

6.0 MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Maintenance

The maintenance of space can sometimes be neglected which leads to the degradation of public spaces. This can be due to insufficient funds, or a lack of clear leadership and a sense of ownership of spaces and streets. As a general rule, projects should not be embarked upon unless adequate revenue provision has been made for their subsequent management and maintenance.

The vision for maintenance of Ashford's public realm shall take the management of the public realm to the next detailed level. It should indicate predicted sources of finance, the means by which they will be secured, and the agencies responsible for delivering elements of the strategy.

The maintenance of the public realm can be broken down into two areas: the repairs of all items in the streetscape palette and the cleaning of the public realm. The repairs include the reinstatement and patching of paving materials, repairs to street furniture including bollards to bus shelters, and landscape maintenance including trees, planters, and sculpture.

Repairs

Competent professionals, to the level of the original standard, should restore the reinstatement of surfaces within the public realm. Surfaces should be quickly and effectively restored to the original standard as soon as the necessary works have been carried out. The repairs to road and pavement surfaces should be done with prescribed materials and to the original specification standard. A stockpile of up to 10% of the total quantity of paving materials not readily available should be set aside for routine maintenance.

Prior to the implementation of high quality public realm schemes in Ashford, a skills audit should be undertaken to evaluate if additional training is required for the current maintenance team. If possible, input should be sought from the designers of the proposed scheme for advice and quality control. This will ensure that the skills are available to successfully reinstate the materials following required street works. Continued design involvement should also be encouraged. Where possible, the original designer or designers of public realm schemes should be retained to provide a watchful eye for the project. This service helps to monitor the development of the project and avoid uncoordinated additions.

In line with the work on this strategy, Alan Baxter and Associates have also been investigating the whole life costs associated with creating and maintaining high quality public realm schemes. This report looks at the methods and costs associated with high quality public realm schemes across the UK, as compared with the current regime in Ashford.

It also evaluates the benefit and costs associated

with the use of a variety of materials. Relevant to this section of the public realm strategy are the findings associated with the cost of maintenance and the comparison of materials. We found that the maintenance cost does increase based on the intensity of use of a space as well as the cost of materials themselves. However, the choice of materials is extremely important as durability and longevity, not to mention aesthetic qualities, are matched by the initial cost of the installation. In summary, although the initial cost of a high quality scheme may be higher, the durability and longevity will offset the increased cost of material replacements. In fact, high-quality materials such as natural stone can weather accommodate nicks and scratches without requiring reinstatement where other man made materials such as concrete may need to be replaced.



Reinstatement of surfaces

Cleaning

The cleaning regime for public realm schemes varies due to the intensity of use, local climate, and quality and robustness of materials. Cleaning can include the use of mechanical and manual street sweepers, manual litter collection, chewing gum and graffiti removal, and the emptying of litterbins.

Of these items, one issue that surfaced in our work for the whole life cost study is the removal of chewing gum and graffiti. Chewing gum can be removed using high-pressure mechanical cleaners, but not all materials can withstand this pressure. This highlights the importance of addressing maintenance and cleaning issues as early as possible in the design process as it may become an expensive issue at a later stage. For example, a public realm improvement scheme in Buchanan Street in Glasgow uses paving that is bedded and pointed with a cement mortar/grout, which prevents the use of high-pressure gum removal and washing systems. A low pressure/high temperature system has been designed for the scheme, which is a successful solution. Graffiti use is dependent on the local environment and can sometimes present a challenge and additional cost for the cleaning regime of public spaces.

Important to the cleaning regime of any scheme is the consideration of such factors prior to street furniture and paving selection. The maintenance and cleaning, along with the projected level of use and culture should be addressed and discussed with all parties involved.



Street cleaning tools

Implementation

Key to the success of any maintenance regime is the coordination of all parties involved. This relates well to the next chapter on management as those involved in the maintenance of the public realm should focus on the street as a whole, not just specific responsibilities.

Management

The management of the public realm needs to work to avoid a complex interaction of many independent and generally uncoordinated processes. A truly integrated and cohesive design relies more on management than anything else.

Many public spaces are badly looked after, neglected, and in disrepair. This affects those that work, live, or simply pass through a city. Public space management often suffers from a lack of adequate resourcing, a lack of good practice, but quite often a lack of interest from key stakeholders.

Stakeholders can be split into four main groups:

- Private (property owners and developers)
- Public/private (government agencies and public transport operators)
- Local government
- Community (residents and local groups or societies)



Monitoring success of maintenance

Each of the stakeholders has a very different set of motivations and a varying degree of responsibility, which makes coordination between the groups difficult. Even within local authorities it is difficult to internally organise efforts and powers. The responsibility of public space lies across a wide range of public and private stakeholders that are often outside the direct control of local authorities. Effective public space management therefore must include the following steps:

- Define and understand the elements and qualities of public space,
- Create a coordinated management strategy that gives a person or group of persons a strategic role to ensure the management of the whole urban environment, and
- Set out the investment, regulation, and maintenance processes that will allow for the continuation of a high quality public realm.

The strategic role that ensures the management of public spaces can be in the form of a streetscape manager or in some cases a designated group such as a trust or committee. Essential to this manager or group is the awareness of a set of management principles that have been identified by the ODPM in "Living Places: Caring for Quality", as well as recommendations from the Urban Task force in "Towards an Urban Renaissance" for the management and the maintenance of the public realm:

- Integrating actions: carefully define and integrate all key responsibilities for planning and delivering the better management of external public space
- Involving others: be inclusive in developing strategies for management, actively communicating with and involving private sector partners and the community wherever possible
- Setting standards: aspire to deliver high quality services and outcomes by challenging existing practices

Case Study: Town Centre Managers The one-stop approach

Some towns and cities such as Oxford have appointed a town centre manager who plays a key role in ensuring that, once implemented, public realm projects are managed and maintained appropriately. The environmental role of the manager includes audits of cleansing operations and reviewing the appropriateness of street related procedures. The manager also helps to co-ordinate the activities of service departments. It is also a priority for the town centre to work with the police and private security companies to ensure a safe and secure environment. The town centre manager also focuses resources on the areas of greatest priority.

- Attracting resources: allocating sufficient core resources to the management of public space to deliver high quality public space
- Delivering for the long term: invest and regulate wisely and for the long-term by thinking of management and development process
- Responding to context carefully by considering the particular requirements of the full range of local contexts and where necessary, modifying standard space management approaches
- Monitoring success: actively monitor the success and effectiveness of management processes and initiatives, including the well-resourced enforcement of public space infringements

Case Study: Chatham, UK An organisational approach

English Partnerships set up the Chatham Maritime Trust in 1997 as a charitable organisation to look after the public parts of the site in perpetuity. The Trust has a wholly owned management company with 10 Trustees drawn from the main leaseholders, commercial tenants, residential occupiers, SEEDA, Medway Council, and three independent professionals. The Trust's funds come from service charges, rent charges from freehold residential occupiers, and invested capital in the form of a dowry. During the development phase, the shortfall of service charges from incomplete properties is being made up by SEEDA. Once the scheme is complete, the whole of the infrastructure will be transferred to the Trust which will take over responsibility for road cleaning, landscaping and security, as well as the maintenance of the locks, bridges and basin walls. The promotion of community spirit has also been an ongoing aim of the Trust, through special events and the provision of land for community activities.

- Leading with vision: define clearly and early a vision for public space and its management that explicitly prioritises 'quality' as the first and overarching objective
- Assign a strategic role to local authorities in ensuring management of the whole urban environment, with powers to require other property owners to maintain their land and premises to an acceptable standard.
- Provide an above-inflation increase in central

resources allocated to local authorities for managing and maintaining the urban environment in each of the next seven years.

- Place Town Improvement Zones on a statutory footing, enabling local authorities to work with local businesses to establish jointly funded management arrangements for town centres and other commercial districts.
- Pilot different models of neighbourhood management, that gives local people a stake in the decision-making process.
- Strengthen enforcement powers and sanctions against individuals or organisations that breach regulations related to planning conditions, noise pollution, littering, fly-tipping and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

The vision for the maintenance and management of Ashford's public realm is one of a coordinated, holistic approach. This can be achieved in many ways and should be discussed by all stakeholders and Ashford Borough Council. The following case studies in Oxford and Chatham highlight two different approaches to the management of the public realm. It is important to note that a number of strategies and principles outlined above can be successful; the key is determining one that will work for the people using and managing the public realm in Ashford.

Case Study: Horsham, UK

Horsham provides one of the best examples of orchestrating investments through its comprehensive improvements to the town centre. The keys to success have included building up trust with all the partners around a vision aimed at making the most of the town's distinctive character. The trust has been reinforced by the success of the environmental enhancement schemes that have created a high quality public realm. The works were largely funded through a deal with a superstore, which moved from the centre to the edge of town. A separate deal with another supermarket helped bring in finance to complete a vital road scheme that took traffic out of the town centre. Another important partner has been a major insurance company, the largest employer in the town, which has given the Council's strategy strong support by reinvesting heavily in the town.

A pleasant market town, Horsham has made great efforts recently to highlight its character as a traditional country town. Great stress has been placed on improving and maintaining the environment. The centre has been mainly pedestrianised; public spaces, such as Carfax, have been paved to a very high specification; lanes and alleys have been emphasised; pedestrian areas have been brightened up with small gardens and extensive planting; art works, including a dramatic fountain, have been introduced. The work has won many awards and has contributed to making the town one of the 'housing hotspots' of the region.

Lessons for Ashford can be learnt from Horsham as one of its key aims was to build on its nature as a historic town rather than attempting to compete with neighbouring centres. Its firm vision to regain and retain its particular character through deliberate change, focusing on the economy and the high quality of the environment, along with the strong coordination of private and public bodies allowed Horsham to become a highly attractive and successful place.

Source:
Urbed Changing Places, <http://changingplaces.urbed.com>



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