



Institute of Parks and Green Space

2007 has been a busy year for IPGS. Since our launch in January, we've been involved in a whole range of initiatives to help our members develop and improve their skills, as well as using our influence to lobby for the improved resources that they need to manage and maintain parks and green spaces to the best possible standard.

So, what have we been doing during 2007?

Shaping and influencing national, regional and local policy

GreenSpace regional forums have gone from strength to strength during the year. A manager was appointed to run GreenSpace South West, and GreenSpace East is currently recruiting a manager. This will bring the total of fully staffed regional forums to five, including the London Parks and Green Spaces Forum, GreenSpace North West and GreenSpace East Midlands.

We aim to secure a member of staff in most regions within the next two years. This will enable the forums to greatly expand the valuable work that they're already doing to research important sector issues, and harness the collective power of member local authorities to lobby national government to provide better resources for parks and green spaces.

The **GreenSpace National Forum**, which comprises representatives from each regional forum as well as key sector organisations, has met four times during the year to discuss issues of common concern. Its influence has continued to grow, with Natural England and Lantra joining CABE Space, English Heritage and CLG as permanent members. Responses to policy consultations are made via the National Forum, and the recent loss of performance indicators has been addressed.

An important development during the year was the first meeting of the 'Future of Parks Round Table', which took place in June during Love Parks Week. Attendees discussed creating a coalition of sector organisations, which would lobby for improved parks. It is expected that the next meeting will take place in early 2008.

Identifying and promoting good practice

Our staffed regional forums have been very active in **identifying good practice** via a range of working groups. Activities are being developed around good practice topics, including training and skills, community involvement, funding, access and inclusion and community safety.

We're constantly on the lookout for examples of great work being done by park managers around the country for our membership magazine, **Spaces&Places**. During 2007 our '6 Great' feature has highlighted fantastic park events, park galleries and play spaces, and many projects have received publicity through our features and profiles.

Inspirational projects and personalities have been given a platform at the five **national conferences** that we've held during the year, and news from around the sector is communicated through our monthly online newsletter, **The Bench**.



GreenSpace Online is a valued resource for the sector. The website is currently being redesigned to improve usability, and the websites of the regional forums are being improved too.

Improving education and training

2007 was a great year for **GreenSpace conferences**. We held five events which looked at issues including tackling antisocial behaviour, imaginative play provision, community engagement, fundraising and marketing parks – and four of them sold out.

We also, in partnership with Lantra, developed **GreenSKILL**, the online skills management solution for parks and green spaces. GreenSKILL is currently being piloted and will be available in 2008. The GreenSKILL profiles for green space managers identify the competencies required at all levels of a parks service, and reflect not only the technical but also the managerial skills that support business excellence.

The first in our series of **training courses** is taking place. Developed by a partnership led by CABE Space, Towards an Excellent Service (TAES) is a business excellence system customised to help green space managers work smarter and achieve excellent results in the delivery of parks services. Our training programme, funded by CABE Space, has been devised to develop the range of skills identified by TAES, which include leadership and community engagement. Courses looking at these different areas will be rolled out during 2008.

Promoting working in the sector as an attractive career option

We all know that the parks sector is facing a significant skills gap, and that we urgently need to attract new recruits into the industry. IPGS takes this challenge extremely seriously. We have been working with a range of other organisations, including Lantra, to start to put in place initiatives to address the problem. This will be an area of priority for us all during 2008. We will also be focussing on helping CABE Space to roll out the Urban Green Space Skills Strategy.