

**PUBLIC OPEN SPACE  
IN THE  
TOTNES SOUTHERN AREA**

**HOW IT COULD  
WORK**



**A Feasibility Report  
For  
South Hams District Council**

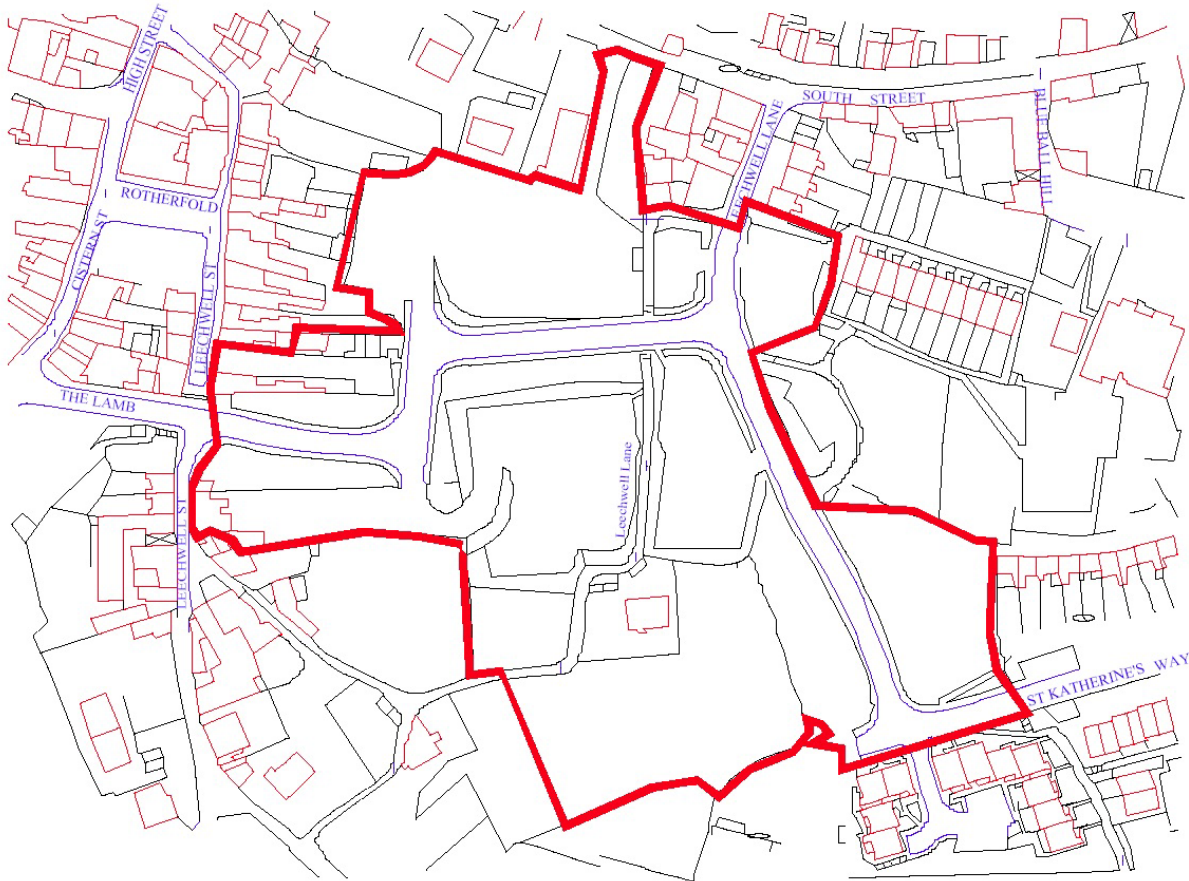
DOS Open Space Steering Group  
June 2005

# CONTENTS

First Steps .....	3
Which Way To Go? .....	4
1. How much land could be used for public open space on the site? .....	6
2. Who would own the land? .....	8
3. Who would manage the project? .....	11
4. What would be on the open space, who would create and look after it? .....	14
5. How much would the garden cost and where would the money come from? ...	19
6. When would things happen? .....	21
7. How does the open space fit in with the rest of the site and the town? .....	22
Which is the Best Route? .....	22
Further Information .....	24
SHDC remit to DOS .....	24
Northamptonshire County Council's Pocket Parks Scheme .....	24
Community Land Trusts .....	25
Groundwork .....	26
Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens .....	26
Community Consultation 2004 .....	27
Design Details .....	28
BTCV .....	31
Heritage Lottery Fund .....	31
Hanson Environment Fund .....	32
References and Further Reading .....	32
Author's Note .....	34

## **FIRST STEPS**

Last year, the community action group Design Our Space (DOS) consulted the community about what it wanted in the new development the South Hams District Council was planning to build in the Southern Area in Totnes (bounded in red in the map below).



One idea the community had was that they, the community, would like to design and look after the open space on the site. So the South Hams District Council (SHDC) asked DOS to set up a Steering Group to write a report by the end of June, 2005, to see how it could work. This is what this report is about. It looks at what needs to be done and who could do it. There are references in the text to extra information at the end of the report. This first step could be the beginning of a new journey together for both the Council and the community.

But DOS has gone further. The second step, if the journey together is to continue, is to look at the bigger picture, to see who could help us and to begin to draw up a plan for the future. This will be the Strategy Report. The third step is a collection of ideas of what we might see at the end of the journey. These ideas will be shown at an Exhibition in the Civic Hall open to the whole community for their comments on 30 June and ideas and comments will be included in an Exhibition Dossier. These two extra community reports will be ready in July.

The three reports form a bridge between the Council and the community, and a bridge from where we are now, to the future: easy to reach open spaces which are a pleasure to be in, that Totnes needs and deserves.

## **WHICH WAY TO GO?**

DOS Open Space Steering Group was asked by South Hams District Council<sup>1</sup> to explore possible answers to seven questions in the first phase of the Southern Area development:

- 1. How much land could be used for public open space on the site?**
- 2. Who would own the land?**
- 3. Who would manage the project?**
- 4. What would be on the open space, who would create it and look after it?**
- 5. How much would it cost and where would the money come from?**
- 6. When would things happen?**
- 7. How does the open space fit in with the rest of the site?**

DOS Open Space Steering Group has looked at several ways of answering these questions. But before beginning to answer them, it is important that the Council and the community talk the same talk so they can recognise the signposts along the way, if they are to walk the same way together.

The Council and the community have three foundation stones in common which we can build on.

- Firstly, we are all people. We all grow and change over time. We all go through different stages. And these different stages of growth and change can be applied to the places we live in and the management of projects too. The same pattern lies behind the idea of sustainable development, which is something else the Council and the community have in common.
- ‘Sustainable development’ means different things to different people, but most agree that, put simply, it means moving from the stage of just taking, to the stage of giving back more than you take. If we bring people, places and projects into the same pattern of development in stages over time, then the Council and the community can understand each other better, and follow the same plan.
- Thirdly, South Hams District Council and DOS share a vision: to create public open space “such as one might expect to find in such a historic setting, of which Totnes might be justly proud”, as SHDC said in their brochure for the Southern Area Public Exhibition in 1995.

The three stages of growth and change over time in ‘sustainable development’ for people, places and projects are:

### **Tradition**

The first stage is historical. In people, this is the ‘I want’ stage, directed at a parental style authority who is in control, makes the decisions, does the work, controls the money. This is also the way things were done in the past between councils and communities. But tradition is also to be valued in heritage as we move on to the next stage.

---

<sup>1</sup> For details of the remit see page 3

### Partnership

Good partnerships are when partners are equally valued for what they can do. A child leaves home and finds his own partner, sharing the work, not expecting others to do it for him. This is the stage that central government is encouraging, when councils and communities work together. This way, like a young person earning lots of money, the 'youngster on the block' can access new sources of funding once local authority lets go of the purse strings.

### Community Responsibility

The third stage is when an individual or a group takes responsibility not just for themselves, but also for the wider community. People are beginning to see that together we are responsible for the global community. This is a hard stage, when every decision has consequences that have to be understood and accepted.

These stages of tradition, partnership and community responsibility, are the three stages of the journey. They will reappear like signposts along the way as we look in turn at the seven questions the Council has asked DOS Open Space Steering Group to explore.



## **1. How much land could be used for public open space on the site?**

DOS Open Space Steering Group has found four possible sites for public open space in Phase 1 of the new development, and two outside the Southern Area.



### **A. The Bungalow Garden, owned by SHDC.**

Housing on Heath Way will use part of the existing garden. The pool in the garden is fed by water from the Holy Leechwell, and has now been recommended for, and is almost certain to be scheduled as a protected heritage monument. It will be scheduled as an “immersion basin attached to a holy well”. Archaeologists have also surveyed the garden. It is hoped to include their survey in the Strategy Report. Preserving the heritage of the site will be important in the design and funding of the open space.

### **B. Orchard Garden, leased by SHDC from Devon County Council.**

In the 2004 Concept Plan, this area is proposed for parking, but the archaeologists may suggest other uses following their survey. The Southern Area has been under cultivation since Saxon times. If this tradition were to be continued, this might be a suitable site for cultivation. It was designed as a new community orchard garden in the 1996 Rathbone design, which was approved by both the Council and the community.

C. South Street Open Space, next to Masonic Hall, owned by SHDC.

The Concept Plan has small workshops on this site. However, workshops are now being built elsewhere in and near Totnes. This small open space is in a good position to meet the needs, strongly put forward by the community, for a toddlers' play area with seating close to the town centre (see Question 4.). It was open space both in the 1996 design and the Savilles' Report. A footpath across the site could link up with a re-opened entrance into Leechwell Lane, so that people would not have to cross the car park to reach the Leechwell area. It could also be the start of a green corridor from the Civic Square to the Bungalow Garden.

D. Land by Moorashes Paddock, owned by SHDC.

This is part of the housing plan. However, part of the site was shown as a play area in the 1996 design. An equipped play area for 5-12 year old children here would be within the 'home zone' of existing housing in Heath Court.

E. Grove School Playing Fields, owned by Devon County Council.

It is difficult for older children to find a suitable place to 'hang out' and the sloping ground and design of the Bungalow Garden would not be suitable for ball games. KEVICCS playing fields have dual use, for school and outside school hours. It is believed that dual use was intended when the land passed to Devon CC for Grove School. SHDC Community Safety Officer and the police have said they would support its use by older children in the evenings and weekends, perhaps with a shelter. Any decision would first have to address Education Authority, security, suitability and residents' concerns.

F. Castle Meadow, owned by Totnes Town Council.

DOS understands that the Steiner School has offered the Town Council more rent than they currently receive from the farmer who grazes sheep on the meadow. The school wants to create a community-supported garden. This may also be a suitable site for other activities.

The community raised the question last year of whether the Southern Area was large enough to meet all the needs that were being asked of it. The same applies to the Bungalow Garden. Can one small open space meet the needs of everyone, particularly the different age groups? Although it is the largest open space on the site, it may not be possible to fit everything on to the Bungalow Garden, especially as the heritage has to be protected.

There is one suggested way forward:

- To develop the Bungalow Garden in stages
- And for SHDC to decide which, if any, of the other sites can also be used.

Because it is not clear whether any of these sites can be used as public open space, this report will look in detail only at the Bungalow Garden.

**DOS RECOMMENDATION**

**Look at whether any or all of sites B, C, D, E and F could be used as public open space.**

## **2. Who would own the land?**

DOS Open Space Steering Group has looked at three options for owning the Bungalow Garden in the future, and the reasons for and the reasons against each option. The priority was the long-term success of the project.

### **a. Tradition**

South Hams District Council owns the Bungalow Garden, as historically councils have owned most public open space. There has been much criticism of urban green spaces recently (Urban Green Spaces Taskforce 2002).

The report said that:

- Urban green spaces have been poorly funded, designed and maintained
- Only 18% of public parks were in 'good' condition
- Sport takes 25% of park space and 50% of budget. There is a tendency for local authorities to promote male fitness at the expense of children, women, family groups, the elderly and the disabled.

An example of a poorly designed and maintained public open space for the disabled in Totnes might be SHDC's "Sensory Garden for the Blind" in Fore Street seen here.



The reasons for and against SHDC continuing to own the Bungalow Garden are:

<b>REASONS FOR</b>	<b>REASONS AGAINST</b>
SHDC has full legal and financial responsibility and control	Not always made best use of open space as landowner
No legal costs	Access to funding restricted
Consistent and stable management with clear lines of responsibility	Open space target of budget cuts
	Reduced community involvement and commitment.
	Lack of local stewardship
	Lack of trust that SHDC will fulfil community's wishes



## b. Partnership

DOS Open Space Steering Group has looked at what other councils have done. In Northamptonshire, the County Council has created over 80 Pocket Parks<sup>2</sup>. The Council gives the community 75% of start-up capital costs, and there is a dedicated council officer who gives support, advice and training. If a Council wants to continue owning the land rather than donating it to the community, Northamptonshire recommends as long a lease as possible.

Funding bodies prepared to give the community money would need, at the very least, a formal letter stating that SHDC had no plans to use the land for other purposes for a minimum period of 10 years. Specialist legal advice is necessary.

The reasons for and against SHDC guaranteeing the land to the community, either by lease or letter for a fixed period of time, are:

REASONS FOR	REASONS AGAINST
Access additional grant sources	Potential communication problems between SHDC and community <sup>3</sup>
Less risk to SHDC and community than full community responsibility	Fall-off in community involvement
SHDC keeps overall control as landowner with reduced financial responsibility	Not clear who is in charge
Site protected as open space	Need to agree clear lines of responsibility
Valuable lessons in citizenship and mutual understanding	
Community can use SHDC's expertise and guidance	
Safety net if community involvement lessens	
Preparation step for a possible next stage	
Joint responsibility	

## c. Community Responsibility

If the community were prepared to take on the full responsibility of owning the land, and SHDC were willing to donate it, one way could be through a Community Land Trust<sup>4</sup> which provides affordable housing and community owned green spaces.

---

<sup>2</sup> For more details see page 3

<sup>3</sup> see Author's Note on page 3

<sup>4</sup> For more details about such Trusts, see page 3

The Stroud Valley Community Land Trust develops and protects green spaces on an ecological and sustainable basis. There are other kinds of Trust that own land.

The reasons for and against the community forming a Trust to own Bungalow Garden are:

REASONS FOR	REASONS AGAINST
Source of civic pride and would strengthen community bonds and skills	High levels of long-term organisational, business and financial skills needed
Model for other open spaces in town, youth involvement, crime and graffiti reduced	Too few volunteers to manage Trust, fundraise and do work. Energy diverted to raising funds.
Access to funding not available to local authorities	Costs in setting up Trust, and complex legal situation if Trust fails
Community control over design and use	Community has full legal, management and financial responsibility, including control of anti-social uses
	Risk to SHDC if community fails and risk to community relations
	Too large a first step. Could same community involvement be reached by setting up "Friends of the Bungalow Garden"?
	GreenSpace: 97% of groups working with green spaces managed without a Trust

#### **DOS Recommendation**

**The balance of arguments for and against the three options put forward for ownership of the Bungalow Garden favours a partnership**

### **3. Who would manage the project?**

DOS Open Space Steering Group has looked at three ways to manage the work to create an open space in the Bungalow Garden. In this report, 'project management' includes setting up a management team to make decisions on strategy and policy, to create a management plan, to organise what happens and when, and to raise funds. Good management of the project is very important to the long term success of the Bungalow Garden. Another kind of management, 'hands-on management', means creating and maintaining the garden (in this report), and is looked at in Question 4.

#### **a. Tradition**

In the past, the Landscape, Leisure and Recreation Department of SHDC has been in charge of open space projects. An example of their work is Follaton Arboretum, a 6 acre site close to of the Council offices, but a long and difficult walk from town for parents and the elderly (see photo below).



The reasons for and against SHDC managing the Bungalow Garden project are:

<b>REASONS FOR</b>	<b>REASONS AGAINST</b>
SHDC has staff, training courses, expertise and resources	Access to funding restricted
Costs, insurance and Health and Safety issues covered by SHDC	SHDC may have other priorities. Project not receive full attention
	Community not able to instruct SHDC
	Lack of community involvement

## b. Partnership

As an example from local projects, Groundwork<sup>5</sup> has been employed as project manager in partnership with Torbay Council and the local community to create varied and well-supported open spaces in Torbay. Groundwork is a Federation of Trusts; each Trust is a partnership between public, private and voluntary groups to improve the quality of the local environment, funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and by fees included in applications for grant aid.

DOS Open Space Steering Group visited several of the Torbay sites and Groundwork has been involved in other projects within the South Hams, where it has worked with the District Council, Town Councils and communities.

The reasons for and against a partnership managing the project are:

REASONS FOR	REASONS AGAINST
Project manager partner to fundraise	Potential conflict between partners <sup>6</sup>
Grants more readily available	Loss of SHDC total control and community less control over detail
Community can draw on SHDC skills. Pooling of expertise and enthusiasm	Uncertain whether big enough pool of community business rather than practical skills to draw from
Suggested project manager has experience in similar successful local projects between councils and community	Can be confusion over different responsibilities
Outside experienced project manager acts as mediator between SHDC and community	
Use of volunteers. Community has helped manage other projects e.g. Grove School Playing Fields and painting in the Rotherfold	

## c. Community Responsibility

City Farms and Community Gardens<sup>7</sup> are created and looked after by local people. The Federation in Bristol provides many on-site facilities and training for people with disabilities, conservation projects for young people, and organise community events.

---

<sup>5</sup> For more details about Groundwork see page 3

<sup>6</sup> See Author's Notes on page 3

<sup>7</sup> For more details about the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens, see page 3

The reasons for and against the community managing the Bungalow Garden project are:

<b>REASONS FOR</b>	<b>REASONS AGAINST</b>
Opportunity for local people to develop management skills	Very big responsibility
Support and training available from other community groups	Depends on long-term on-going resources of people, skills and money
Access to grant aid	Dependent on a few key volunteers with dedication, drive and time
Maximum scope for new ways of working	Replacements for key volunteers needed over long term
	Needs guaranteed structure and long-term funding
	No SHDC fall-back for responsibility

**DOS Recommendation**

**The balance of arguments for and against the three options put forward to manage the project favours a partnership**



#### **4. What would be on the open space, who would create it and look after it?**

This is the question that DOS Open Space Steering Group members – and much of the wider community – are most interested in. The community feels more comfortable with design (they are **Design Our Space**), ‘hands-on’ management and maintenance, rather than project or financial management.

When people were consulted in 2004<sup>8</sup>, most said what they wanted to see in the open space in the Bungalow Garden were:

- The site’s heritage protected and enhanced
- Nature reserve
- Trees
- A feature of the pool and water
- Seating for rest and quiet
- Places for meeting and viewing the surrounding places of interest
- A small café/covered area/centre
- Play space for children
- Space for young people
- Public art
- No large buildings on site.

#### **What is in the Bungalow Garden at present?**

##### **a. Bungalow**

On the site, there is a Bungalow let by SHDC, with outbuildings, on a flat area of land, close to the Heath Way car park. DOS Open Space Strategy Group understands that there is a problem with subsidence to the Bungalow, which would be expensive to repair. A decision has to be taken whether to keep, repair and re-design the bungalow or whether to demolish it and possibly replace it at a later date with a purpose-built community building.

#### **DOS RECOMMENDATION**

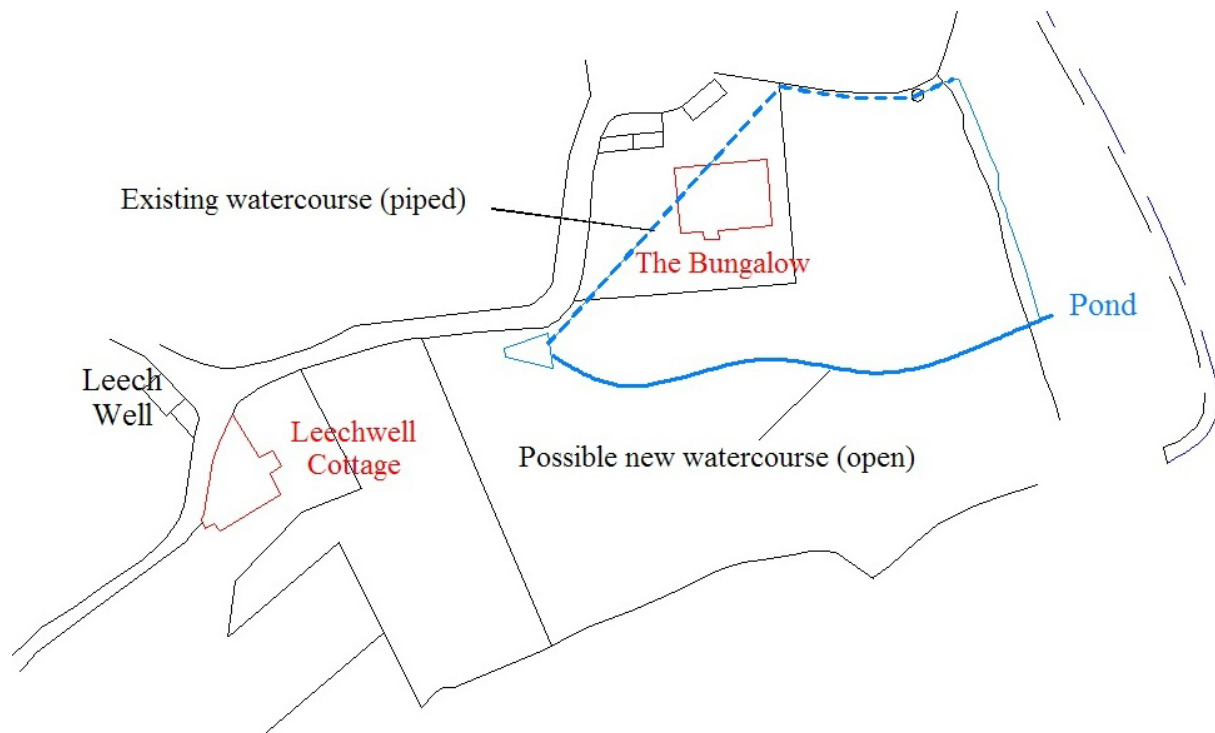
**The decision on the future of the bungalow depends  
in part on survey only available to SHDC**

##### **b. Pool**

DOS has worked with English Heritage so that the triangular pool, fed by water from the ancient Holy Leechwell, has now been recommended for, and is almost certain to be, scheduled as a heritage monument. It will be in the rare category of “immersion basin attached to a holy well”. There are two ways the water leaves the pool. The first is the original watercourse that probably still runs diagonally under the Bungalow. The second outlet was made about 15 years ago to feed the new ponds in front of the Bungalow. The Environment Agency has agreed that a new water course can run in an easterly direction across the garden, in small waterfalls, to join the existing storm drain outside the garden, so long as the original water course is kept as an overflow.

---

<sup>8</sup> For more details about the consultation, see page 3



The Town Council has an important role in making sure the water from the Leechwell continues to flow into the pool. The present mayor, Councillor Pruw Boswell, is the Guardian of the Well. If the Town Council agrees, it has been suggested that an application for Heritage Lottery Funding could be made to conserve/repair the Leechwell.

#### c. Boundaries

The walls of Leechwell Lane form the western boundary of the garden. They need to be repaired and made secure. To the north is the Car Park and to the south west and south are the hedges of private housing. None of them are secure as public open space boundaries. To the east will be the boundary between the open space and new private housing. DOS Open Space Steering Group does not yet have detailed information on this boundary. This will be presented at the 30 June Public Meeting.

#### d. Trees

There are native and non-native ornamental trees in the garden, some in poor condition. The site has been an orchard for at least 150 years. There are several ancient but still-fruiting apple trees, which need pruning. The underlying scrub and Japanese knotweed by the pool is being treated by the SHDC maintenance team.

#### e. Under the ground

An archaeological survey has been carried out to see what lies beneath the Bungalow Garden. DOS Open Space Steering Group hopes to include the survey in the Strategy Report. The site of the Bungalow Garden may have been part of the grounds of the Leper Hospital that once stood on Maudlin Road.

## Design Basics

The question has already been raised as to whether the Bungalow Garden can have provide everything the community said it wanted from open space on the Southern Area. Many items from the Community Consultation Process listed above could be in conflict, for example a nature reserve and a community centre. It is very hard to bring these ideas into one design.

One approach could be to apply the three stages of sustainable development to the garden in phases, so that it too grows over time. For example:

- PHASE 1: Simple design of an orchard meadow, with woodland, open stream and natural planting, with the focus on the heritage of the garden
- PHASE 2: Intermediate stage, where there is more landscaping, facilities and play areas
- PHASE 3: Complex design, with a multi-purpose community centre/café.

*SHDC has suggested that the Phase 1 simple design would cost approximately £25,000 to £35,000.*

Each design would include public art, both functional and non-functional. The designs will also have to provide for new paths and gateways, with access and special areas for people with disabilities. High quality build, particularly self-build, and low maintenance are seen as an integral part of good design. Many other imaginative designs will be presented at the Exhibition on 30<sup>th</sup> June, and included in the Exhibition Dossier together with the community's comments.

The advantage of phasing the design of the Bungalow Garden is that additional work could be done as more the money becomes available - and if the community, including the new community in the Southern Area, wants it. Also, the first stage could be started while looking at which other sites listed under Question 1, could be used for some of the open space activities too.

DOS Open Space Steering Group recommends the use of natural materials, in play equipment and tree sculptures, in willow play structures, log piles, wooden seats and tree trunk bridges. It also recommends that planting is mostly native woodland and meadow, with plant movement by the water with rushes, and new trees for new life. Wildlife is looked after too, in Devon hedgebanks and hedges, with waterside planting, insect log piles, and bird and bat boxes, which it is hoped will involve local schoolchildren (perhaps in a Wildlife Club).

The advantages of phasing the design of the Bungalow Garden are that:

- additional work in the later phases could be done as more money becomes available
- the community, including the new community in the Southern Area, will be able to decide how far they want the design phasing to go
- the first stage could be started while other sites listed in Question 1 are looked at to see which if any could be used for as open space.

## **Security**

People are very concerned about security. Nearby residents are concerned about the boundary between their gardens and the public open space. The community is also concerned about security in the open space itself. DOS Open Space Steering Group asked the local police service for their advice. As well as including the open space on their regular town patrols, the police made 3 key points:

- Boundaries between private and public areas need to be secure with as few access points as reasonable
- Anti-social behaviour can be discouraged by providing other places for young people's activities; by emphasising the 'family' nature of the open space and by good design and maintenance
- Bye-laws can be used for things like dogs, litter, the ages of children who can use the play areas and if/when the space will be closed.

More detailed information on design is provided at the end of this report on page 28.

## **South Street Open Space**

As mentioned in Question 1, many people also said they wanted close to the town centre:

- A play area for toddlers
- Seating particularly for the elderly.

When DOS Open Space Steering Group carried out a survey in 2005, over 90% of those asked thought a garden on South Street open space would be a good place to have both a play area and seating.

## **And who would create the garden and look after it?**

It is likely that whoever managed the project, would also be in charge of the groups who would create and maintain the open space, although again, DOS has used the 3 signposts to signal which direction we could go:

### **a. Tradition**

In the past, South Hams District Council has done the work of creating and maintaining public open space, sometimes employing outside people to help, such as BTCV. SHDC has specially trained teams which inspect, insure and maintain its own areas to required Health and Safety standards, as well as agreements to do the same on other sites not owned by the Council.

### **b. Partnership**

DOS has been talking to many different groups who could be involved in creating and maintaining the Bungalow Garden. These include BTCV<sup>9</sup>, The Robert Owen Foundation for Disabled Adults, the Probation Service and local youth groups. Devon Wildlife Trust has also said it would be interested. BTCV works with SHDC on projects such as 'Life into Landscape', and also offers training schemes.

---

<sup>9</sup> For more details about BTCV see page 3

### c. Community Responsibility

The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens have green spaces that are created and looked after by local people. The day-to-day maintenance of the site is the responsibility of paid staff, trainees and volunteers.



## **5. How much would the garden cost and where would the money come from?**

It is difficult to say how much the whole project will cost, before the direction to go and design have been chosen. DOS Open Space Steering Group does not have the expertise to provide even approximate costs. What is clear however, is that the value of well-designed, easy to reach, safe and attractive open spaces cannot be counted in money terms only.

If it were agreed that the best way forward was for the Council and the community to work in partnership with other groups, costs and potential sources of funding might include:

<b>COSTS</b>	<b>POSSIBLE FUNDING</b>
1. Legal fees for lease	SHDC
2. Public Liability Insurance	SHDC (or BTCV)
3. Project management	Groundwork fees included in grant aid applications
4. Removal of bungalow and outbuildings	SHDC
5. Planning Permission for buildings in the open space	Harrison Sutton/SHDC
6. Boundaries and gateways	SHDC
7. Heritage protection, some paths and access, signage, education	Heritage Lottery Fund
8. Landscaping for Design 1	S106 agreement/see list below
9. Buildings on site	S106 agreement/see list below
10. Public art	% for Art
11. Maintenance	SHDC/BTCV/Local groups
12. Publicity	SHDC

Examples of how other partnership projects have raised the money are:

- Pocket Parks in Northamptonshire are each funded by a grant from the Council for 75% of approved start-up costs to a maximum of £4,000. The community raises the other 25%.
- Where Groundwork has managed projects in Torbay, their role has included fund-raising. They receive about 50% of the money they apply for.
- Some funding agencies accept community hours as benefit in kind for matched funding. The DOS Open Space Steering Group has spent more than 700 person

hours in meetings alone. At a typical rate of £7 per person hour, this represents over £5000. Individuals have spent at least this number of hours again on research and report-writing.

### **Where would the rest of the money come from?**

Money could also come from:

- National Lottery
  - Heritage Lottery Fund (see below)
  - Awards for All
  - New Opportunities Fund
  - People's Places
  - The Big Lottery
- Hanson Environment Fund (see below)
- Wildspace, English Nature
- Green Space
- Shell Better Britain
- Co-op Community Grants
- BTCV and CVS for information on funding sources
- Local fund-raising

#### Heritage Lottery Fund<sup>10</sup>

Michael Clayson of HLF visited the Bungalow Garden, and said he thought the project would be eligible for money from the 'Your Heritage?' Scheme. It takes about 3 months for a decision on an application, and the most that can be awarded is £50,000. It only applies to the heritage part of the site, that is the pool, but does include material to conserve and repair the pool, education for school children and the whole community with heritage trails, information boards etc, access, signposts, seating and path to the site. The community does not have to match the funding, only make a contribution.

#### Hanson Environment Fund<sup>11</sup>

The Fund uses landfill credits to support environment and community projects through a small grants scheme (up to £4,000) and a main grants scheme (up to £25,000) to help with landscaping, planting, paths and seating. As with the Heritage Lottery Fund, the community has to make a contribution from other sources.

---

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the Heritage Lottery Fund see page 3

<sup>11</sup> For more information on the Hanson Environment Fund see page 3

## **6. When would things happen?**

The three stages of sustainable development for each question – tradition, partnership and community responsibility – are like stepping stones to move from where we are now to how it could be done in the future. When one step has worked well, then the next step could be taken. Each step takes the whole project forward, both to create a public open space and to create a closer working relationship between the Council and the community.

One example is highlighted below. In this example, the Bungalow Garden would continue to be owned by SHDC. Groundwork could act as project manager of a SHDC/community team, for a garden designed by SHDC/community and others, and created and maintained by SHDC.

<b>Bungalow Garden</b>	<b>Owned by</b>	<b>Project managed by</b>	<b>Designed by</b>	<b>Created and maintained by</b>
1. Tradition	<b><i>SHDC</i></b>	SHDC	SHDC	<b><i>SHDC</i></b>
2. Partnership	SHDC lease/letter to cmt	<b><i>SHDC/cmt + others</i></b>	<b><i>SHDC/cmt + others</i></b>	SHDC/cmt + others
3. Community responsibility	Community	Community	Community	Community

**Note: This is NOT a DOS Recommendation**

**This is an example only – many other combinations could be chosen.**

## **7. How does the open space fit in with the rest of the site (and town)?**

Officers from SHDC have attended the regular weekly Steering Group meetings and the monthly visits to the garden. They have also invited DOS Open Space Steering Group members to Follaton House to talk about specific ideas, provided background information and technical support. This has helped make sure that DOS' work has been part of the wider picture for Totnes.

DOS Open Space Steering Group has had meetings with the appointed architects, Harrison Sutton Partnership, on their plans for the Southern Area to exchange views, to make sure the housing and open space are linked together in design, to discuss the boundary between housing and open space and talk about sustainability issues. SHDC, DOS and Harrison Sutton have also held joint Public Meetings to give the wider community the chance to see and ask questions about the plans, and have arranged an exhibition on 30<sup>th</sup> June at the Civic Hall, open to everyone, to make sure the community is fully consulted and their comments can be included. Unfortunately, because the second Public Meeting was delayed from mid-May to end June, it is not possible to include the results of the community consultation in this report.

DOS Open Space Steering Group has held meetings with local landscape architects, the police service, youth groups and other local groups, and included the Town Council in their public meetings. Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and DOS attended and spoke at each other's meetings to strengthen the link between businesses in Totnes and the Southern Area development.

Also, DOS Open Space Steering Group had a 'Sharing Day' on 4 June in the Bungalow Garden, when members from many groups in Totnes were invited. This was an informal opportunity for people to get together and share ideas about the garden, the Southern Area and Totnes as a whole. The responses from the Public Meetings, Exhibition and 'Sharing Day' will be found in the two community reports, the Strategy Report and the Exhibition Dossier.

## **WHICH IS THE BEST ROUTE?**

Everything has risks. The best way forward is to face those risks, see if they can be made easier to handle, even turn negatives into positives, and then choose the route which will best achieve the aim shared by the Council and the community, which is to have inspirational and well-looked-after open spaces in the town centre.

The issues that need to be considered when deciding the best way forward, in addition to public liability risks, are:

1. the reasons for and the reasons against the different ways the land could be owned and how the work could be managed
2. future relations between the Council and the community if the community does not continue to be closely involved in open space in the Southern Area development
3. the special risks listed below to SHDC in working in a new way with the community

<b>RISK TO SHDC OF WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY</b>	<b>HOW TO REDUCE IT</b>
Way of working not tried before	Take one step at a time, beginning with the easiest, so can see how it works before taking the next, as suggested in 'When would things happen'
Difficult to go back	SHDC has already begun to work in a new way as developer. All the partners DOS suggests working with have worked with other councils.
Council/community partnership does not work	SHDC does not take all the blame. SHDC can make use of work invested by community.
Concerns because of heritage and archaeology cause delays to the project or problems on site	Start to use other areas in Southern Area and town centre to meet community's needs

#### **DOS OPEN SPACE STEERING GROUP RECOMMENDS THAT:**

1. SHDC sets up a fully-funded open space steering group with SHDC officers from the Landscape and Leisure, Recreation and Property Services Departments, DOS representatives and external advisors to look in detail at the partnership ideas put forward in this report. The Steering Group could later become part of the management team of a joint Council/community partnership, if that is the route chosen.
2. The Steering Group looks immediately at the highlighted recommendations in the report.
3. The Steering Group, after looking at the Feasibility Study, Strategy Report and Exhibition Dossier and the architects' plans as a whole, draws up an outline plan to put before the Council and the community to identify the best way forward.
4. SHDC makes available to the community copies of all three DOS Open Space Steering Group reports
5. These steps are taken as soon as possible



## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **(1) Exact wording of South Hams District Council's remit to DOS**

Council Minutes: 11.11.04

"Recommendations: that the Council resolves to

- i. support in principle the concept framework developed by DOS for the development of the Southern Area
- v. agree the setting up of a Steering Group by Design Our Space (DOS) to investigate the future provision and management of Public Open Space with a feasibility report to Council by the end of June 2005.

21. The consultation exercise concluded that the community had a wish to design and manage the open space. Investigation of this idea could concentrate of the Bungalow site whilst also assessing other areas of public use identified during the DOS consultation. In order to maintain the momentum and public involvement it is recommended that Members agree the setting up of a Steering Group by DOS whereby the Council can work with DOS and the wider community to investigate options for public open space in the Southern Area. It is proposed that the Group liaise closely with any appointed advisors during this [period] (to ensure compatibility between development and public open space) and that the study be produced by the end of June 2005. The remit of the group would be to look at:

- Extent of available land
- Design
- Long term management
- Long term ownership
- Costs and funding
- Phasing.

### **(2) Northamptonshire County Council's Pocket Parks Scheme**

In April 2002, Northamptonshire County Council received Beacon status for 'Improving Urban Green Spaces', the only county council to do so. Our innovative Pocket Parks Scheme provides 'Countryside on the Doorstep' for people in Northamptonshire.

Pocket Parks are open areas of land:

- owned and managed by local people
- providing free, open access for all at all times
- helping to protect and conserve local wildlife, heritage and landscape

Over the past 18 years, the county council has worked in partnership with many organisations and other local authorities to help create 80 Pocket Parks. They vary in size from 0.04ha to 35ha and are found in all types of locations from town centres to quiet villages.

Pocket Parks serve many purposes. They make a valuable contribution to the protection and conservation of Northamptonshire's landscape, heritage and wildlife, as well as giving local people the opportunity to enhance the place in which they live or work. In addition, Pocket Parks can assist in the regeneration of areas as well as help to maintain existing features.

The Pocket Parks scheme is easily replicable, environmentally sound, good economic value and community focussed. Any available space can become a Pocket Park - all that is needed is political will and grass roots support.

In the 18 years the scheme has been in operation, only one Pocket Park has closed. The Council feels that their success is due to careful planning, local empowerment and providing effective support.

#### Community desire

Pocket Parks are only set up in areas where the communities have expressed a wish for one to be established. The creation of a management group ensures that the local community is fully involved with all aspects of the Pocket Parks establishment.

#### Local empowerment

From the outset, the Pocket Park is the responsibility of the community and not the local authority.

#### Appropriate site

Ensuring the suitability of a site - for example proximity to the community, ease of access, other similar amenities, recreational and wildlife potential - is of paramount importance.

#### Continuous support

The Pocket Parks Officer provides support and advice to the Pocket Parks at all stages of their existence. In addition, a small capital reserve is available to assist groups with the purchase of land or large pieces of equipment.

#### Partnerships and Service Level Agreements

The development of partnership working by the local authorities and the implementation of service level agreements with various organisations also provide ongoing assistance and support for the Pocket Parks.

#### Political will

The Scheme has the full support of members and is an integral part of the Council Plan with a Best Value target of creating three new Pocket Parks per year over the next four years.

For more information see the references on page 32

### **(3) Community Land Trusts**

A Community Land Trust provides a mechanism for keeping affordable houses affordable in perpetuity.

The idea is that the trust owns the land and builds the houses which are then sold at a price which reflects the cost of the house (but not the land). Together with cheap, low-start mortgages this brings down the cost to the owner considerably. When the

owner sells the house (but not the land), any rise in value is shared between the owner and the trust (with the major share going to the trust).

This provides a revenue stream for the trust (which allows it to continue subsidising house building and selling), but also tends to reduce the likelihood of the house being sold for a quick profit.

For more information see the references on page 32

#### **(4) Groundwork**

Groundwork is a federation of Trusts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, each working with their partners to improve the quality of the local environment, the lives of local people and the success of local businesses in areas in need of investment and support.

Each Groundwork Trust is a partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors with its own board of trustees. The work of the Trusts is supported by the national and regional offices of Groundwork UK and by Groundwork Wales.

They work closely with the Government and national assemblies, local authorities, regional agencies and businesses. We also receive support from the European Union, the National Lottery, private sponsors and charitable foundations.

Groundwork receives a grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) to support its activities and is a partner in helping deliver the Government's Sustainable Communities plan.

The first Groundwork Trust was established on Merseyside in 1981. There are now 50 Trusts in the UK and a number of Groundwork projects in Europe. The Groundwork approach has also been adopted in Japan and the USA where the National Park Service is supporting a growing number of Trusts.

Groundwork's purpose is to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action. They aim to do this by getting residents, businesses and other local organisations involved in practical projects that improve quality of life, bring about regeneration and lay the foundations for sustainable development.

Groundwork believes a 'sustainable community' is one which is vibrant, healthy and safe, which values the local and global environment and where individuals and enterprise prosper.

For more information see the references on page 32

#### **(5) Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens**

FCFCG is the representative body for city farms, community gardens and similar community-led organisations in the UK.

- There are 59 city farms, nearly 1000 community gardens, 75 school farms and a number of community-managed allotments in the UK.
- An estimated 500,000 people volunteer on them and they attract over three million visitors each year.

- FCFCG promotes and represents its members at a national, regional and local level.
- It also provides a wide range of services, advice and support for city farms and community gardens, whether they are well-established or just getting off the ground.

City farms and community gardens are community-managed projects working with people, animals and plants. They range from tiny wildlife gardens to fruit and vegetable plots on housing estates, from community polytunnels to large city farms.

They exist mainly in urban areas and are created in response to a lack of access to green space, combined with a desire to encourage strong community relationships and an awareness of gardening and farming.

City farms and community gardens are often developed by local people in a voluntary capacity, and commonly retain a strong degree of volunteer involvement. Some larger community farms and gardens employ many workers whilst others are run solely by small groups of dedicated volunteers. Most are run by a management committee of local people and some are run as partnerships with local authorities, whilst retaining strong local involvement.

Most projects provide food-growing activities, training courses, school visits, community allotments and community businesses. In addition, some provide play facilities and sports facilities, and after school and holiday schemes.

There is no typical city farm or community garden as each develops according to the local area and in response to the needs of the local community. They are places where people of all ages and from all sections of the community are welcome.

For more information see the references on page 32

## **(6) Report on Community Consultation 2004**

“Areas of Agreement” in the Plenary Session relating to the Bungalow Garden were:

- Protect and enhance heritage
- Trees
- Play space for children
- Community focus space/café
- Seating – resting, meeting, viewing point
- Public Art
- Feature the water and pool

Di Parkin, the author of the Consultation Report, comments: “the above relates specifically to the Bungalow Garden, but what might happen there must depend on the development of the whole Southern Area. For instance, other sites might be possible, or indeed preferable, for a playground, such as Grove School field, should it become available, or closer to the old town, on the North Side of the Area (South Street open space). In relation to housing being planned to back onto the Garden, people were against the traditional suburban-type housing with front and back gardens.”

## **(7) Design Details**

### **1. SECURITY**

#### Between private and public spaces

- A secure boundary is needed between private and public spaces, and a 1.8m steel fence will be needed to reinforce hedging to the south and west
- It has been suggested that the garden be closed at night, although without unacceptable additions to the boundaries, people could still get it, and it is proposed to build a path for rear access to new properties from Heath Way and the car park
- We propose an Open Garden, with entrances from Leechwell Lane, Heath Way and the car park.

#### Security within the garden

- This will depend on clear Amenity Value Resource recognition, with design and security paramount. This means good maintenance, no tall shrubbery or low branches and good visibility
- Garden furniture such as benches, litter and dog bins, need to be rugged and firmly secured
- Any buildings on the site would need to be secure, and if habitable, occupied. There are no plans for a park-keeper or ranger in Totnes.
- CCTV is not an option at the moment. Leechwell Lane and Heath Way car park would provide useful lighting, and the new housing would offer on-site observation.

### **2. BOUNDARIES**

Green boundaries are preferred. They encourage wildlife and are in sympathy with the character of the garden, which has a 50m long Devon hedgebank to the south, which is partially degraded. The Leechwell Lane boundary needs repairing.

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. Existing private gardens need barriers up to 1.8m with dense thorny planting in front
- b. Leechwell Lane wall needs to be repaired
- c. Devon banks to be rebuilt, and new hedges expertly pruned

### **3. TREES**

The Bungalow Garden presents a good and welcome opportunity to have a planned and managed tree planting scheme within the town centre.

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. Remove dead or dying trees
- b. Remove dangerously leaning and poorly functioning trees
- c. Gradually replace some trees with others which provide more all year interest and encourage wildlife

If this plan is followed, the trees remaining will be shown off to greater advantage. It is hoped that some people will donate one of their favourite trees or give one as a memorial to someone.

#### 4. PLANTINGS

The aim of plantings is to create a place of harmony with local environmental conditions, where a high proportion of the plantings is of native plants, suitable for the area, offering insects, birds and animals a favourable habitat.

##### **Recommendations**

- a. Clear garden of undergrowth and decide which shrubs and hedges to keep
- b. Identify soil type, slope and aspect, light and shade, drainage and water management
- c. Low maintenance is a priority, such as rough grass with bulbs and wildflowers, ground cover plants and native shrubs, hedges and plants.

#### 5. WILDFLOWER MANAGEMENT

It is hoped that some parts of the garden, possibly adjoining the boundaries, Devon banks or edges, will be made into wildflower areas. They need careful maintenance. Left to themselves for a few years, there will only be grasses and a few strong flowers. The management required will depend on whether the plants flower in spring or autumn.

##### **Recommendations:**

- a. Control pernicious weeds
- b. Choose separate areas for spring and summer wild flowers
- c. Arrange for contract maintenance

#### 6. SEATING

Seats should be placed in a variety of locations in the garden, in sunlight, in shade, where there are views, where mothers would be able to watch young ones at play, and for the elderly, and close to scented plants with easy access for the disabled.

##### **Recommendations:**

- a. Source seats locally or from non-profit organisations eg Wildlife Trust
- b. Seats should reflect the ambience of their immediate area
- c. Install seats over a period of time as funds become available

Donations could be encouraged as on the Devon Coastal Path.

#### 7. PUBLIC ART

##### **What is public art?**

Public art can be functional, that is, it could be a seat, railings, lighting or a bollard. It has a practical use. Or public art can be non-functional, it can be something we look at, feel or hear, such as a sculpture, water feature, wind chimes or mosaic. It could tell us about the place or what happened here. It could celebrate our life today or just be lovely to look at.

##### **What can public art do for the Southern Area?**

Thoughtfully considered, well-designed and well-made public art can have a positive effect on how the place feels to live and be in. Experiences elsewhere have shown that not only does public art enhance our places and spaces, but can add distinctive character, integration and identity. This has reduced vandalism, and fostered a more caring attitude to the places in which we live, a worthy heritage for our children.

### **What we need from the community**

DOS Open Space Steering Group has marked sites on a map, and will invite the community to offer their ideas about what could go on those sites. It could be a drawing, photo or model. Tell us about it. Does it celebrate a place or event, old or new? Do we use it, or use our senses to enjoy it? Have we missed a site? Entries will be displayed at the 30 June Exhibition, and a panel will look at the entries to see which ones could be developed into features for the sites. The invitation is open to all.

### **8. DOG USE**

Three options on how owners with their dogs can use the garden seem available:

1. Let dogs exercise freely
2. Keep dogs on leads
3. Ban dogs completely

Three issues need to be considered in making a decision:

1. the need for dog facilities in the Southern Area
2. the relationship between maintenance of grass and dog contamination. SHDC has (at least) two categories of grass maintenance – ‘amenity’ for general use (less frequent mowing and uncollected cut grass) and ‘ornamental’ for sport and recreation (mowed once a week and cut grass collected). The former makes it harder for owners to clear up any mess, which also tends to be less visible to the public.
3. the feasibility of restricting dog use

### **Recommendation:**

1. that only **dogs on leads** are allowed in the park, and that adequate facilities are in place to support dog owners and to control and educate irresponsible ones.
  2. that if there is to be cut grass, it is cut to an ‘ornamental’ level
9. BUILDINGS, WATER FEATURES, PLAY EQUIPMENT, YOUTH AND SCHOOLCHILDREN INVOLVEMENT

To be included in the Strategy Report and Exhibition Dossier

## **(8) British Trust for Community Volunteers (BTCV)**

BTCV is the UK's largest practical conservation charity. Founded in 1959, it helps over 130,000 volunteers take hands-on action each year to improve the rural and urban environment.

They offer:

- Practical conservation opportunities
- Support and advice for local people and community groups
- UK and International Conservation Holidays
- Training and learning opportunities
- Practical land management for conservation
- Opportunities for young people to develop skills and careers
- Employment programmes to give people the skills for work
- Recycling and waste minimisation projects and consultancy
- Environmental consultancy and project management
- Mail order delivery, including trees, wildflowers, tools and handbooks.

Guiding principles

- Increase the number of people and communities that have the capacity and abilities to change their environment positively and sustainably.
- Reach an increasingly diverse range of people defined by culture, geography or personal circumstances, by listening and responding to their needs.
- Provide relevant solutions for communities that take full account of local dynamics and individual situations.
- Validate and advocate the links between practical environmental action, health, well-being, skills for life, civil renewal, employment and citizenship.
- Promote and publicise the value of environmental volunteering in social and economic regeneration.

For more information see the references on page 32

## **(9) The Heritage Lottery Fund (funding work on the Immersion Pool)**

The **Heritage Lottery Fund** ([www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)) offers grants up to £50,000 under a scheme called **Your Heritage** which could be used to fund work on the pool in the garden. Michael Clayson from the Exeter office of the Heritage Lottery has visited the garden and was very optimistic about our chances. To qualify for a **Your Heritage** grant, projects should conserve and enhance our diverse heritage or encourage communities to identify, look after and celebrate their heritage or both. Projects should also ensure that everyone can learn about, have access to, and enjoy their heritage.



Conservation and repairs to the pool would be covered, but conservation can only be a part of funding application. We could not apply for funding to build a water-course running from the stream to the road.

The application must also cover educational/learning aspects. This would include on and off-site learning materials, exhibitions and displays, heritage trails and notice boards (at the Totnes Museum and Tourist Information Centre as well as in the garden itself). Crucially there has to be adequate access to the heritage for as many people as possible – so funding may also cover signposts, seating or a path to the site. We do not have to get matched funding, but will probably have to find a small percentage of the total costs – through fundraising and volunteer contributions for example.

Michael Clayson also suggested that if the Town Council are in agreement, we could later make a second linked application to conserve and repair the Leechwell in similar fashion.

### **(10) Hanson Environment Fund**

The **Hanson Environment Fund** ([www.hansonenvfund.org](http://www.hansonenvfund.org)) uses landfill tax credits accumulated by the company to support environmental and community initiatives from not-for-profit organisations. The Hanson Environment Fund has distributed more than £15.7 million in the last 8 years, to support more than 800 projects across the UK. Around 40% of applications are successful.

The fund offers two levels of support:

1. small grants scheme – grants between £250 and £4,000 for community amenities, and wildlife and habitat conservation
2. main grants scheme – grants between £4,001 and £25,000 for the creation and improvement of parks and public amenities, and the creation, restoration and management of areas specifically to safeguard and/or enhance biodiversity.

Preliminary discussions with the fund lead us to be optimistic – we believe the fund would support an application that would allow us to do some landscaping and planting as well as the provision of paths and seating.

As with the heritage Lottery Fund, we would have to obtain a small percentage of the total costs from other sources.

## **References and Further Reading**

South Hams Local Plan review 1995 – 2011: General Policies  
Regeneration of Public Parks 2000  
CABE Green Space Strategies: Good Practice Guide

### **Northamptonshire's Pocket Parks:**

See <http://www.pocketparks.com>

### **Community Land Trusts:**

1. The Confederation of Co-operative Housing website - see <http://cch.coop> particularly the research paper at <http://cch.coop/docs/cch-clt-report.pdf>
2. The Community Land Trust website at the University of Salford - see <http://www.communitylandtrust.salford.ac.uk/>
3. The Oxford Community Land Trust website - see <http://oxfordshirecommunitylandtrusts.org.uk/links/cltlinks/> particularly the links page at <http://oxfordshirecommunitylandtrusts.org.uk/links/cltlinks/>

### **GroundWork:**

See <http://www.groundwork.org.uk>

### **Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens:**

See <http://www.farmgarden.org.uk>

### **British Trust for Community Volunteers (BTCV)**

See <http://www.btcv.org>

### **The Heritage Lottery Fund**

See [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

### **Hanson Environment Fund**

See <http://www.hansonenvfund.org>

## **DISCLAIMER**

The information in this report, "How It Could Work", has been compiled by volunteers from the DOS Open Space Steering Group for South Hams District Council. Whilst every effort to be accurate has been made the group disclaims any responsibility for statements and data not independently verified.

## Author's Note

### 1. Was this the best way?

This report is about how to turn ideas into reality. It is a key step in any project. However, was asking a group of volunteers to do this important work, without funding or office facilities, the best way to achieve the objective, or to protect the investment that has already been made by the Council and the community in terms of time, money and effort?

As co-chair, I am very conscious of the confidence and responsibility the Council has placed on the DOS Open Space Steering Group by the Council and the community. If a fully funded, cross-departmental Steering Group, with community representation and outside expert advice, had been set up for this work (as recommended in this report for the next stage), would not the Council have been able to place more confidence in the outcome?

### 2. Why was it written in this way?

'Feasibility study' and 'models of management' are not phrases that one hears very often in Totnes town. Some members of the community were put off joining the Open Space Steering Group by these kinds of words. On the other hand, many 'new age' ideas, such as the pattern of life that connects everyone and everything, may not feature in many Council discussions. Even well-known words such as 'history' and 'management' have different meanings for the Council and the community.

The remit for the Feasibility Study was narrow in focus, one small step forward and isolated from a strategic framework, and one small step forward. However, many in the community think in a different way: their focus is visionary, they see beyond the confines of a predetermined box and feel connected to an underlying network between man and nature. I hope that by writing the report in plain English, by extending the concept of 'sustainable development' and by producing three reports, DOS Open Space Steering Group's research and information will be accessible to everyone. The council is part of the wider community it serves, not separate from it.

### 3. Will it work?

This reports shows how it could work. But will it work?

There have been many excellent, logical and fully-costed reports which have ended up on the shelf, because of one unknown and unpredictable factor: people. I have stretched the sustainable development model to its limit to include the Council and the community within its framework. We need a new model to explain why the Council and the community have such different viewpoints and how to bring them together, if a partnership between them is to work. This new model is outside the scope of this report.

Sue Holmes - June 2005