971, p.34
7. ibid. pp.28-29
8. ibid. p.40
9. ibid. p.6
10. Michael Dower, *The Fourth Wave*, London: Civic Trust, 1966

[11.] Quoted in Cara Aitchison, Nicola MacLeod, Stephen Shaw, *Leisure and Tourism Landscapes: Social and cultural geographies* (Routledge, London, 2000), p.64
[12.] CC Bonsey *Recreation and country parks*, The Chartered Surveyor, March 1969, quoted in Holdaway,
[13.] Nan Fairbrother, *New Lives, New Landscapes*, London 1970
[14.] Ray Woolmore, *111 parks in six years*, Geographical Magazine, July 1974, vol.66, no.10, pp.550-55.

[15.] This assertion is based on reading a sample of fifteen Commission Board Papers on Country Park grant applications 1971-73.
[16.] Martin Hampton *Recreation and Conservation in English Country Parks*, unpublished BA dissertation. November 1991.
[17.] David Haffey, Countrywise, *Countryside Recreation Sites Condition Survey, Final Report*, February 1997, para.7.9.
[18.] Peter Scott and Helen Holdaway on behalf of the Countryside Commission, *Evaluation of the Countryside Commission's Investment in Country Parks and Picnic Sites*, August 1995, paras.3.2.2. and 3.3
[19.] ibid. para.2.6
[20.] ibid. para.2.7
[21.] ibid. para.2.8
[22.] ibid. p.ii.
[23.] ibid. Recommendation 3.
[24.] J Blunden and N Curry, *A Future for our Countryside*, Oxford 1988.
[25.] ibid, pp.145-6.
[26.] Memorandum by the Countryside Agency, House of Commons Environment Committee, inquiry into Town and Country Parks, 1999, HC477-II.
[27.] Countryside Commission, *Advisory Notes on Country Park Plans* in 1974, CCP 80, 1974.
[28.] House of Commons Environment Committee, inquiry into Town and Country Parks, 1999, vol.1, p.xii, HC477-I.
[29.] Countryside Commission, *Management Survey of Country Parks: a Report on the Pilot Surveys in Wales & Greater London and the South East Regions*, April 1978
[30.] ibid., p.4
[31.] ibid, p.5
[32.] ibid, p.6
[33.] ibid, p.13; corrected to 'three' on p.16
[34.] ibid. p.15
[35.] Countryside Commission, *Enjoying the Countryside: a consultation paper on future policies,* CCP 225, 1987, para.6
[36.] ibid. para.39.
[37.] ibid., para.63.
[38.] Countryside Commission, *National Countryside Recreation Survey*, CCP 201, 1984
[39.] Countryside Commission, *Policies for enjoying the Countryside,* CCP 234, 1987, paras.51-52.
[40.] Countryside Commission, *Enjoying the countryside: priorities for action*, CCP 235, 1987, p.12
[41.] Countryside Commission, *Enjoying the Countryside: Policies for People* (CCP 371) 1992
[42.] Countryside Commission, *The Visitor Welcome Initiative*, (CCP 476) 1995
[43.] Countryside Agency, *A Living Countryside,* CCP 492, 1996
[44.] David Haffey, Countrywise, *Countryside Recreation Sites Condition Survey*, Final Report, February 1997.
[45.] ibid. paras.11.16-17, p.62
[46.] Countryside Commission, *Countryside Recreation: enjoying the living countryside* (CCP 544, 1999), p.10
[47.] House of Commons, Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee, 'Public Spaces: the role of PPG17 in the Urban Renaissance', 3rd report of 2001-02, 3 vols. 20 February 2002 (HCC 238 - I-III).
[48.] Countryside Commission, *Linking Town and Country: policies for the countryside in and around town* (CCP 546, 1999), p.9.
[49.] ibid. p.10.
[50.] ibid. p.15.
[51.] House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee, *Town and Country Parks*, 20th report of 1998-99, 3 vols, 27 October 1999 (HC 477 - I-III). All subsequent quotations are taken from vol. III, pp.58-63.
[52.] ETRA Committee, 1999, vol.I, p.xii.
[53.] Countryside Agency, 'Designed Landscapes & Country Parks' (AP 00/4), p.3.
[54.] ibid.
[55.] ibid. p.4.

Appendix 2: Minimum standards and performance indicators

Minimum standard	Performance indicator
Management plan (including marketing and interpretation)	Annual update, 3-year review
Business plan – rolling 3-year budget and cost centre	Cost per hectare and per visitor
Training plan	Implementation and monitoring
Regular visitor surveys including non-users	% satisfaction every 3 years, number of repeat visits
staff : visitor ratio	Full-time employees : 10,000 visitors
Toilets	Visitor provision - ETB standards
Good signage (external directions, internal orientation) circular routes, footpaths, cycleways	Minimum number of complaints
Disability access	BT Countryside for all/Fieldfare Trust standards
Public transport routes	Hourly bus service to visitor reception
Linked to non-motorised user network	Local Transport Plan
User forum	Quarterly meetings and AGM
Volunteer opportunities	No. of volunteer days per year
Positive community engagement	No. of days per year, minimum complaints
Customer care/attention to detail	Minimum complaints, focus groups, cards, welcome audit
Minimal crime	Crime reporting figures
Accessibility, getting there and getting around	Car parking provision, success of public transport links, customer complaints, path and wider access network links
Quality of experience	Customer feedback
Quantity – hectarage etc, range of greenspace for each community	
Appropriate landscape management	
Car park (Blue Badge)	
Voluntary activities	Number of volunteer days a year
Interpretation/information	Customer feedback
Income generation	How much income, spend per head
Visitor welcome	Countryside Agency audit
Linking town and country	

Appendix 3: Target groups, needs and provision

Target group	Needs	Provision
Elderly - including 'heritage coach tours' and private visitors	Basic facilities, shorter routes, safety, volunteering opportunities, rules, parking and interpretation	Minimum standards in place and publicised, appropriate waymarked trails, sensitive landscape design, encouragement from people-orientated staff, ability to absorb many types of activities, i.e. 'behaviour code areas'
Ethnic minorities	Welcome, interpretation in relevant languages, i.e. not just in English, opportunities for specific events	People orientated staff, improved interpretation boards, outreach work to identify needs
People with disabilities	Welcome, appropriate waymarked trails and interpretation, appropriate basic facilities, opportunity to take part in events, parking facilities	People-orientated staff, revised infrastructure including paths, signage and toilets, parking provision,events specifically tailored for disabled visitors
People on low incomes	Free/low cost, relevant discounts, public transport	Introduction of, in those parks who charge, appropriate discounts, subsidised transport implementation
Families	Basic facilities, space and recreation opportunities	Minimum standards introduction, events and activities programmes created with families in mind
Toddlers	Play areas, refreshments, space, basic facilities, including baby changing, animals, appropriate trails and events/activities	Minimum standards introduction, relevant events/activities, children's farms, appropriate waymarked trails. Possible crèche or children's centre.
Children 5-12 yrs	Educational visits with national curriculum based teachers/work packs, holiday play programmes, junior park clubs, adventurous play opportunities, basic	Increased child-centred policies with educational emphasis. Child education/care staff available, minimum standards implementation

	facilities	
Schools/playgroups	National curriculum based activities and information, educational staff or staff available for advice/support, basic facilities	Increased contact with local schools, child education centred policies, dedicated/support staff available, minimum standards implemented
Youth/unsupervised teens	Welcome and tolerance, challenges, basic facilities	People-orientated staff, staff available to provide 'outreach' type contact, space to 'hang out', appropriate events/activities, minimum standards implemented, close partnership with schools
Children's parties	Adequate space provision, including indoor area, basic facilities, catering facilities or provision, child-friendly staff	Specific provision made for this purpose, minimum standards implemented, party package including catering arrangements and entertainment, child-friendly trained staff
Dog walkers	Space, dog waste bins	Supply bins in appropriate areas
Business/corporate/festival and event organisers, i.e. music and culture events	Adequate specific facilities, professional, helpful staff	Provision made for conference facilities, people-orientated staff with knowledge of business requirements
Casual business recreation, i.e. lunch time users	Basic facilities, space	Minimum standards implemented, including toilets and bins
Specialist groups, i.e. historical or conservation societies	Basic facilities, friendly, encouraging, knowledgeable staff	Minimum standards implemented, people-orientated staff, acknowledgement of contribution of group to park
Sport participators	Changing facilities, pitches, basic facilities including parking and refreshments, links to wider trail network, input to management/plan	Sports centred policy, minimum standards implemented, links to cycle paths, ROW, user forum linking to management of site
Personal fitness/casual or social walkers/informal sport	Space, waymarked trails, basic facilities	Appropriate trail and interpretation provision, minimum standard implementation

Alfresco diners!	Space, basic facilities including waste bins, dog-free area	Minimum standards implemented, specific, dog-free picnic area
Tourists including 'Explorer tours'	Basic facilities, adequate parking, interpretation, welcoming staff	Minimum standards implemented, including parking and interpretation, people-orientated staff
Wedding groups	Total wedding package	Specific organisation of comprehensive wedding package
Volunteers, both heritage and nature orientated	Basic facilities, encouragement and welcome by staff, acknowledgement of achievement, input to management/plan	Minimum standard implementation, people-orientated staff, user forum input to management

Appendix 4: Review of existing advice on management plans

List of advisory documents reviewed

*Conservation Management System Partnership, 2000, *CMS Guide to the production of management plans for country parks*
*Countryside Agency with English Heritage and English Nature, 2002a, 'Heritage Management Plans: guidance notes for the preparation of heritage management plans' (draft)
*Countryside Agency with English Heritage and English Nature, 2002b,'Heritage Management Plans: National Heritage Standards' (draft)
*Countryside Commission, 1974, *Advisory Notes on Country Park Plans* (CCP 80).
*Countryside Commission, 1986, *Management Plans: a guide to their preparation and use* (CCP 206)
*Countryside Commission, 1988, *Heritage landscapes management plans* (CCP 205)
Countryside Commission, 1997, *Guidelines for countryside recreation project appraisal* (CCWP 06)
*Countryside Commission, 1998, *Site Management Planning: a guide* (CCP 527)
*Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1982, *Management Plans for Country Parks: a guide to their preparation*, 10pp
*Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1989, *Gardens and designed landscapes: an owners guide to planning their management and conservation*
*English Heritage, 1988a, *Preparing restoration schemes: a guide for owners. The repair of storm damage to historic parks and gardens*
*English Heritage, 1988b, *Preparing restoration schemes: a guide for professional advisers. The repair of storm damage to historic parks and gardens*
English Heritage, 1999 *Conservation plans in action: proceedings of the Oxford Conference*
*English Heritage, 2001a, *Informed Conservation: understanding historic buildings and their landscapes for conservation*
*English Heritage, 2001b, *Conservation Management Plans for restoring historic parks and gardens: guidance for owners and managers on plans and commissioning consultants* (consultation draft)
*Heritage Lottery Fund, 1998a, *Conservation Plans for Historic Places*
*Heritage Lottery Fund, Urban Parks Programme, 2002, 'Draft guidelines for the production of park management plans'
Heritage Lottery Fund, 1998c, *Preparing your business plan for a capital project*
*Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, 1991, *A guide to management plans for parks and open spaces*
Kerr, James Semple, 1996, *The Conservation Plan: a guide to the preparation of conservation plans for places of European cultural significance* (Sydney)
*Lockwood, Mary, 2000, 'Study methods' in *The Regeneration of Public Parks,* ed J Woudstra and K Fieldhouse (Garden History Society and Landscape Design Trust, London)
Sports Council and Countryside Commission, 1995, *Good practice in the planning and management of sport and active recreation in the countryside*
Seabrook, W and Miles, 1992, C W, *Recreational land management* (2nd ed., London)

*reviewed below

Reviews

Countryside Commission, 1974, *Advisory Notes on Country Park Plans* (CCP 80).
This was the last Countryside Commission publication to address Country Parks specifically. The short (9pp) guidance begins with a definition of purpose: 'The plan for a country park is a comprehensive statement of the managing authority's intentions towards the establishment and running of the park, providing a framework for implementation and continuity of management'.

It advises that a sound plan will be 'a statement of policy for the future and a guide to the subsequent administration of the park'. It stresses that 'The plan needs to be definitive in outline, yet flexible enough in detail to allow for changed circumstances and the necessary freedom of action required for effective day-to-day running' and advises 'periodic' reappraisal and, if necessary, revision. It suggests that appendices contain more detailed material not required for day-to-day purposes, and that a summary publication is useful for public information.

The *Advisory Notes* divide a plan into three parts: Background, Aims and Implementation. **Background** should include information on the setting up of the park, a physical analysis of the site, an account of existing management policies, financial information, and an assessment of the factors and implications for recreation development. **Aims** should state the primary purposes of management and give an indication of the range of methods and options for implementation. It should thus address a) objectives and b) methods of achievement in the form of an outline guide to the running of the park. **Implementation** should set out in detail how the objectives are to be pursued, including a definition of the manager's responsibilities and the delegation of powers. It should cover administrative organisation, principles of management (maintenance of the physical fabric, control of tenancies and licences etc), management of facilities including parking, standards of maintenance, services to cover catering sales, events etc; emergency services, visitor management (numbers, arrangements for groups, bye-laws etc), interpretation, information, relations with other organisations (e.g. advisory committees of user interests, neighbouring landowners etc), voluntary participation in management, and monitoring.

Comments

- *Given its period, it is not surprising that there is throughout a focus on the initial development stage of creating a park, with the plan seen as a necessary accompaniment to a newly created park.*
- *As a result, surveys of all kinds are not given the emphasis that would now be expected.*
- *It does not advocate public involvement in the preparation of the plan.*
- *The need for flexibility, and for regular reappraisal and revision is emphasised.*
- *This advice did not lead to management plan being widely adopted as a working tool.*

Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1982, *Management Plans for Country Parks: a Guide to their Preparation*
This is the CCS version of the Countryside Commission 1974 publication reviewed above and is similar in the framework proposed: basic information; statement of objectives; policy framework; recommendations on major issues; indicative programme of costs; summary of who is responsible for putting the plan into operation. It contains a recommended outline structure set out diagrammatically. It also includes much of the

good advice referred to in the above review and a sensible summary of the usefulness of a plan. The latter covers its role as a means of communication with elected members of a council and with other departments, organisations and neighbours. In addition, it has a useful paragraph on setting up a consultative group representing specialist interests.

Comments

- *Like its English equivalent this document is of its period – closely related to the early stages of a country park's life.*
- *It states that 'generally the Commission would not advocate formal public consultation'.*
- *It only briefly refers to the importance of including 'something about recreational uses'.*

Countryside Commission, 1986, *Management Plans: a guide to their preparation and use* (CCP 206)

The bulk of this advice addresses four example cases: a whole farm, a Woodland Trust urban woodland, a composite National Trust upland estate, and a restored cement works. The 5-page introduction defines a management plan as 'a site-specific document prepared by the controlling owner, occupier or manager of a piece of land which guides the planning and management of that land' and refers to the management plan approach 'now gaining momentum'. The advice advocates that 'the importance of management plans lies in their ability to provide a vehicle for integrating multiple demands on land in the face of shifting physical economic and political pressures on a large and small scale' and stresses the need for flexibility within the framework of the overall plan.

It suggests that a good management plan will serve the following purposes:

- The provision of a well-researched and comprehensive reference record
- The formulation of explicit objectives and priorities for management decisions
- The identification of additional resources required and related proposals in support of grant aid applications
- An assurance for continuity of management within the guidance of the plan and programme of work (para.2.2)

The advice also stresses survey work: 'The basis for management planning is a well-researched and comprehensive record for the land - what is present and how it is currently managed'. It gives this equal billing with a statement of aims. A flow diagram illustrates the processes of stating aims and survey work, leading on to analysis, management objectives, management prescription, implementation and review. It advises on the difference between an *aim* (e.g. to conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape) and an *objective* (e.g. to minimise further hedgerow removal). Objectives should be flexible while aims create the more rigid framework. *Prescription* includes an overview of the required operations which leads to the yearly programming which is *implementation.* The latter needs to identify resources required.

Comments

- *There is no reference to community involvement.*
- *The examples studied do not include a country park, although Bishop Bowls Lake, at Bishops Itchington, a Blue Circle Industries property, does have some parallels (e.g. to encourage visitors to enjoy walking on the site and to appreciate the wildlife) even though its primary aim is to achieve a successful commercial trout fishery.*

Countryside Commission, 1988, *Heritage landscapes management plans* (CCP 205)

This short 12-page advice pamphlet was prepared for 'land of outstanding scenic interest qualifying for condition exemption from capital tax' (under the Inheritance Tax Act 1984). While this is very unlikely to cover Country Parks specifically, it gives useful reasons for preparing plans, what they should contain and a guide for owners (implicitly private owners) on drafting.

English Heritage, 1988a, *Preparing restoration schemes: a guide for owners. The repair of storm damage to historic parks and gardens*
English Heritage, 1988b, *Preparing restoration schemes: a guide for professional advisers. The repair of storm damage to historic parks and gardens* (1988)
Two short but detailed guides on surveying and drawing up management proposals for historic parks and gardens published in the wake of the 1987 hurricane. Aimed principally at the rural landscape park and the private owner, with a good deal of detailed technical advice.

Countryside Commission for Scotland, 1989, *Gardens and designed landscapes: an owners guide to planning their management and conservation*
A useful, attractive 35-page pamphlet setting out the desirability of a management plan for a non-specialist audience, stressing simplicity. The aims are 'to describe the garden and designed landscape and say clearly what is important about it; to set down the aims for its conservation and future management, and to set out the action required to meet those aims'. Professional advisers may or may not be necessary. It includes summaries of the different components of a designed landscape, the nature of change and historical development, assessment of important features, deciding on management aims and formulating proposals, with useful checklists and criteria at the end

Comments
- *Basic but sound guide to the needs of the fabric of a designed landscape.*
- *Little reference to public access or amenity, or to visitor management.*

Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management, 1991, *A guide to management plans for parks and open spaces*
Written for local authorities and thus has a strong emphasis on public amenity. Draws attention to considerations such as sports facilities, recreational activities, public interest, user surveys, user groups, seasonal trends, visitor numbers, visitor facilities, visitor management, and byelaws. It also has a section on the consultation draft stage and the benefits of a summary leaflet for public consumption. Of public consultation it stresses that 'this is the most important stage' and advises on forms of consultation. ILAM also prepared a useful supplement, setting out a checklist of points with notes on each one.

Sports Council and Countryside Commission, 1995, *Good practice in the planning and management of sport and active recreation in the countryside*
Short introduction followed by 12 case studies, and an end-section on lessons for planning and management. Demonstrates good practice in the planning and management of sport and active recreation in the countryside, and argues that 'conflict between conservation and sport and recreation, and between different sport and recreation interests, can, in almost all cases, be prevented or resolved by good planning and management practice'. It concludes that six major factors constitute the main elements of good practice:

1. *State of the environment*: good baseline data on environmental conditions and an agreed view of the nature of any impacts. It emphasises that 'much of the data collected on environmental impacts are *not systematically used for management purposes*'.
2. *Clarity of purpose:* setting unequivocal objectives to form a realistic framework for future action. 'The need to consider trade-offs and capacity *at the level of the resource* is clearly very important'.
3. *Participatory management*: regarding management as a process, guided by a regular discourse and negotiations between relevant interests. "Blueprint' style formal management plans have less to offer than a style characterised by smaller steps designed to create a common discourse, backed by appropriate research'.
4. *Importance of voluntary agreements*: the operation of restraint and self-policing by clubs and governing bodies; 'the main problems emerge from non-affiliated participants ... such persons may not even be aware of the voluntary arrangements in place at a site. Users of personal watercraft (jetskiers) are a good example here'.
5. *Local involvement*: regular liaison and negotiation with local populations and sports organisations; in particular 'there is considerable scope for an increase in local codes of practice'
6. *Monitoring and review*: a conscious and, ideally, systematic process which informs future management decisions, and any changes in direction to site management. The report stresses 'without effective monitoring and review it is difficult to see how managers can make informed decisions'. In the case studies, procedures were 'weak and unstructured' on many sites. Wardens and site managers personify the 'precautionary principle', detecting day-to-day signs of change and making minor adjustments which can ultimately lead ad hoc to a divergence from previously established long-term aims. The report also stresses that 'monitoring should also be applied to the *management measures themselves'*.

Comments

- *The report strongly emphasises that a management plan is not a one-off exercise but must be continuously evolving.*
- *It also stresses the importance of participation not only in plan preparation and review but also in day-to-day management.*

Countryside Commission, 1997, *Guidelines for countryside recreation project appraisal* (CCWP 06)

This document addresses the appraisal of projects prior to their development. It does refer to the need to agree a management plan for the construction and operation phase of the project. It states that liaison and consultation with user, local conservation and community groups should be part of the on-going management process'. 'Wider consultations will be required in respect of major reviews of the management plan' . It advises that the plan should be revised every five years or so and emphasises the need for monitoring data to contribute to an annual review and update of the operating plan. Major reviews should collect additional survey data to augment annual monitoring data .

Comments

- *Principally intended for new projects.*
- *The advice on the management plan does usefully highlight the putting in place of mechanisms for liaison and consultation.*

Countryside Commission, 1998, *Site Management Planning: a guide* (CCP 527)

This is a substantial piece of guidance running to over 50 pages, admired by this project's advisory panel for its emphasis on visitor management. It includes a basic introduction for those new to the subject and a more in-depth treatment of site assessment and policy planning in part two. Work programming, financial planning and monitoring and review are addressed in part three. It emphasises that a plan 'is not an end in itself ... the only real test of a management plan is whether or not it works . It also usefully points out that 'the process of producing a plan may be as important as the plan itself' , because ideas are shared, problems resolved and consensus achieved, along with 'the involvement of the various individuals or organisations who have an interest in the site'. The lifetime of a plan varies: many cover five years, forestry and heritage sites require a longer term view often for 10-20 years; while there may be circumstances where an interim 1-2 year plan is the best option.

Comments

- *This remains the most substantial advice from the Commission on management planning, and is highly relevant to country park planning*

Heritage Lottery Fund, 1998, 'Draft Guidelines for the production of park management plans' (draft 3)

This brief guidance replaces the model brief which HLF issued for the Urban Parks Programme. It gives a checklist of items and issues which might be considered in drafting a management plan. It refers to a consistent strategy for management over a period of 10 years and stresses that 'an important component is a review of existing levels of commitment and resources and a thorough assessment of future requirements in the light of the restoration project'. It suggests that an annual review might be appropriate. A management plan should serve as a working manual for use by the applicant, staff and contractors as well as by the grant-aiding agency. A ring binder is advised. It should also make clear the context and policies behind a plan.

The advice suggests the following structure and content: *Introduction to the site* (brief history, council policies, other constraints, site description, description of activities and events, visitor numbers and facilities); *Management aims and objectives* - 'The Vision' (stating what management is trying to achieve; *Key Issues* (known conflicts, quality issues, skills need/shortage, community involvement, and 'anything where problems have occurred in the past and can be remedied through enlightened management'); *Proposals for implementing high standards of management* (either set out area by area or issue by issue) current and future spending should be matched to costed proposals; a phased programme of implementation of capital projects, partnerships, identification of training needs, project management structure, supervision, liaison with stakeholders, routine operations, grounds maintenance operations, works procurement. A process of review should be built into the programme. Clear lines of responsibility for maintenance of buildings and structures should be set out. This section should also include a financial plan for the Plan period covering revenue and capital sources; and a schedule of maintenance operations. Details of grounds maintenance specifications should be included in an appendix, and the advice also suggests that a photographic record be undertaken as a future archive. Finally, it advises that *Supporting documents* should include surveys and condition reports, historic survey, site analysis, visitor surveys, policy documents, maintenance specifications, inventory of features, manufacturer's information on furniture, surfacing, mulches, signage etc.

Comments

- *A useful summary specific to management plans required as a condition of grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund. For a Stage 1 pass, HLF requires only an outline; for Stage 2 more detail is required but it is accepted that a management plan will need to evolve out of actual management of the finished project and so, even at Stage 2, it can be provisional, provided the full scope of the work and its cost-implications are demonstrably understood. It is likely that HLF would require an agreed 10-Year management plan within 12 months of completion of the capital phase.*

Heritage Lottery Fund, 1998, *Conservation Plans for Historic Places*

A 'conservation plan' is a recent coining. developed in the wake of the Heritage Lottery Fund's massive injection of cash into large capital projects. It is not the same as a management plan but 'is part of the process of understanding the asset at the outset' . The conservation plan process is defined as: *understand* the site via documents and fieldwork; *assess* significance; assess how significance is *vulnerable*; write *policies* for retaining significance. Throughout the process, consensus should be built via consulting and involving others. Once completed the policies should be subject to revision and refinement. The guidance suggests that a Conservation Plan is the first step in preparing management proposals, planning restoration schemes, planning new developments, or managing a programme of regular maintenance. It should be a consultative document and a team effort because of its multi-disciplinary nature; and that 'the strength of the Conservation Plan will be directly related to the amount of support it has gained'. Ideally, a conservation plan should be less than 50 pages long; it should be well-presented with graphics and illustrative material, A4 format for ease of storage and use, and should be easy to dismantle and reassemble for photocopying. The advice stresses the need for a Conservation Plan to be adopted by the major stakeholders. There is a more detailed section on the content of a plan, a template, and advice on its usefulness..

Comments

- *Conservation plans are a relatively new concept, mainly applicable to historic sites combining a range of potentially conflicting interests. They may therefore be directly appropriate to country parks which have historic interest as designed landscapes.*
- *Conservation plans may be particularly useful in unlocking grant-aid. Although a comprehensive management plan will address most of these issues arising from a complex site, a conservation plan sets out the underlying analysis and rationale and reassures heritage agencies that the historic aspect has been fully considered.*

Conservation Management System Partnership, 2000, *CMS Guide to the production of management plans for country parks*

This substantial report is, to date, the most ambitious attempt to establish a standard methodology for the preparation of Country Park Management Plans. Prepared as a companion guide to the *Guide to management planning for protected areas* (CMS Partnership, 2000), it is written in a friendly voice direct to those writing a plan for the first time. It is based on the consultant's experience in helping to prepare a plan for Craig-y-Nos Country Park in the Brecon Beacons, which also allowed for extensive piloting of the methodology. It stresses at an early stage that 'management planning must be regarded as a continuous, long-term process. Don't think that when you have written your plan that your work is over'. It advises that the plan should be a computer document with a database for records of management activities, significant events and surveys. CMS Partnership has produced software for this purpose.

This continuous process of 'adaptable management' is built into its suggested structure which is based on the business model of favourable status, factors and operational limits, objectives, selection of performance indicators, monitoring, review and audit; or inputs,

outputs and outcomes. After preliminaries – vision statement, policy statements, description - it advocates that a plan addresses the two key topics: a) nature conservation and services and b) facilities and obligations (i.e., ecology and recreation) via two separate but identical processes. On the relation between these two topics, the Guide advises for example 'The impact of visitors on country park conservation features will be one of your biggest challenges. Large numbers of people at concentrated times may damage or affect features and other site qualities. You will need to adapt a range of visitor management techniques to safeguard these conservation features – especially as these probably form the basis for people's visits in the first place'.

The guide exports to people-planning some of the models used in the nature conservation methodology – for example the concept of favourable status, adapted using Best Value processes .

It includes a table of contents for a country park management plan, and a detailed, step-by-step guide to the preparation of each section including, for example, such details as a filing and coding system for records (Annex B). It advises evaluating ecological conservation features first, ahead of the 'people planning'. This it does on the grounds that while 'the primary purpose of Country Parks as stated in the 1968 Act is 'to provide informal opportunities for recreation', without conservation features many country parks would not attract the number of visitors that they do … Without such features, the services/facilities would be unlikely to exist in their present form'. The second section mirrors, indeed repeats, much of the first, merely replacing 'conservation' with 'service'. It has surprisingly little to say on community engagement; even in the review section it advises that this be done by the management team with a remark to 'consider parties from outside the organisation as well'.

Comments

- *As a systematic, modern methodology this advice has much to commend it. However, its structure is flawed in dividing so completely nature conservation and people-planning. Because of the structure, the inter-action and inter-dependency of the two is not reflected in the advice; indeed the two sections could be read in isolation.*
- *It appears to give primacy to nature conservation objectives. While this will be in tune with much of the training of the current generation of managers, it may not be the smartest way to make the case for country parks.*
- *Moreover, case studies indicate that a failure to address users and non-users is likely to have a more threatening impact on the park's long-term viability and may often be the more urgent priority in turning a failing park around.*
- *The advice is also disconcerting in giving very little time to the importance of engaging the community.*

Lockwood, Mary, 2000, 'Study methods' in *The Regeneration of Public Parks,* ed J Woudstra and K Fieldhouse (Garden History Society and Landscape Design Trust, London), pp.33-34

A useful essay, written by a former senior grants officer with the Heritage Lottery Fund who was closely involved in the Urban Parks Programme, on the benefits and contents of a 'restoration plan'. It encapsulates the philosophy of the UPP in, for example, including new design as part of the regeneration of a public park, and emphasising the balance between fabric and people and the need to assess and address financial and human resources. It also has a section on the HLF requirement for a 10-year management and maintenance plan.

English Heritage, 2001, Kate Clark, *Informed Conservation: understanding historic buildings and their landscapes for conservation*

Helpful in distinguishing between conservation plans and conservation management plans and contains useful chapter on Conservation and Management Planning. This defines a conservation plan as covering four basic concepts: understanding; assessment of significance, identification of conservation issues (including conflicts and how significance is vulnerable); and policies for retention of significance. It advises that the process must be 'creative, analytical, participatory and synthetic'.' It also advises on conservation statements which are outline versions of plans, based on the same principles. Of management plans it notes that 'many conservation professions already use management plans as a way of outlining the measures needed to care for a significant site or place' including historic landscape management plans. It suggests that, if there is a difference between a conservation plan and a management plan 'it is usually that a management plan will place greater emphasis on the programme of work than the thinking behind it' and will include a specific schedule of work, often with costs. A conservation plan will be more analytical but will deal with implementation only in broad terms; however conservation plans are 'often used for a much wider ranger of purposes'. The role of the conservation plan is to be a 'single approach' to the site and its issues as a whole.

It contains advice on conservation plan briefs, on stakeholder participation and on implementation and review. It covers the need for formal adoption and regular monitoring and review.

Other chapters contain detailed advice on the role of understanding, sources of funding, impact assessment, defining significance, CoBRA (Conservation Based Research and Analysis), information on requirements and survey, requirements with regard to statutory designations, repair, maintenance and management, techniques for understanding, specialist skills and appendices which include a model brief for CoBRA.

Comments

- *The advice is based on the English Heritage Oxford conference on Conservation Plans in Action.*
- *Although landscapes are mentioned, the bulk of the report is tailored to the needs of buildings and monuments.*
- *The report is the most comprehensive treatment of conservation plans. Terminology is fluid with both management plans and conservation management plans being current. However, this document makes clear that a conservation plan is a different creature - over-arching, broad-brush and not addressing the detail of work programmes.*
- *Although participation is referred to, the advice is largely technical and focussed on the conservation of fabric, rather than public amenity.*

English Heritage, 2001, 'Conservation Management Plans for restoring historic parks and gardens: guidance for owners and managers on plans and commissioning consultants' (consultation draft)

This publication should be the authoritative guide to its subject (which has important overlaps with country park management) and not restricted to parks in historic landscapes. It takes the reader through the processes behind a conservation management plan, including surveys, 'statements of significance', policies, business planning, monitoring and review, commissioning consultants, contract terms and conditions, and funding sources. The guidance also contains advice on managing consultants and a

standard plan format, useful addresses, a 'landscape restoration work programme proforma' and a maintenance checklist. It addresses registered parks and gardens in particular but is applicable to all types of historic park and garden.

Comments

- *Although concentrating a) on registered parks and b) on conservation of the fabric, this advice has useful information with regard to country park management, and the contents of a good management plan.*

Countryside Agency with English Heritage and English Nature, 2002a, 'Heritage Management Plans: guidance notes for the preparation of heritage management plans' (draft)
Countryside Agency with English Heritage and English Nature, 2002b,'Heritage Management Plans: National Heritage Standards' (draft)

This supersedes the Countryside Commission's 1988 advice, *Heritage landscapes management plans,* and addresses the needs of the Agency with regard to capital tax exemption cases.

It is rarely going to be directly applicable to a country park but nevertheless sets out useful guidance on methodology.

The guidance builds on the Agency's *Site management planning: a guide*, 1998, and also accords with the processes set out in the Heritage Lottery Fund's *Conservation Plans for Historic Places*, 1998.

The advice contains an outline structure of a heritage management plan. This comprises: *Introduction* explaining tax purpose; *Description* including physical and historical data, summary description of features, and assessment of significance; *Aims*, including broad policies underlying overall management and the intended balance between various interests; *Management*, covering topic by topic description of the features and all aspects of the estate's management, baseline data, and appropriate objectives, together with a summary of revenue flow; *Work programmes*; arrangements for *Monitoring and review*; and *Appendices*, to include maps and plans, showing rights of way and statutory designations, features, ecology and soils, land-use, restoration projects, together with schedules, surveys and photographs. The advice then goes into detail on each section.

The advice also refers to and builds on a companion volume prepared by the same agencies, 'Heritage Management Plans: National Heritage Standards' (draft, January 2002), which sets standards for all aspects of heritage property: agriculture, archaeology, archives, buildings, chattels, development, history, designed landscapes, management, nature conservation, recreation and access, sporting and woodland.

Comments

- *The advice is tailored towards private owners of 'outstanding sites'. Thus it is not directly applicable to country parks - some elements are not relevant and some important aspects of a plan suitable for a country park are omitted but it is very solid advice on the contents and drafting processes of a management plan.*

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