

EUROPEAN GARDEN HERITAGE NETWORK



INNOVATIVE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH GARDENS (TATTON PARK, 22 JULY 2004)

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the meeting was to demonstrate show the importance and value of historic gardens and parks to regional and sub-regional regeneration, tourism and heritage strategies.

The meeting was attended by a variety of planners, economists, regeneration officers, tourism officers, RDA staff, from NW local authorities and also Surrey County Council, Somerset County Council, and representatives from the North Rhine Westphalia area of Germany.

German examples

HANS-DIETER COLLINET: Head of Department, Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Town Planning, Culture and Sport; North Rhine-Westphalia.

REGIONALE 2000-2010

CONTEXT How do you capture the regional distinctiveness of a region and how do we open up the use of the environment with its cultural draw as a unique selling point to create the regional identity.

PROJECT REVIEW:

- The Regionale project in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) project 'spaces of culture and landscape' was an initiative set up to use the heritage, landscape and built environment of the region to create a 'regional profile' with a focus on sustainable development based around a series of events and initiatives. The state invites areas to join together and bid.
- The project was based on regeneration of rundown areas, and the rediscovery of the regions – making use of the existing urban/industrial landscape.
- All the individual schemes undertaken in the project built on the existing regional identity (indigenous potential). Each project aims to include themes which capture innovation, measures which capture specific talents of the area and which emphasises good cultural and tourism strengths.
- The project involved the creation of new gardens, not just relying on existing landscape resources.

- Gardens were used as places for people's personal enjoyment as well as for education, with education potential being placed very high, and to sharpen the region's profile and image.

Emerging projects include Regionale 2008 which builds regional connections crossing borders through culture as a unifying medium. This will consider whether the cultural aspects of a region trigger economic development, increase the identity of the region by residents and create sustainable benefits for regions. The project will build on the indigenous potential of region using such things as the quality of landscape and architecture.

Additional information can be found in the case study on the REGIONALE 2000-2010 which is part of the work on the "Spatial Strategy" within the EGHN and is available as download from www.eghn.org

Lessons learnt:

- view the gardens as economic stimuli not just isolated gardens and this should be integrated into the design of projects, along with cultural development and industrial heritage
- Review what you consider to be the main economic draws to a region
- Appraise what types of activity will increase investment to a region
- Develop the promotion of gardens to a wide audience.
- Challenge your concepts of what might be a traditional garden/green space that improved the environmental quality of a region.
- Expand the use of gardens.
- Instigate investment programmes to help raise the potential of the area.
- use only a few themes in order to foster a clear identity of the region. clearly define the region or area.
- be creative, have a project vision.
- Even if there is not a lot of money to be spent this project the benefits of improving joint working can be substantial.

MICHAEL SCHWARZE-RODRIAN – EMSCHER LANDSCHAFTSPARK 2010

CONTEXT What economic return is there to be derived from investing in environmental quality, industrial heritage and local distinctiveness?

PROJECT REVIEW:

The Emscher Landchaftspark is based on the industrial heritage of the area – but not static preservation, instead using and building on this as a base to look forward to future change to create a unique selling point for a region. Three words that would have characterised the region were: coal, steel and pollution. Area currently suffers from high unemployment and out migration, and therefore experiencing continual structural change.

The Challenge was to develop integrated and sustainable solutions for industrial urban landscape, these sites are often in the urban centres and this has advantages as they are already well connected to transport, and accessible to a large number of people. The challenge presented is not one of simply clearing the land and starting again, something more visionary is needed that maintains the industrial heritage as an historical feature of value, challenging traditional views on local assets to create integrated and sustainable solutions to areas generally considered to be worthless.

New strategic approach: looking for new solutions they held a competition for various to compete for funding, this meant that they could choose the best and highest quality from a range of proposals.

Step 1: International Building Exhibition Emscher Park 1989-1999 -IBA-

Looked for potential in existing buildings/structures (i.e. not simply clearing everything away and starting again).

One major focus was Zollverein coalmine industrial complex in Essen a World Heritage Site (since 2001), which with lighting and various landscape measures was converted into a park. Indoor space is also used as a museum and other cultural activities and place for special events and festivals. The park is mainly the space between the built up area with a total of 320 km², and one of the major ways that it was combined into a park was with networks of paths.

THE PROJECT WAS BASED ON A NUMBER OF KEY PRINCIPLES

Integrate: the park landscape was used as the setting for business parks, and regeneration included harbour side areas that were transformed as part of the project.

Design: the park not only concentrated on large high profile projects but also small local projects, the majority of work related directly to the area's industrial past and the enhancement of these areas/buildings.

Connect: bike paths (with bike rental at each end allowing one way trips), maps, and information points. The path network required new bridges and many of these were put out to open competition, which resulted in many innovatively designed bridges, which are landmarks in themselves, and became part of the regions unique selling point.

Creates emotion: connection of people and their landscape/heritage, spaces for people and art. All the major features have a daytime and night time character with the use of lighting. However an exhibition of temporary art in agricultural land was not too popular with local taxpayers who viewed it as an inefficient use of money (once a private backer was found for the project it was more popular).

Set signs: These were unique selling points that gave the park a recognisable identity; this included the large viewing tower/sculpture 'Tetrahedron', with views of the industrial region from the top. This type of project clearly draws from and relates to the industrial character of the region – lights on the tower also provided night time identity as a beacon on the hilltop. Other projects included the 'Gas-o-meter' a converted gasholder used as a space for events and meetings, again uses lighting to full effect for night time character.

Nature: into many of these projects a biodiversity and nature conservation element was built in, e.g. an old colliery left to be re-colonised by nature, provided a research tool for local universities.

Step 2: Emscher Landscape Park 2002 - 2010 (and beyond)

It was always clear that the IBA would need a follow-up project to maintain the new quality sites and landscapes and to create and implement new projects.

During the last two years this initiative was started and a Master plan was produced looking forward into where the regional park would go in the future, considered all aspects e.g. economy, ecology etc.

The comprehensive Master Plan 2010 for the Emscher River Landscape Park is a result of a two-year contracting procedure. The results were compiled and distributed to the 17 cities participating in the project, as well as numerous regional bodies involved. The master plan encompasses issues beyond those of landscape and architecture. The main themes of the plan are: the new Emscher river valley, regional political opinions, park ecology, infrastructure and culture, use of the urban landscape and forests, and quality and maintenance of the park. All sponsors of the park share in its development, and maintenance concepts will guarantee quality control of privately owned park space. Setting parameters for the new river valley and waterfront redevelopment will be a key regional theme in the next few years.

The main project in the entire scheme for the Emscher Landscape Park is the Emscher River Valley Project: the development of the river valley. Over the next 10 years an underground drainage system will be constructed, which aims to separate wastewater from the river. After wastewater is totally eliminated, surface water development of the entire river will begin and completion is expected by 2020. Planners are concentrating on water as the valley's key element. Currently there are 17 stages in the master plan for the park. The valley presents the opportunity for the region to experiment with concepts for living and working along the water and parks.

Lessons Learnt:

- Consider which promotional mechanisms would attract the stakeholder to a region.
- Develop and address assets and aspects within the region which investors like/not like.
- Promote an image would attract your stakeholder to a region i.e. use the quality of the environment as a factor for the business community to invest in an area.
- Take into account the kinds of services/facilities will the stakeholder want to see in the region to serve and accompany the garden offer?
- Allow for the external environment which will impact on stakeholder investment in the region.

MARTIN REYNOLDS: NWDA – Investing in environmental assets

CONTEXT: How can you use the industrial landscape to bring inward investment into the region, and improve the socio-economy and quality of life of local community?

PROJECT REVIEW

- In order to prioritise resources a method was used to identify those areas most in need of environmental enhancement. Priority areas were identified through using the DUN (derelict, underused or neglected) landscape survey and identifying where these areas corresponded with areas that are ranked highly on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. These identified areas were then assessed using local priorities set by sub-regional partnerships to pinpoint those that would be suitable for the project.
- Very pragmatic approach in identifying areas where landscape restoration and environmental improvement would help attracts business investment.

- The DUN landscape survey was based on National Landuse Database, backed up by information from aerial photographs, GIS, and verified through 'ground truthing'. Areas are available as a GIS layer.
- The identified sites were often characterised by industrial landscape, e.g. oil refineries, but the NWDA want to attract new business investment that may be put off by this landscape.
- The Newlands project (NWDA and Forestry Commission) was one way in which some of the land was going to be regenerated, using tree planting for area enhancement on areas of derelict Brownfield land. Aim is 'to contribute to economic prosperity and a better quality of life'.
- One area that was identified where this would be suitable was at Ellesmere Port, an area with much dereliction. Proposals to introduce woodland to the area, in areas targeted for economic investment. This would create a setting for new businesses, screening out the older heavy industry areas.
- These projects are fit very well with the objectives of the Regional Economic Strategy, and are based on strong evidence gathering and justification that money spent would bring about the maximum benefits.
- Strong strategic fit with:
 - Regional Economic Strategy.
 - Rural Renaissance: The Regional Rural Recovery Plan.
 - Tourism Vision for England's Northwest.
 - A New Vision for Northwest Coastal Resorts.
 - Sub-Regional and Local development strategies.
 - EU Structural Fund Programmes in the North West.
 - North West Action for Sustainability.
 - Regional & Local Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

It was noted that there is a challenge to balance whether the overall aim should be to screen the existing industrial landscape, or adopt the German example and embrace and enhance what is already there.

LOUISE HOPKINS – Mersey Waterfront Regional Park

CONTEXT: How do existing assets in one particular area have a regional connection and what is their role in region economic prosperity

PROJECT REVIEW

- The Park stretches along 120km of Mersey waterfront, and has been running about 12 months, although they have managed to achieve quite a lot quite fast, the main goals and achievements will be long term (10 years+).
- Characterised by a high level of community involvement, local residents feel strongly about their area 'improving opportunity and lifestyle'.
- Challenges are to transform, energise and connect up the various part of the waterfront as the area is characterised by several boundaries including 4 Local Authority boundaries, which have huge potential but are not connected.
- Advantages to the project are that the area already has a unique sense of place, and already most people have strong images relating to the area, along with a wide variety of natural assets
- The project includes many and varied features e.g. lighting scheme along the whole waterfront in order to unify it (beacons); aiming for landscape accreditation in parts of Halton 'green flag' award; trying to improve Wirral areas, such as the Woodside area of Birkenhead with its views of Liverpool's Three Graces and pier head.

- Really trying to think strategically – and staying closely aligned with the sub-regional agenda. They have links with other key projects for the area including the Capital of Culture success and River Festival of light. Support is given to the tourism cluster developments, and sustainable communities programme.

DR. THOMAS KELLEIN – Gartenlandschaft OWL

PROJECT REVIEW

- This project was part of the first REGIONALE in 2000 in NRW (see above), and involved putting art (performance and sculpture) into garden settings in the eastern part of the region. The project was quite successful and presented internationally renowned artists – although only had limited funding
- One of the primary benefits was getting people to visit gardens that they may otherwise not have seen, for example many of the gardens were privately owned. Also media coverage was very good
- In addition new target groups were addressed and came to visit the gardens: those who have a primary interest in modern arts
- The success of the first year allowed to repeat the festival every summer (2004 fifth year), with new objects and works of art in a number of gardens - some hosting the event for the first time, others acting as a kind of permanent location
- In parallel there was and is a festival of literature with lectures and performances in gardens, castles and other unusual locations
- There also is an additional investment program in the area to restore and enhance historic parks and gardens
- Ideally would like to see become more permanent e.g. Internet site, signs off major roads.

MIKE COOKSLEY – Cheshire and Warrington Tourist Board

Context: How can we stretch the use of gardens to bring stakeholders away from main stream tourism/honey pot tourism destinations into gardens to capture the cultural draw of an area

- Raised the point that the gardens needed branding for uniqueness.
- Various organisations/authorities working together for a better product is essential e.g. different gardens working together and with other attractions in order to increase the length of visitor stay, this method will help make their value greater than the sum of the parts.
- Cross-marketing is needed between different goods and services relating to the gardens e.g. plants, gardening tools, food, in garden events
- Gardens help improve quality of life and people's 'Pride of Place' for living and working, helping to draw in investment to the area.

ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED

- Build on the inherent 'draw' of the area to encourage stakeholders to visit/invest in that region
- How do we build the image of an area
- Consider what does your target audience want from an area
- How do we promote the gardens to address the various target groups

- What are the barriers and constraints to promoting the use of environmental assets
- Think about ways in which the industrial regions could be improved to dispel the notion of 'blight' that currently exists.
- How can you bring the stakeholder away from honey pot tourism into the less well known sites
- How can you capture the cultural draw of the region

OPEN DISCUSSION

- Regionale project was heavily covered by regional and national media and this helped raised its profile, and benefited the whole project, with the majority of coverage being very supportive.
- Vital to start the process with a real vision and go for it, it should not start with the funding and practicalities and this may limit initial thinking. If there is a real passion from the outset then a way may be found to carry it through.
- Funding

The German project was organised outside the existing funding structures, this meant they could set their own rules for funding awards, and where necessary make exceptions to rules so the process was accommodating and flexible and supportive of ideas.

The UK experience is different and often it is found that funding can be restrictive and projects can be constrained by existing funding methods, and the need for projects to have to be structured in such a way that tangible outcomes and benefits must be measured and proven in order to justify funding. This type of method sometimes does not lead to the best and most innovate results.

- There may always be the problem implementing large scale projects that are expected to have the majority of their benefits in the long-term, as the political process may always make short-term gains more attractive.
- Schemes under the EGHN should look not only at existing garden resources, but also at the creation of new gardens. Regeneration of landscapes – creation of new parks and gardens and putting heritage features into a landscape context was essential.
- The issue of whether it is better to invest heavily in the worst for a small-scale return, or make a smaller investment in the best for a higher return was also raised.

SUMMARY

It was clear from the meeting that Historic Parks and Gardens and new created parks/gardens and “new heritage” landscapes can add a great deal to the quality of life in a region and sub-region. The EGHN project has an opportunity to build on these ideas and push them forward with regeneration partners at a variety of levels. Good parks and gardens with quality features/installations/events/arts/improved visitor attractions etc will add significantly to regional and sub-regional strategies and agendas. Partnership working with RDA's is essential link to secure the success of the project in local and regional contexts. Contact with local/regional and national politicians were also essential if the real potential of these sites were to be unlocked for the future.

Gardens are open and available to everyone and they have great potential to offer for enjoyment, contemplation and learning. This offer can be direct, at the garden or indirect, by association. Therefore the improvement of the image of an area. The challenge is to target investment in order to effectively release their internet potential.

These conference proceedings have benefited from notes prepared by Cicely Postan from Baker Associates and Bob Croft Somerset County Council, together with supplements on the presentations from Northrhine Westphalia made by Christian Gruessen of Plan+

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