

Parks and open spaces strategy

[00:17] - Ian Maxwell

Open space, it's a really important part of every community across our Pacific, and healthy parks and healthy people, look, it goes together and it's important in terms of our community, the role its parks play.

And it's common to think about areas such as roads or pipes or sewerage systems as utilities.

And I think it's really important to think about open space in exactly the same way.

Think of open space as a utility, as an asset. Think of open space not just as an individual park, an island in the middle of your community, but a network of open space that stretches right through your community.

Areas of open space run alongside our coastlines. They run alongside our streams. They run beside our roads and our motorways. And all of this makes up our open space network.

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The most important thing when proceeding in terms of strategic planning about open space is actually resolving what role that open space will play in your community.

That can play a role and physical well-being, things like sports and recreation, for example.

Can play a role in mental well-being, a place to go and be with nature or to enjoy a location.

It can play a role in terms of enhancing the natural environment, a place for wildlife habitats. A place to meet in, a place for people together.

These are things that open space can provide to your community. And it's really important for you to decide what it is that this open space network will provide to you and what key components of that open space network will do.

Sustainability, from a financial perspective, is very important in terms of strategic planning for open space. It's important that when we think about our open space, when we think about what facilities that we will provide on that open space, that we think about where that funding is coming from.

In almost all cases, that funding comes from taxation, that comes from central government taxation or perhaps taxation by local councils.

And we know that demand for money raised by government and raised by councils is very high.

And it's important not to create a situation where we have built a facility and actually we are unable to maintain it because taxation is unable to provide the amount of funding that's necessary to do that.

What I've found in our situation is it's important to look ahead in terms of your asset management planning and your financial planning, just how much funding is available in future years for renewals and for maintenance and use that as a guide for what you can build now.

Strategic planning also helps innovation. Things can be done differently in the future compared to now. If we find, for example, that a facility cannot be maintained in the normal way, can we do it another way?

Just thinking about how you raise funds helps you create a way of looking at new ways of doing things, some innovation and a new approach.

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Open space is very versatile. Each of us have been in situations perhaps we've been looking at a map of our town and we're looking for a site that might be useful for housing or for transport or for some sort of utility.

And those green spaces on that map look incredibly attractive.

And of course, I'm talking about open space, those green spaces are our cities' open space. And we need to be careful when doing that.

Clearly, our open space has legal protection, but we know that in situations that is not enough. If your community loves their open space, uses their open space, then they will themselves give a comment and feedback and perhaps get very angry about proposals to use it for something else.

That open space is going to be more important in the future than it is today. And no matter how significant the new housing development might be, it's important to remember that future generation.