

## Summary Report 17<sup>th</sup> November 2009

### **Making it Safe, GreenSpace Conference**

Royal Geographical Society, London

A conference focussing on how to successfully tackle crimes and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in parks and green spaces.

### **Adapting to new and changing challenges – Derek Pollock, Ex-OCU Commander, Metropolitan Police**

Derek's presentation focussed around policing in parks, new phenomenon's such as "flash-mobs" and the needs to generate income through events and therefore managing crime during such times. His main points were:

- **Criminal Damage:** ensure that any reports of criminal damage handled efficiently. If benches or bins, for example, are vandalised either repair or remove them quickly to stop the wider area looking unwelcoming and therefore inviting more crime.
- **ASB:** Tackled through presence, either police or uniformed park attendants, and challenge, talking to people undertaking the ASB.
- Create **Safer Parks Teams** or if budget prohibits this utilise PCSO time for specific events.
- **Dog Watch:** Use the eyes and ears of regular responsible dog-walkers and get their knowledge of areas or user groups in the park.
- **Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP):** High level senior police and other authority officers who meet to discuss issues. By creating a sub-group at this level it can bring targeted problem responses, such as buying Chelsea clips to prevent handbag thefts at park cafes or funding a poster campaign.
- **Events Management:** Ensure that all parties in the team are coordinated and agree actions prior to the event.

### **Developing effective partnerships to give communities confidence – Peter Owens, Parks Community Liaison Officer, Cardiff City Council**

Peter looked at how measuring the quantity, and therefore cost, of nuisance incidents will ensure that correct resources are used to tackle the issue. He discussed a project in Cardiff around motorbikes, including quad bikes, which had been a big problem in public spaces. By working in partnership both police and the council pooled resources to target this.

Enforcement occurred via an approach with two teams on motorbikes, one PC and one ASB officer, who 'leap-frogged' incidents. All incidents were logged; time, date, location, category of bike, age of offender etc. This allowed police and ASB officers to look at who was riding, either child or adult, what kind of bike they were riding and if they were legal.

Once a clear picture of the problem was understood they further targeted the group with an education element, safety on these bikes etc, and then looking to create provision. Often ASB was inappropriate play due to lack of provision. Many under-16's who were caught illegally joined a formal riders group, and lost the privilege of this if caught illegally riding again. Furthermore the project developed so that a permanent off-road facility was funded and created.

### **Providing young people with the opportunities to make parks safer – Steve Rice, Neighbourhood Inspector, Merseyside Police**

Steve presented an example of partnership working to tackle the problem of a seasonal rise in ASB during the school holidays in certain parks. Working with agencies, including Youth Services, a range of diversionary activities were programmed providing something for young people to do during these times. They also tackled ASB, particularly drinking, by stepping up enforcement during these times, including licensed premises visits and proxy alcohol sales.

In addition 'Operation Staysafe' was started. A safe haven was identified as St Aidens Church, Cherry Lane. Social Services, together with local officers and Special Constables, worked to protect children left to wander the streets at night without responsible adult supervision. The project educated both children and parents about the dangers of consuming too much alcohol and improving parenting in order to protect children.

### **Transforming graffiti from a problem into an opportunity – Samantha Ward, Technical Officer, Calderdale Council**

An interesting talk about how engagement with young people in a local park led to the creation of a youth group. Working with the young people they created a project around the creation of a graffiti wall and the provision of artist workshops to develop their skills. To ensure a responsible approach from the teens involved the young people committed to litter picks and graffiti removal across the park. The young people led the project and consulted the public regarding all stages. Now ongoing the engagement has created a positive group for young people to join related directly to the management of a park.

### **Successfully dealing with dogs in parks – Stephen Jenkins, Access and Countryside Management Consultant**

With 6-8m dogs, and therefore dog-owners, in the UK there is a high demand for off-lead access and this group make up a significant proportion of park and countryside users. Bad problems associated with dogs include: fouling, resentment from other users, packs of dogs, attacks and vandalism. Good benefits of dogs include: constant use and surveillance of the park, exercise/health, communication network and social cohesion plus dog-owners often take ownership of parks visited.

Dog control orders can be useful to tackle specific challenges or issues; number of dogs on lead, on-lead zones, pick-up areas and no dog areas. However to really make the most of opportunities presented by this user group, engagement and consultation was discussed. Such consultation has led to ideas, such as human/dog activity walks or provision of fenced areas for training sessions. The latter has also provided a revenue income. Engagement with users can be as simple as providing dog 'pit-stops' with food and water, plus information and officers on-hand to chat.

Further information can be found at:

Hampshire County Council: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-countryside/dogs.htm>

Forestry Commission: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-dogs>

### **Case Studies: afternoon session**

#### **Turning a place around – Michael Rowland, Leisure Policy Manager, Bournemouth City Council**

Boscombe Chine Gardens was badly affected by ASB. To tackle the issue engagement with the community, particularly those who weren't using the site. They succeeded in a HLF bid and before, during and after the build carried out guided walks for local people. Infrastructure which related beyond the park was also looked at, such as diverting the land train to bring users into the park. Care was also taken with the contract for the cafe, ensuring cover all year around not just peak season.

### **Young people speaking out – Tim Cooper, Programme Manager, Groundwork Solent**

Engagement of the young people in a very deprived estate has led to the creation of a community garden. Roles such as junior wardens also mean participation by young people in community clean-up days.

### **Taking youth seriously: providing a stimulating environment – Michael Rowan, Director of Mile End Park, London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

By looking carefully at vandalism problems and analysing the real cause of issues responses are improved. An example was given of a teen shelter that looked like it had been set on fire; actually the youths were trying to keep warm and the installation of a heater is moving forward. Another good idea with teen shelters was, if possible, get two and face them towards each other so the kids can talk together.

### **Hyde Park Tour – Michael Rowland, Hotham Park Manager, Arun District Council**

My thanks to him for this input

- Some paths are designated shared by cyclists and pedestrians. There are problems with accidents even leading to broken bones. The worst time is at commuter rush hour when some cyclists tend to travel too fast. Other paths allow only pedestrian traffic.
- The Park has boreholes to supply fountains and the water eventually goes into the Serpentine. The water is not treated.
- They have been spreading mulch under veteran trees to help improve soil conditions and in turn the health of the trees.
- Green waste is composted on site on an industrial scale.
- Parakeets are forcing out native species such as bats, owls, and other birds. This is due to them taking food and nesting sites.
- Concessions require permission from the parks management to close early (perhaps in bad weather).
- Dogs restricted from some areas after problems with attacks on wildlife.
- Feeding of birds and squirrels restricted in some areas.
- Attempts are made to educate the public with regard to safe cycling, dog behaviour, and the feeding of birds and squirrels.
- The Metropolitan Police police the parks.
- The management have to contend with a number of 'Friends of groups' that have different interests in the park. Some people belong to the friends groups as it is a status symbol to say you are a 'Friend of a Royal Park'.
- Sometimes it seems that 'every user of the park knows someone important or famous', who they would use to exert pressure on the management to get their issue dealt with.
- Income is obtained from licenses to film in the park. It has featured in many famous films.
- They are trying to develop areas as wild flower meadows which have been received with mixed views.
- There are some wild areas behind railings where dogs cannot run around.
- They have given up planting bulbs as the squirrels destroy them.
- Problems with ASB tend to be in areas of the park near where there is lower value property bordering the park. The Park is bordered by property with very different values.

If anyone has any questions about this report please contact:

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