

CASE STUDY: BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK NEW YORK, US

Brooklyn Bridge Park is an 85-acre sustainable waterfront park stretching 1.3 miles along Brooklyn's East River shoreline. The Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation is a not-for-profit entity responsible for the planning, construction, maintenance and operation of Brooklyn Bridge Park. The Corporation operates under a mandate to be financially self-sustaining, which has been possible through property development within the park, which generates revenue to cover the annual maintenance and operations costs.



Creative Commons

Recent news that some councils were investigating selling off areas of parkland to raise funds (in part income for the council and in part revenue for development of existing parks) has not been without considerable controversy and vociferous campaigning from local residents. But the more usual relationship between developers and parks has been through levys and contributions after new development – including Section 106 funds. It is anticipated that as the construction industry picks up again after the recession, there will be increasing competition for funding from this source through the new Community Infrastructure Levy. Monies will be allocated by councils according to their community infrastructure plans and priorities.

There is also scope for input from the newly formed Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), who have replaced the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). LEPs are charged with delivering economic growth in regions and The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, for example, has recently published guidance²⁰ for LEPs on applying for European Funding that includes opportunities for investing in green infrastructure.

3.4 Income generation through taxation

In addition to improving and expanding many of the existing mechanisms to supplement funding for parks there is the potential to explore opportunities for innovation in developing and refining taxation and levy models to raise more locally-focused public funding where local economies are able to support this. Whilst the UK Government's current political position is to limit any increase in taxation, models used in the US include bond raising measures and methods to offset or supplement tax revenues for park investment and locally-based taxation measures.

The most familiar technique adopted in the UK for local taxation is through the use of Business Improvement Districts to raise additional funding for specific areas and in particular commercial and retail districts. This generally focusses on promoting local businesses and improving the management of streets and squares to improve the business environment. It is rarely used to improve the wider environment and in particular parks, although the model is more established and used more widely in the US.