
Growth, Planning and the Environment event – Summary of themes

Planning our green infrastructure:

These notes are a summary of the events of the Newquay workshop on the 9th of November held for Cornwall Councillors and attended by our project partners from the Netherlands and Austria. We asked members to discuss what they thought is good and bad about the way green spaces (taken here to extend beyond traditional public open spaces) are currently planned, provided and managed and challenged them to suggest ways of improving what we do. There were a number of common themes that emerged during the day and this note provides a summary of the main challenges and opportunities. These notes should be read alongside the larger summary of the day.



How are we doing with our current green spaces?

A low average score was given to our current provision, with a lack of maintenance and poor connectivity given as key concerns. There was a clear sense of 'could do better' in the current approach with comments that new spaces can be small, ill-thought out and developed without proper consultation with the local community. Providing space for children to play is important but

green spaces should be for all and there needs to be a renewed focus on delivering space that works for all generations.

Participants highlighted that the way in which green space is conceived and provided (including long term maintenance) needs to be reconsidered. Providing larger, higher quality, multifunctional and inter-generational spaces that can be easily reached on foot or bike and that encourage social interaction was seen as a priority for future developments.

Comments on the current situation:

Common comments made on current green space (which is taken to mean green infrastructure, including open spaces) include:

- The current focus is predominantly on provision for younger children – with very little for older children / teenagers and adults. Green spaces often seem to be an afterthought rather than a well-planned and intrinsic feature of development – there seems generally to be very little vision in planning these new green spaces.
- Maintenance – a lack of funding has had a big impact on green spaces. Use of volunteers is great but cannot wholly replace a funded maintenance programme – current management of spaces is inconsistent. A new way of looking after spaces is needed to ensure that green spaces are well utilised.
- Spaces are often too small to be effectively used for recreational activities. There seems to be generally little local input into the planning of new green space. Decisions about green space provision should have strong local involvement.

Suggestions for improvement – we asked participants what we should do in the future.

Participants said we should ensure that:

- Green infrastructure is provided first as part of a masterplanned approach – planting trees as early as possible, respect habitats and adaptable to climate change;
- Green spaces are provided by developers, but not developer led. They should be more than the spaces left at the end of development;
- Destination green spaces (park-sized) are created, large multi-purpose areas that attract people from outside the immediate locality and the importance of ensuring green linkages to and from these. Understanding and delivering space that meets the needs of different parts of the community is also important.
- Green space is better integrated/connected into communities and designed to be used by all ages as living space. They should be accessible and usable for movement (e.g. provide linkages to places) and act as a destination with defined activity and functions. Stimulating with activities, sensory trails,

walking/ jogging routes and wild play for creative play, e.g. logs and trees. Public spaces should avoid fumes and noise and steep land;

- Spaces are designed at local level in partnership with communities, using some leadership and expertise. We need to listen to all voices within the community and engage teenagers to understand what they want;
- Green spaces are seen as an asset rather than a liability and placed in community ownership. There should be a move away from small, poorly used space and towards better, larger spaces with connecting routes;
- Quality spaces are created rather than simply formal spaces – a natural space could offer the same benefits. Include ponds, streams etc to aid drainage and provide interest and attract wildlife. Allow space for events, provide seating and ensure that much of the space is disability friendly.
- We should be open to innovation and technological advances in seeking to deliver high quality space. Explore ways of generating revenue to help meet maintenance costs.

Next steps:

Thank you to all participants in the event on the 9th and for their helpful feedback.

Comments made during the day will help develop the PERFECT project and inform work being undertaken as part of the project on how we plan, provide and maintain green infrastructure and green spaces into the future. Learning from our partners as well as working with officers to explore working practices and opportunities to create the best networks of space possible.

We will keep you informed and place notes and presentations from the day and the on-going projects on our web area: www.cornwall.gov.uk/perfect

You can also contact the Project Lead, Robert Lacey on rlacey@cornwall.gov.uk

