Chapter 7

Connecting making and keeping

Design and management in place-keeping

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Introduction

Every open space is subject to a unique set of constraints, issues and opportunities. The way in which these are addressed through design and management processes and practice is central to the place-keeping aim of sustaining well-used and cared-for places. A well 'made' (designed and built) place does not necessarily develop into a well-loved and used place. As we posit through this book, what happens through the ongoing process of management is equally important, if not more so. However, the importance of good design and management and the relationship between the two is often ignored or appears to be little understood. This chapter begins by exploring what we understand by design and management in place-keeping and how they contribute to creating great places.

As we have already seen in Chapter 2, design and management are often dealt with separately leading to an uncoordinated and disjointed approach. To be effective, management needs to take a long-term approach and be responsive to changes in use, budgets and priorities but, as this chapter will show, in practice management processes are often inflexible and standardised. However, does it have to be like this? Are there alternative approaches that can deliver a more joined-up and efficient and effective process? Open space design and management requires the input from a wide range of open space 'professionals' and 'non-professionals', for examples site users, with differing skills, expertise and opinions that do not always concur. Many of these issues and challenges stem from traditional approaches to design and management. Here we explore the issues this can pose and whether this can also offer the opportunity for new and innovative approaches.

Places are not static; they change and develop over time as needs and priorities change, vegetation grows and built elements need renewal. Use varies throughout the day and seasonally and the full benefits of a place are only realised over time. This has implications for design and management: ensuring paths accommodate peak footfall, providing shade in summer, varying grass cutting regimes seasonally, gritting paths during winter. However, the longer-term impact of maturing designs on management and the impact of changing social, environmental and economic pressures are not always so well considered. In this chapter we explore how the wider context influences design and how designers and managers can balance the variety of ensuing needs. Given the generally higher complexity in the delivery of good design and management, this chapter focuses on green rather than hard, landscape open space.

Definitions and the role of design and management within place-keeping

Design and management are highly interrelated activities and together have a huge impact on the physical product of place. Carmona *et al*. (2010, p. 3) define urban design as 'the process of making better places for people than would otherwise be produced', which suggests the idea of a process of conscious change which also has wider application to 'greener' and rural settings and can include non-human users. In practice, the *design* process follows recognised stages: brief setting, design phase, implementation phase and post-implementation review. Throughout this process the designer seeks to balance objectives and constraints for a site in order to develop an optimal design that satisfies multiple criteria, for example, to meet user needs and clients' wishes, deliver biodiversity gains, follow planning guidance, or maximum use of restricted budgets (Carmona *et al*., 2010). Designing a site, neighbourhood or even a city is not just a response to its physical nature but is profoundly influenced by the political, economic and cultural processes 'inherent in design and use of (urban) space' (Madanipour, 1996, p. 218). How a designer resolves these often conflicting demands, and who is involved in the process and how, will have a great impact on the design of a place and the subsequent place-keeping. Whether a designer opts for mown grass for ball games over woodland edges to maximise biodiversity may depend as much on the brief, political support and financial constraints as on which stakeholders are able to influence the design process and how.

After the implementation phase, essentially a place has been 'made' but it requires ongoing effective *management* to maintain and enhance its quality to ensure it develops in a way that delivers the aspirations for the site and maximises the benefits it can bring. Management implies planned actions, both short- and long-term, that affect the use and development of places. Management includes a much wider range of actions than simply cleaning and maintenance processes that keep a place 'neat and tidy'. In an urban context it includes area and citywide actions such as ensuring equitable access to public spaces, and managing regeneration and conservation processes (Carmona *et al*., 2010). As with design, it sits within and is affected by wider pressures to which it must respond, as recognised in the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000) that describes landscape management as action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes.

As part of the longer-term process of management, *maintenance* specifically refers to a range of land management techniques and the day-to-day operations required to ensure the 'fitness for purpose' of a place (Barber, 2005; Welch, 1991). The maintenance a place will require is largely determined by its design. Specific landscape features may require particular maintenance equipment and expertise: for example a range of mowing equipment for a grassed amphitheatre or specialist horticultural knowledge for particular planting. In particular, maintenance relates to a place's condition and cleanliness and lack of maintenance is one of the most obvious and immediate signs of when place-keeping is failing – litter bins are not emptied, grass remains uncut and graffiti is not cleaned. Maintenance is the day-to-day manifestation of place-keeping; it happens everywhere, in our streets, town centres and open spaces and as such can have greater impact on everyday life than the relatively infrequent investment in a 'place-making' project (Carmona *et al*., 2004a; Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 New features in open space such as grassed amphitheatres can pose maintenance challenges.

Management that does not respond to the original design intent can result in impoverished places where vegetation richness and complexity have been 'managed out' to simplify management and gang mowing and high canopy trees prevail (Hitchmough *et al.*, 2004). Standard maintenance practices aim to *maintain* landscape elements of an open space such as grass and shrubs *in the same condition* (CABE Space, 2006a; Figure 7.2). However, the concept of place-keeping permits a more evolving, broader and flexible definition that recognises that a place is not 'made' the day the implementation of the design is completed. Places are dynamic; they take time to mature as trees grow, use becomes established and meaning develops. This will bring with it changes in maintenance requirements and, in response to changing external influences, will require management priorities to be reviewed, if for example public sector budget cuts mean a community group must take over planting maintenance.

Despite the obvious interrelatedness of design and management, within place-keeping in practice they are often dealt with separately, often by different stakeholders and at different stages in the process of developing a site or regenerating an area. Simply put, design represents the place-making stage, whereas

Figure 7.2 Standard management approaches aim to maintain features in the same condition, such as this closely clipped hedging.

management and maintenance follow on later. This can result in little or no consideration of design's implications for long-term management beyond that needed to establish the site, for example the maintenance of planting in the first 12 months. Referring to the place-keeping model described in Chapter 2, however, within a holistic place-keeping model, plans for the future management and maintenance of a place are embedded in the design stage and shape the ultimate design to help ensure sustainability, something to which all related stakeholders should aspire.

What makes a place great? The implications of design and management for place-keeping

There is a wealth of guidance that describes the attributes of good design with respect to place-making. These have been succinctly summarised by Vitruvius, back in the first century, as, how well a place is built, how well it functions and how it looks. Beyond this simple description, however, lies a depth of qualities

that are not simply a matter of aesthetics, taste or style or providing a specific function (Madanipour, 2006). Good design should respond to and be integrated with its local context and community (whether at a local or city scale). Well-designed places are accessible to all, safe and inclusive, provide opportunities for social interaction and bring social benefits (Gehl, 2001; Whyte, 1980). They offer variety of choice in terms of experiences and uses and are distinctive; they have their own identity – for designers, this is the elusive '*genius loci*' or 'sense of place'. They are also robust and adaptable, fit for purpose and able to accommodate new uses, of prime importance to place-keeping with its underpinning principle of longevity and providing great places for the long term. In essence well-designed places will be *well-used* and *cared-for* by users (Cowan *et al.*, 2005; Figure 7.3).

Although there is much debate among professionals as to how to describe and measure quality in relation to landscape, open space users are very clear about what they expect from a good-quality place. They expect good-quality facilities such as play areas, toilets, provision for young people and sensory stimulation (Shoreditch Trust and OISD, 2009; Dunnett *et al.*, 2002) – see Figure 7.4 / Colour Plate 10.

Figure 7.3 Neglected space: sites that are not robust and adaptable to changing uses can become neglected and little used, such as this public space in the Cultural Industries Quarter in Sheffield, England.

They should also be well maintained and there is a clear link between the level of maintenance, users' perception of quality and use of open spaces (Dempsey, 2008). Litter clearance in particular is one of the most visible signs to users of whether an area is adequately maintained or not and can send out signals that a place is uncared for. The level of maintenance has been shown to strongly influence not only how likely people are to use a space, but the image of an area as a place in which to invest. A neat and tidy, 'cared-for' landscape has been shown to play an important role in creating the right business image and improving the perceived quality of a potential office location. Derelict land in particular conveys a strong negative image; it is seen to be unsafe, attracting misuse and projects an image of a failing area (Burton and Rymsa-Fitschen, 2008; Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Figure 7.5).

Clearly, perceptions of the quality of open space are related to both the design and the management of that space. However, perceptions of place are influenced by more than what a user can see or sense (e.g. litter, bird song or car noise) and refer to a more complex processing or understanding of stimuli (Carmona *et al.*, 2010). Although based in biological processes, perception is socially and culturally

Figure 7.4 Ministries Plaza in Muscat, Oman, is well-maintained but lacking in services which meet users' needs, and therefore is not well-used.

Photo courtesy of Hanan Aljabri.

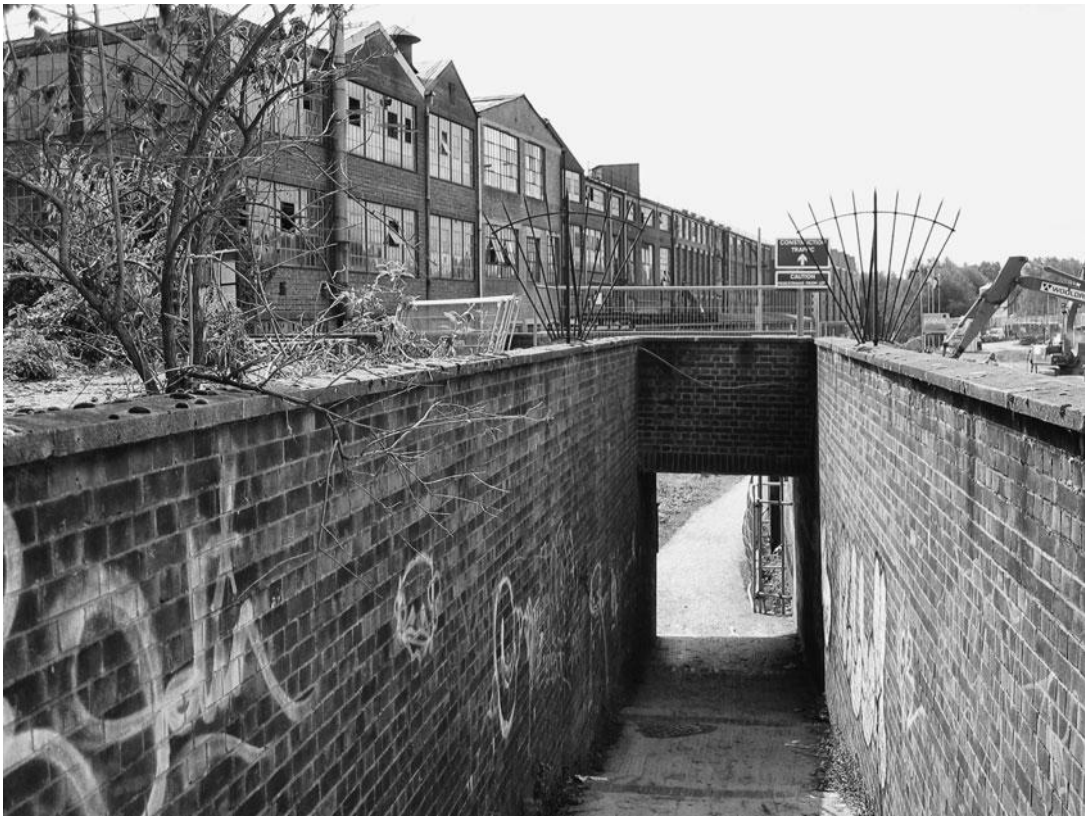

Figure 7.5 Derelict land and accompanying graffiti and litter can lead to misuse and perceptions of insecurity, deterring users.

learnt, in that the response to stimuli varies not only with a person's age, gender ethnicity and so on, but also with the physical, social and cultural environment in which they were raised. This has implications for place-keeping in helping to understand the complaints that arise from changes in management practices that challenge users' perceptions of what 'their place' should be like. For example, allowing the grass to grow long to bring biodiversity benefits and reduce cost may be outside the users' experience and cultural understanding of what is appropriate in a 'traditional' park, hence provoking complaints. Following this reasoning, however, it should be possible for park users to 'relearn' and alter their perception of what 'acceptable' park management practices are (that may stem from a bygone Victorian era), helping them to come to understand the reasons for it and the benefits it brings. Indeed consultation exercises with users early in the process where changes are proposed is considered good practice and may lead to reduced numbers of objections. Another less inclusive approach is to recognise that over time users are likely to become used to the 'new' management that is implemented despite initial reluctance.

Despite the abundance of design guidance and the growing body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of good design, poor design still proliferates. The report 'The Cost of Bad Design' (Simmons *et al.*, 2006) describes the huge (and as yet unmeasured) cost, both in financial and social terms of upgrading or replacing poorly designed buildings and landscapes. It asserts that poor design can be assessed by the misuse of a space, such as desire lines where paths should run, but also, and more difficult to measure, invisible features of design failure, for example all the journeys by foot that don't take place anymore because a place is perceived to be unsafe. Even if guidance is followed, the degree to which designers are able to control or promote particular behaviour through design is questionable (Lang, 1987). Designers can provide cognitive and functional cues to increase the likelihood of more respectful behaviour and provide opportunity for desirable activity, but management is required to regulate use (Carmona *et al.*, 2010). Bins may be provided but litter can still end up on the ground. Steps can provide a welcome seating opportunity, a homeless person a bed for the night or a challenge for a keen skateboarder (Figure 7.6 / Colour Plate 11). These issues help illustrate that such complex problems cannot be overcome by designers or managers working in isolation. This calls for a joined-up approach to reunite design and management to ensure successful place-keeping.

Figure 7.6 The use of London's South Bank by skateboarders, an unplanned-for activity but now an important part of the character of the area, is potentially under threat of removal due to encroaching commercial interests.

Photo courtesy of Prof. Iain Borden.

Disjointed processes and multiple players

The processes of design and management in practice are complex and disjointed. Place-making involves many different actors who may be located within different departments in a local authority, or within different organisations altogether. This fragmentation of responsibility has been precipitated by the move from government to governance; no longer is it just 'the state' involved (see Chapters 3 and 4). The subsequent ongoing management of the created place may be the responsibility of a whole set of different actors. Alongside the number of actors are the many bureaucratic procedures that local authorities in particular are subject to. Whilst many of these are concerned with obtaining best value, the focus may be on short-term value for money, not about securing best value from the place in the long term. This separation between design and management, particularly in relation to resourcing, is compounded by the fact that the cost of management rarely falls on the shoulders of those who designed and built the project (Simmons *et al.*, 2006). In the public sector the development of a scheme may be financed by one department yet maintained by another. Similarly private developers rarely have a long-term interest once they have made profits selling their scheme; the costs associated with place-keeping are passed on to the occupier.

A significant issue with the focus on place-making is that the costs of maintenance of new or refurbished public spaces may only be made apparent once the scheme has been implemented. Despite the fact that project briefs call for 'low maintenance' design, anecdotal evidence from practitioners is that improvements to open space, which often involve new designs, can increase maintenance costs and have long-term management implications that may be difficult to resource. An example is the competition designs of open spaces, such as Parc André Citroën in Paris where few of the original water features, an integral part of the design requiring ongoing maintenance, are still operational (Figure 7.7).

Although competitions can generate innovative designs and become well-loved destinations, they may not be subject to the same local authority checks as home-grown projects (Carmona *et al.*, 2004a). Such successful projects can lead to increased and unforeseen management costs simply as a result of high levels of use, as is the case in Malmö, Sweden (see Box 7.1.). Such lack of foresight may be genuine or may be a result of funding regimes that reward place-making. This lack of focus on place-keeping may actually encourage recipients to take an over-optimistic approach to funding ongoing management. This points to a need for considering a long-term management strategy early on in the place-making process (Gallacher, 2005; Carmona *et al.*, 2004a). If the true costs of place-keeping such high-profile places were fully acknowledged early, would they have ever been built, or would they have been designed very differently?

Within the complexity of design and management processes may be embedded a requirement to consult with land managers, although this may take the form of merely 'signing-off' a design rather than deeper engagement that may negate or reduce maintenance and longer-term management problems. For example, park managers in Sheffield expressed a desire to be more involved earlier in the design process. They used the example of litter bins to highlight the lack of understanding they felt designers had regarding open space management. They felt that bins needed to be large and colourful to attract users' attention, rather than the small 'designer' bins specified. Whether their proposed bin 'style' would complement the designers' aesthetic aspirations for the scheme was questioned by the managers and these real or perceived 'disciplinary differences' is a point returned to later.

Figure 7.7 Parc André Citroën, Paris, France: the ambitious 'competition' design of this popular park relied heavily on water features, few of which are still working.

Box 7.1 Temalekplats, Malmö, Sweden

The Temalekplats are themed playgrounds, which were planned, designed and managed by the city of Malmö's Streets and Parks Department (SPD) (Figure 7.8). Malmö, referred to as the 'City of Parks', has a reputation for providing excellent parks and open spaces and the Temalekplats project aimed to replace many rundown playgrounds built in the 1960s and 1970s and to raise the importance of the environment for children in urban areas not simply by replacing existing equipment, but by developing a series of unique playgrounds built around themes that would appeal to them. These included fairy tales, water and an Africa Park with full-sized animals in a 'wild' shrub setting. Working with local children and residents to understand their needs and promote a positive response to the project was an important part of the design process.

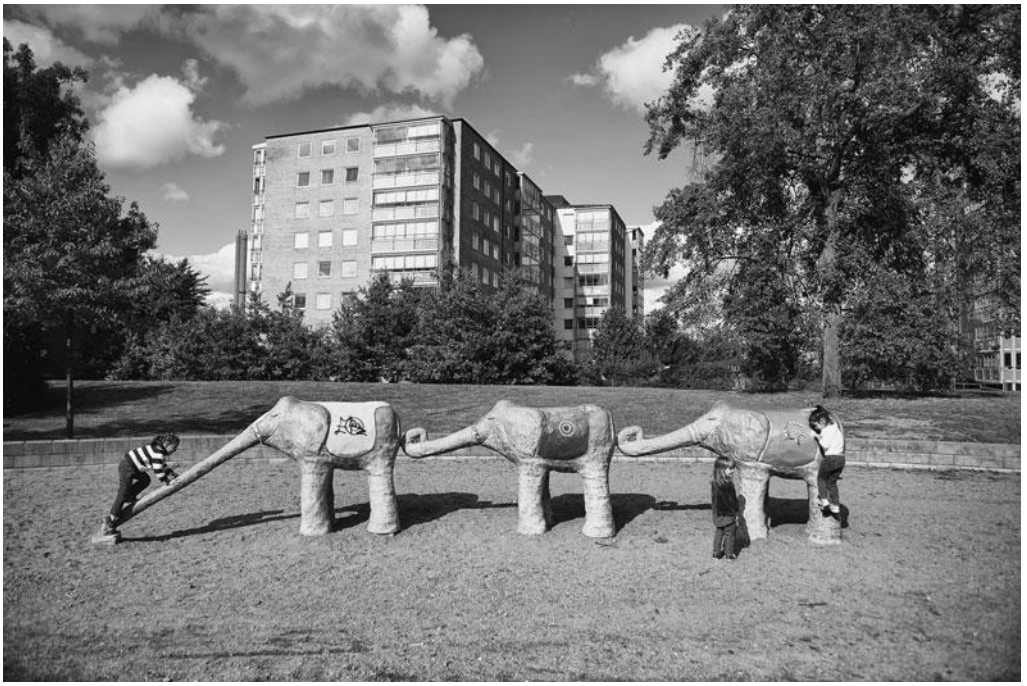

Figure 7.8 Temalekplats, Malmö, Sweden: themed playgrounds which have been very successful but which have underlined the absence of consideration of long-term management.

Photo courtesy of Liv Sonntag.

The resulting play areas have won several awards and have been very popular, with users travelling to different neighbourhoods to visit the different themed parks. The intensive use, however, means that they require considerable maintenance, with extra costs having to be sourced from within the existing management budget. When conceived, the long-term management of the play areas was not really considered and the high use means, despite having used high-quality materials, a ten-year life span is more likely than the 33 years they would normally expect. To retain the parks and meet users' high expectations, a large reinvestment programme is needed. Whilst the popularity of the parks has been a challenge, the playgrounds have generated a huge confidence in both public spaces and the SPD, and demonstrated the positive impact that high-quality places can have. This makes the case for further support and investment stronger.

The number of different actors involved in the place-making process can make it difficult to ensure that the aspirations for a place are carried through to the subsequent management of the site. The role of partnerships in bringing together these disparate bodies to undertake place-keeping has been discussed in depth in Chapter 5, and where such groups have been formed successfully this can help to reconnect design and management to ensure that the aspirations for a scheme are delivered over the long term. In Barger Compascuum, a village in the Netherlands, a 'Joint Management Group' performed this role (see Box 7.2)

An alternative approach is pulling together all responsibilities for green spaces under one organization, as in Minneapolis. Here the provision and management of urban green spaces is the sole responsibility of an independent elected board, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), a form of independent local government. Established by state legislation, it has powers to raise its own taxes and set its own laws. This single organisation, which owns and manages all key green spaces in the city, reduces the issues of fragmentation and a disjointed approach, enabling it to implement its own policies (Carmona *et al.*, 2004a).

Such intensive or large-scale approaches are not possible everywhere and for many local authorities more informal partnerships with open space user groups help to bridge the gap between users and deliverers and to ensure continuity between design and management. In Sheffield, the city council has developed a simple two to three-page management plan format, used in conjunction with a simple auditing tool, the 'Sheffield Standard', that sets minimum maintenance standards and highlights areas that require action. The plan and audit can be used with open space user groups to help develop jointly agreed management aims and actions for their local site, and by other organisations with open space responsibilities to assess their own sites. The advantage of such a simplified 'user friendly' approach that sits within a city-wide open space strategy, is that it can be used to facilitate dialogue around changes in management approach such as those resulting from budget cuts.

For many open spaces however, conflict between management objectives may be complex, requiring more than a simple two-page document. Such conflict means that compromises are required and issues are not necessarily resolved easily. Raising awareness among the public of the need for such management can help, but differences in professional standpoint can be more entrenched.

A negotiated and possibly independently facilitated approach to developing a management plan may be the answer. Such plans, which describe aims and priorities for the space, the actions needed to deliver these, and the roles and responsibilities of each individual or organisation, can form the basis for a more holistic approach to place-keeping and provide a strong focus for bringing together the many different organisations and interests that may need or wish to be involved. The ten-year management plan developed for the Water of Leith, Edinburgh (see Box 7.3; Figure 7.10), shows that it is possible to develop a coordinated approach. Management plans, rather than design-led 'masterplanning' for a site or area can help direct stakeholders' attention firmly on place-keeping, rather than place-making, which is often the preoccupation of many open space partnerships. A 'place-keeping plan' would (where relevant) include new development as part of the aspirations for the site, but the plan would focus directly on a new feature managed in the long term as an integral part of the whole site's development.

Box 7.2 Barger Compascuum, Emmen, the Netherlands

In Barger Compascuum, a small village near Emmen, the responsibilities for place-keeping are complex, yet coordinated. Involvement of local residents in the place-making stage has led to the establishment of a Joint Management Group, with representation from the local community, the municipality's maintenance department and an organisation that works with unemployed people. The Management Group identifies place-keeping priorities and allocates tasks and responsibilities to the relevant bodies and individuals (Province, Water Board, Unemployed Peoples' Organisation, landowners) with local residents given the first opportunity to undertake appropriate tasks. The group is gradually achieving improved coordination for place-keeping including a number of ad-hoc arrangements such as:

- individual businesses taking on place-keeping roles such as the upkeep of external space by shops, emptying waste bins and monitoring parking on shared space
- grass cutting previously conducted by individual landowners, including weeding/maintenance of canal-side path being handed over to residents.

Such inclusive, coordinated and shared place-keeping has been helped by the small size of the village where it is possible to identify interested individuals. It is a village with a long history of community involvement, and there is a strong sense of ownership which has been enhanced through the place-making and place-keeping processes (Figure 7.9).

Figure 7.9
Barger Compascuum, Emmen, the Netherlands: part of the place-keeping process involved improvements to the canal.

Box 7.3 Water of Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland

The Water of Leith Action Group (WLAG), established in 1980, brought together a host of private, public (including several sections from the city council) and third sector landowners and stakeholders, to discuss issues that affected the management of the river that runs through Edinburgh. Some of these organisations have statutory responsibility for aspects of the river's management whilst others, such as the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, are voluntary. A key action arising from the group was to develop a ten-year management plan that would cover all the major uses and interests in the walkway along the riverside. The aim of this was to facilitate delivery of a more cohesive approach to the river's management that would deliver environmental improvement that balanced the needs of stakeholders and user groups. The plan was prepared by a consultant and involved consultation with the public as well as with the key stakeholders. The plan sets out shared objectives and priorities, to give clarity to action and define roles, responsibilities and objectives against which performance can be measured. Key stakeholders agreed that this is to be a 'working document', recognising the need for it to respond to funding opportunities and changes in key organisations and legislation.

Figure 7.10 Water of Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland: river management requires a balance of the needs of different stakeholders.

Disciplinary differences and gaps – designers design and managers manage

To ensure effective place-keeping, designers should understand both the short- and long-term management implications of their designs. Managers should understand the designers' intent so that a newly made 'place' can be managed and maintained to deliver this. In practice the many different professions involved in design and management have different skillsets, professional standpoints and standards and may have little understanding of each other's work (CABE Space, 2009c). Overcoming this does not necessarily mean that professional boundaries should be merged, but being open to the input of others can help ensure that each has the skills and knowledge to perform their own role effectively and to encourage 'buy in' and a commitment to the place as a joint-development entity. Designers may have much to learn from managers in design development to understand the maintenance implications of their proposals. Such collaboration could lead to greater understanding between professions and the generation of new ideas and creative compromise. A possible negative outcome of this more integrated approach, and one described anecdotally, is that such collaboration can lead to more standardised designs, restricting the design to what standard management practices can maintain, for example mown grass rather than biodiverse meadows.

The prevailing cultural context of traditional horticulture can determine what the 'appropriate' type of management for an open space should be and may actually form a barrier to the introduction of new techniques (Figure 7.11). Using Firth Park as an example, this traditional, Green Flag Award-winning park features intensively managed areas such as bedding schemes and well-tended (striped) lawns. Diminishing local authority budgets have already prompted a review of some of the current practices to reduce resource input, such as replacing bedding with perennial planting and simplified, less frequent and intense mowing regimes. There is resistance to such approaches, seen as non-traditional; reasons for this reluctance to try new approaches include: not wanting to take risks in a high-profile site, concern over how park users will react, lack of information on the relative costs, and the lack of skills and equipment to undertake alternative approaches.

Features used in more 'sustainable' open space design such as sustainable drainage systems, green roofs and biodiverse planting may require non-traditional management and maintenance, sometimes borrowing techniques from more traditional rural practices, such as woodland coppicing or meadow management. Such skills, and the machinery required to implement them, may not be found within the local authority with its history of traditional urban open space managers. The development of such expertise (at least at first) may lie with other organisations, such as in those in the third sector, less constrained by standard practices, procedures and contracts and therefore able to experiment and innovate.

Skills for all?

The need for 'skilled intervention' is a key factor in the approach to management of green spaces. In their examination of planning and design around the world, Carmona *et al*. (2004a, p. 93) remark that 'departments staffed with marginalised, low-status staff were never found in the successful cities'.

Figure 7.11 Example of traditional park design and management regime.

However, the general lack of skills within the 'green space sector' has been highlighted as a key issue in the UK. A review of 54 local authorities in the UK revealed that 68 per cent identified that a skills shortage in key green space competencies was affecting service delivery (CABE Space, 2008). Low pay and status have been linked to this decline in the number of people entering these occupations, triggering a cycle of decline leading to poor-quality green spaces and low public expectation. The result is not just an unskilled sector but an unsustainable situation that relies on a few highly skilled workers, leaving it vulnerable when a key member of staff leaves (CABE Space, 2009c). Changes to the way the management of open spaces is carried out have contributed to this deskilling. The majority of open space management practices now being contracted-out has led to the dismantling of hierarchies within local authorities that were originally based on professional open space management knowledge and expertise (Lindholst 2008, 2009).

Investment in training is required not just for those involved in practical tasks, but also for those involved at a more strategic level, managing processes of design and management. Such investment has

been shown to contribute to more successful place-keeping. In Minneapolis (US), long-serving staff with highly detailed knowledge were able to deliver expert management required by the diversity of green spaces. Such organisations, however, are still vulnerable to losing key staff, an issue recognised in Minneapolis. Here the solution proposed was for the Parks Board to record, develop and systematise the knowledge of long-serving staff so that it is not lost when they retire or move on. The need for training and skills development to be successful 'place-keepers' is not the preserve of large (public sector) organisations. The success of Green Estate in Sheffield lies in the dedication of its long-serving staff and ongoing training that ensures a flexibility of approach in that they are able to respond to changes and develop new management techniques (Box 7.4).

Box 7.4 Green Estate, Sheffield, England

Green Estate Ltd is a social enterprise with a commercial arm. It is an unconventional land management company that carries out neighbourhood renewal and landscape management activities on mixed-tenure housing estates. The social arm focuses on the place-keeping of existing parks and open spaces and engages in 'place-making' when parks/green spaces are being developed. To reduce the reliance on grant funding (which was the basis for its establishment in 1998), Green Estate has a number of enterprises to generate income. These include landscape management, grounds maintenance, green waste recycling and composting, green roof installation and the Sheffield Manor Lodge Heritage Site. The organisation takes a dynamic and responsive approach to land management and incorporates community engagement, and their innovative techniques include Pictorial Meadows – where strips of annual flowers are sown within areas of amenity grass along footpaths and highways where the highest visual impact can be achieved (Figure 7.12 / Colour Plate 12). This

Figure 7.12
Example of non-traditional park design and management regime.

is a fairly modest intervention requiring low levels of maintenance, with social benefits including a reduction in anti-social behaviour such as fly-tipping, and potential economic benefits as it provides an attractive setting for housing developers.

Green Estate adds value to their contracted-out management practices, which are conducted by a highly skilled team of staff that includes landscape architects, landscape managers, qualified arboriculturalists and Royal Horticultural Society-qualified staff.

The widespread restricted skill and knowledge base of open space managers that can occur is compounded by the fact that, despite the obvious benefits, virtually no post-occupancy evaluation is carried out, so there is a genuine lack of knowledge about how designs work in practice and the implications for place-keeping. Such insight would enable designers, developers and others involved in the creation of open spaces to learn lessons for the future (after Gallacher, 2005). Another limiting factor to sharing and developing knowledge is the wide diversity of different professions involved in open space design and management. These are trained by different organisations, to different standards and attain a range of qualifications. Proposals to remedy this situation include raising awareness of the sector as a careers choice, skills auditing, coordination across the sector to describe and benchmark roles, as well as training and continuing professional development (CABE Space, 2009c).

Responsive place-keeping needs flexible contracts

The transition to 'new public management' (see Chapters 3 and 4), has seen open space management that was previously carried out 'in-house' by the local authority being 'contracted out', where private companies (or third sector or even the local authority's own in-house team) compete to undertake specified management. The procurement of management activity in this way is usually through competitive tendering, with the public sector contracts awarded based on price (the cheapest tender will win the contract) although other quality criteria such as those relating to social benefits may carry a weighting. The process of competitive tendering usually follows a widely accepted framework, the standard arrangement, which emphasises specification, pricing, monitoring and enforcement of service delivery (Lindholst, 2009).

Whilst competitive tendering has served to drive down management costs, the resulting tightly specified standardised actions, in place from the outset, can be seen to be at odds with the dynamic and responsive approach demanded by, particularly, green space management where unpredictable weather and usage can have significant maintenance implications. With competitive tendering, accuracy in the project specification and costs are crucial to ensure that such contracts are effective and this results in an *input*- or *output*-based approach focused on specific frequencies and retaining standards of particular activities such as grass cutting and tree pruning (CABE Space, 2006a). To achieve more flexibility, an *outcome*-driven approach is advocated that gives the contractors freedom to establish their own method, usually supported by a written method statement agreed with the client, of achieving the desired (and

described) results. This would allow a contractor to work more flexibly, and responsively and progressively, across seasons to deliver, for example, biodiversity benefits.

Examples of a more flexible approach can be seen in third sector organisations such as Green Estate and the Riverside Stewardship Company (RSC) in Sheffield (see Boxes 7.4 and 7.5). Although bound by the same rules as other private contractors in their relationship with a local authority, the central ethos of these social enterprises is to deliver *added value* in relation to social or environmental benefits through site management. This added social value also extends to employees with local people employed through training initiatives to raise skills and improve employment chances. Building strong partnerships with clients and other stakeholders is a key element of their approach. A review of ten UK and EU case studies shows that just getting the contract documentation right is not enough to achieve successful open space management. Effective communication, working with contractors to interpret what is needed and how, and providing training (on and off site) to help the contractor make appropriate judgements in interpreting the specification and react to day-to-day requirements are key factors to success (CABE Space, 2006a). Teamwork and partnership building, between the client, contractor and external expert organisations make up other factors. This is the approach taken by Green Estate and RSC where building a strong partnership with clients and other stakeholders is central to their way of working.

Box 7.5 The River Stewardship Company, Sheffield, England

The River Stewardship Company (RSC), based in Sheffield, is a not-for-profit social enterprise set up with the aim to protect and improve the waterside environment in Sheffield for users and wildlife. Despite improvements in river quality since the decline in heavy industries, riverside management responsibility was fragmented (Figure 7.13 / Colour Plate 13). The responsibilities

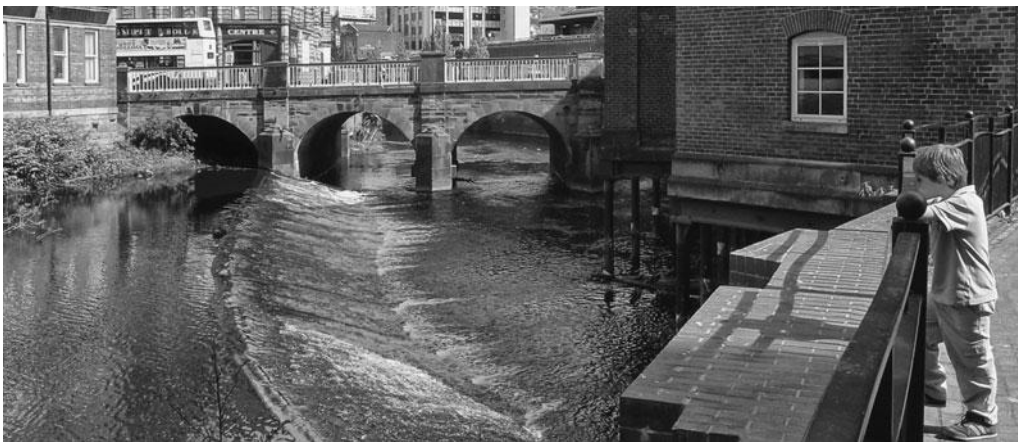

Figure 7.13 Urban rivers pose many challenges arising from multiple ownership, conflicting demands and management issues such as flooding and invasive species.

of the local authority as major landowner were split across many departments. The Environment Agency had statutory responsibility for flood protection and pollution, but not for river bank vegetation management or removing rubbish; this was the responsibility of the many riparian owners who rarely took action. The resulting problems of fly-tipping, unmanaged vegetation and vandalism drew regular public criticism. The solution was the formation, by key third sector and public stakeholders, of a river stewardship service set up as a not-for-profit company. The company delivers a land management service through contracts with landowners and liaises with the other agencies to facilitate a quick response to maintenance issues and raise standards. Initial funding came from a wide variety of sources (partner organisations, grants to support economic regeneration and community engagement) but the company requires ongoing contracts from landowners to remain financially viable. This process has been slow, but 'paid for' work is complemented by volunteer input which increases what they are able to achieve.

Achieving more with less – are volunteers the answer?

An increasingly common approach taken by local authorities (partly due to budget cuts) is to involve volunteers – also known as 'the community' – in site management and maintenance (see Chapter 6). Although not without its issues, not least the requirement for resources to support volunteers, volunteer input ranges from occasional volunteering work days to wholescale devolution of management responsibility. This approach relies not only on the willingness of volunteers to take responsibility for place-keeping but also on them having the right skills, expertise or equipment to undertake the work (Mathers *et al.*, 2011). Managing public space carries with it a host of risks and liabilities. National and local authority legislation and procedures, such as those to do with health and safety, may require risk assessments to be undertaken, or obtaining local authority licences to hold events. Groups may be unable or unwilling to take out insurance required to cover the inherent liabilities, or follow unfamiliar processes.

Equally the local authority may be unwilling to relinquish control over fears of reducing maintenance and management standards. In Barger Compascuum (see Box 7.2) concerns were raised that the maintenance provided by local people would not be *up to standard* and part of the role of the Joint Management Group is to provide a monitoring role to ensure it is. Developing the skills of volunteers is another way of providing them with the expertise they may need to manage their own spaces. The Master Gardeners programme in the US is one example that aims to develop expertise in volunteers in gardening and horticulture. Many of the world's third sector organisations that rely on volunteering, such as Conservation Volunteers in Australia, or the Wildlife Trusts UK, deliver land management skills training as part of their remit.

In devolving management responsibilities to volunteer groups, local authorities might be forced to 'let go' and the resulting changes in management may challenge their, and users', perceptions of what a park

is and what it should look like. An open space managed by a community may be very different from the traditional image of the highly managed and manicured British Victorian park that has been exported across the world. An example is Robin Hood Community Garden, a small open space in Hackney, London which demonstrates what community-developed and -managed open spaces might be like (Figure 7.14). Here the community group has taken a lead role in the evolutionary design and management of the site which forms a focus for community activities. The success of the site lies in its manageable size as well as the type of low-key 'design' and informal management approach taken – a manicured appearance is neither required nor desired. This approach may not be appropriate across all open spaces, but may be suitable for smaller areas within a park.

This example highlights the need to match volunteers' capacity and interests to the 'right' scale and scope of management and maintenance activity. The reluctance of the 'Friends of' group to engage in place-making and place-keeping activities at Sheaf Valley Park in Sheffield had much to do with the large scale of the development and it being seen as a city events space rather than a space for the local community. Smaller community-led projects within the large-scale site, such as a community-focused festival, has led to greater involvement, and this event was in fact far better attended than those run by external organisations. Equally, not all open space management requires an intensive or highly skilled

Figure 7.14 Robin Hood Community Garden, London. A community-led approach to design and management may look very different from a 'traditional' park.

input to have an impact. The Friends of Firth Park highlighted the importance of 'informal' volunteers. These are regular users, often dog-walkers, who are the 'eyes and ears' of the park, reporting on maintenance issues and forming part of the informal communication network, passing on information.

Places for all? Balancing multiple needs and wider contextual influences

As described earlier, open spaces are dynamic, they evolve over time and require robust design and responsive management which is subject to the changing political, social and economic context in which it occurs. A place-keeping approach, where sustainable design and management is implicit, aims to bring multiple benefits, balancing needs and aspirations of all, and indeed these aspirations are written into many design briefs and management plans. In practice, however, achieving this is subject to a host of external influences that can drive a particular design and management approach where compromise and conflict may be more common than delivering multiple benefits.

Safe and secure?

The drive to create 'safer places', both in response to everyday crime and safety fears and wider terrorism threats, is one example of a dominant issue that results in a particular design and management approach. There is no doubt that a place where users feel safe is central to developing well-loved places and we have seen already how design and maintenance can have an impact on perceived and actual crime. The drive for safety, however, may have potentially negative implications for aims to achieve inclusive places and holistic place-keeping. In the US and UK at least, many of the Business Improvement District (BID) and Town Centre Management models of public space management aim to create safer environments for residents and shoppers. In UK town centres this security-focused approach has involved widespread installation of CCTV cameras (Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Minton, 2009). In New York, since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, over a quarter of the space between buildings is now designated as *security zones* where pedestrian movement is effectively blocked off (Németh and Hollander, 2010). In such privately managed public space, other management practices can mean that 'undesirables' such as vagrants, street drinkers and in some cases, buskers and skateboarders, are excluded from such spaces (Carmona *et al.*, 2010; Kohn, 2004; Figure 7.15 / Colour Plate 14).

Although safety may be improved in these areas, and there are real economic costs associated with crime and fear of crime that can result in businesses moving out of areas (Home Office, 2003), there is an associated impact on the design and management. Places are increasingly designed to be low-maintenance, welcoming (to a point) with clearly designated public routes that can be easily monitored by surveillance equipment – which often avoids new tree planting which can block lines of sight. (It should be noted that not all BIDs adopt CCTV and other security-driven measures: for example, in Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands, CCTV is not nearly as widespread as in the UK (Gras, 2004).) Such place-keeping activities (conducted in a very particular context) may make place-keeping more efficient but may not bring the full social and environmental benefits possible. A growing body of literature argues that the regeneration of public spaces for urban renewal and economic growth is creating

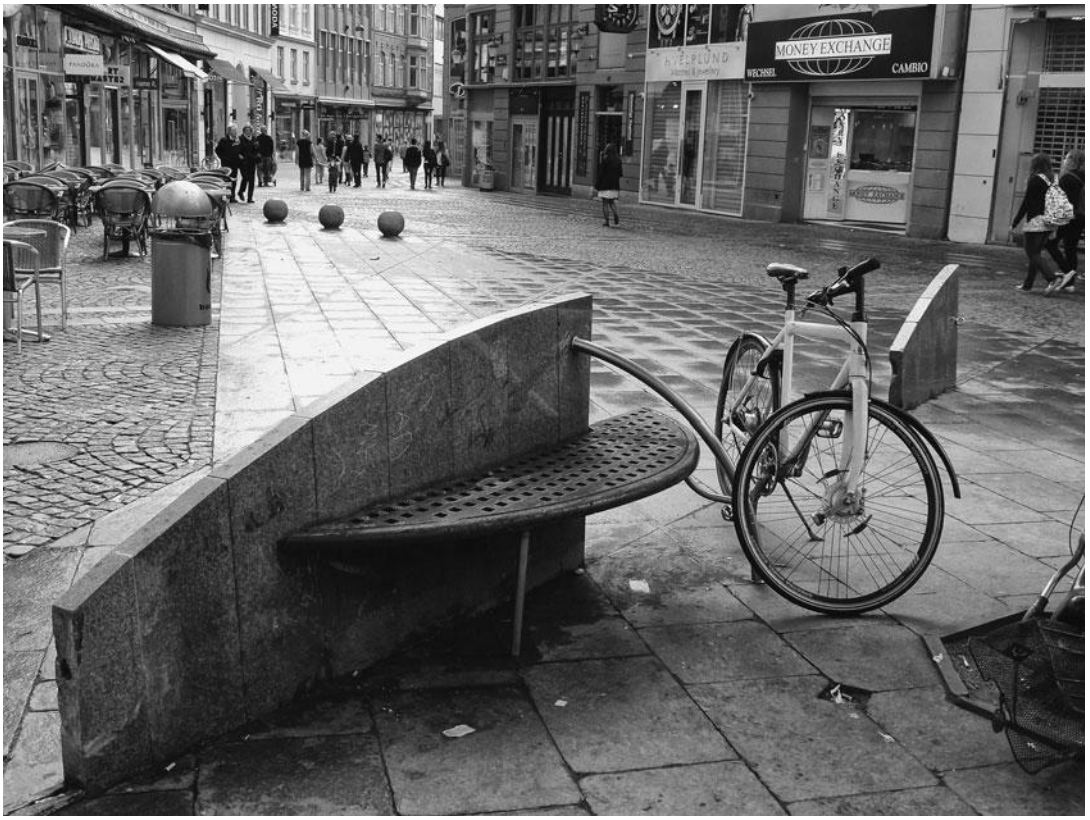

Figure 7.15 'High-quality', features, while popular and maintained to a high standard, can discourage certain users from lingering in public spaces.

commodified spaces and sterile environments that are no longer places for 'social gathering' (Bannister *et al.*, 2006) and that high-level security measures have simply heightened ongoing security and safety fears (Mitchell, 2003).

Changing climate

Of increasing concern to designers and managers is the changing climate and unpredictable climatic events such as flooding and drought. This is likely to have profound implications for place-keeping in the way in which we design and manage public spaces, and may affect not only what is planted but the actual use of the open space. For example, open spaces have a role to play in climate change mitigation and adaptation, doubling as flood storage areas and providing shade and cooling effects (Davies *et al.*, 2006; CABE Space, 2005; Figure 7.16) but although guidance is available for designers and managers, there is little evidence of widespread translation into practice. In some locations, such as in parts of Australia,

Figure 7.16
In the very hot climate of Seville, Spain, the 1982 Expo had very good examples of walkways and promenades shaded by structures with hanging plants.

adverse weather is already forcing change. In Melbourne, where green spaces are an integral part of the city's character, drought and imposed restrictions on water usage have forced a review of current practice. The City Council has to reduce water consumption by 50 per cent which has meant that, as well as introducing water-saving techniques, land managers have had to prioritise where scarce water resources are used to safeguard its green image. This has seen trees, such as 100-year-old elms that are an important symbol of Melbourne's character, prioritised over lawns, which are replaceable. The restrictions have also precipitated a shift towards drought-resilient planting including the use of native Australian plants rather than water-hungry exotics (Penning-Rowsell, 2007).

Decreasing budgets and economic pressures force choices

Whilst it is possible that the role of open spaces in mitigating against the changing climate might help to raise their status, this is set against a trend towards decreasing resources for open spaces. As discussed in Chapter 6, funding for place-keeping has long been inadequate and is being further eroded as priorities for more limited budgets, particularly of the local authority, lie elsewhere. Added to this is the legacy of the place-making boom time from the mid-1990s to early 2000s that saw a proliferation of new and improved places funded from a variety of public and private sources. International, high-profile place-making programmes such as Garden Festivals, Expos and Olympic Parks may catalyse short-term place development, but their long-term sustainability is questionable. How designed features are to be maintained or, in the longer term, replaced is not fully considered. Evidence can be found across international urban areas, like Barcelona where Olympic place-making left a lot of open spaces and other facilities in the city. However, without accompanying management, purpose-built swimming pools and once-green parks became abandoned and degraded and substantial renewed investment by Barcelona's local government has been required to regenerate them.

When budgets are limited, the need to ensure that maximum value is obtained from each and every open space becomes increasingly more important, but where budgets are squeezed, choices have to be made. This may lead to innovation or to impoverished places with limited facilities, built with poor-quality

construction materials that could cost more to maintain, and increased competition as users vie for resources. In Oostkamp near Bruges, budget cuts led to the removal of benches from the design proposals for a new open space despite being considered important elements to facilitate new use. Without such simple facilities, the wider social benefits gained from the place may be greatly reduced, although the sports facilities which were to serve the needs of local young people were retained. In Oostskamp the decisions were as dependent on who was involved in the process, whose voices were heard, as on the size of the budget and space limitations (aspects covered more fully in Chapter 4).

Managing potential conflicts

Such omissions can reduce the benefits a place can bring; more directly, poorly considered design or management can bring users into conflict, or isolate user groups and have longer-lasting impact. For example, in Firth Park the location of a basketball court in an isolated and unattractive area of the park, now the site of a rejuvenated Ripples Project, meant that it was rarely used. Not only was it of poor quality but the fact that it was cut off from the rest of the park was an issue: young people reported feeling vulnerable when using the facility in such an isolated location. The new basketball court is located in the heart of the park, near to the café and other recreational facilities. It is now well-used and the place-keeping approach taken in the park strives to cater for all park users equally. However, the process of agreeing these changes was not easy. The relocation of the basketball court next to the bowling green was hotly contested by the bowlers, who foresaw problems arising from what they saw as a conflicting use (or type of user). Issues of potential conflict do need to be addressed, as conflict (real or imagined) of use between different open space users, for example between dog owners and young families, or cyclists and pedestrians, can affect whether they use a space (Shoreditch Trust and OISD, 2009). Wider demographic and cultural forces contribute to changes in the way open space is used, and these new uses may not be acceptable to all. De Magalhães and Carmona (2009, p. 117) cite the example of an emerging 'young, alcohol-based sub-culture providing the mainstay of the evening economy' in the UK, which has brought about conflict with, for example, night-time and day-time users or different age groups (Roberts and Eldridge, 2007).

People versus biodiversity

Multifunctional places are not just about delivering benefits for people. Along with their importance in climate mitigation, their importance in sustaining biodiversity is increasingly recognised. At a time when biodiversity in rural areas is decreasing, largely due to intensified agricultural techniques, many urban green spaces provide a haven for wildlife no longer common in the countryside. Evaluation frameworks such as 'ecosystems services' have raised awareness of the multiple benefits that natural systems bring. Design and management approaches such as ecological design focus on re-establishing natural systems, balancing the needs of people and wildlife and, as less intensive management approaches, they can help to lower costs. Vegetation is selected primarily for its biodiversity value but concerns are often voiced that this naturalistic appearance (e.g. long grass, meadows and complex woodland) will be perceived by the public as messy and be associated with perceptions of fear (Jorgensen *et al.*, 2002). Research has shown that the negative association between perceptions of safety and urban woodlands can be mitigated through careful design and management (Jorgensen *et al.*, 2002) enabling a *win–win* situation for people

and wildlife. For such 'natural' areas to be acceptable, attention must be paid to ensure that it looks *cared for*. The term *cues to care* was introduced by Nassauer (1995) to describe practices which signal to users that a place is maintained and cared for, such as the much-employed technique of mowing the edges around areas of long, unmanaged grass, or signage to explain management intentions and raise awareness of biodiversity.

Rivers in urban areas illustrate the range of issues inherent when multiple benefits are sought. Urban rivers serve the needs of many different user groups and their management falls within the scope of many different policies focused on these different uses, such as recreation, flooding and biodiversity. This can lead to conflicting design and management objectives. This was clearly demonstrated following severe flooding in Sheffield in 2007 when a decision was taken by the UK's Environment Agency, responsible for river management, to undertake river channel clearance. This work, although deemed necessary to reduce blockages to water flow and thus contribute to flood risk management policies, appeared contrary to the aims of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan due to the detrimental impact on fish passes, disturbance of heavy metal industrial waste on the riverbed and removal of vegetation that it would entail. The widespread removal of trees caused great public concern despite the devastation caused when the river flooded. A management plan approach, as for the Water of Leith, may be the way forward, but reaching compromise takes time and resources, both of which we have seen can be in short supply, and dominant issues, such as the immediacy of having to deal with issues such as flooding, can over-ride a more negotiated approach, at least in the short term.

Reflections

Appropriate and flexible design and management are central to place-keeping, but not easy to deliver. As processes they are at the mercy of external forces that may have little to do with the space itself. This is epitomised by decreasing state responsibility and increasingly widespread governance that has complicated already fragmented responsibilities and increased the number of organisations that expect, or are expected, to contribute views or resources. Changes in the economic and political context may reduce budgets and may change priorities for open space delivery, who is involved and how delivery happens in practice. Where budgets are squeezed, choices have to be made. This may lead to innovation in design and management or it may lead to impoverished places with limited facilities, built with poor-quality construction materials that could be more costly to maintain. Differences in perceptions of what are acceptable standards of practice in open space design and management exist between professionals and users alike. What is achievable may be limited by lack of skills and inflexible processes which cannot respond to the multi-functional design and responsive approach to management increasingly required in open spaces.

It does not have to be like this. Change requires not only an understanding of the impact of these wider forces, but a broadening of our understanding and acceptance of what open spaces are for, the multiple benefits they can deliver, and a willingness of those involved to work together to deliver this. This involves compromise, preparedness to learn from others and a loosening of rigid structures to facilitate innovation and a more joined-up approach. A change in focus is needed: from design for place-making as the solution for better open spaces, to a collaborative development of 'place-keeping' plans that embrace place-making as part of the overall process.