

Chapter 7: Sustainable project management of green spaces, protected and conserved areas – opportunities and challenges.

Malgorzata Radomska¹

Richard Clarke²

Denise Hewlett³

Abstract

Worldwide, the dynamics in which protected areas and in urban contexts, public parks and other forms of greenspaces have survived, is challenging. For example, impacts of climate change, seemingly endless political instabilities, decreased funding opportunities, increased numbers of tourists, notably so since the pandemic, all draw upon, managing agencies' increasingly limited funds, staff capacities, their skills, knowledge, expertise and resources often simultaneously, to manage their areas often for dual, frequently conflicting purposes of conservation and use. Such events can have deep-seated impacts of change on environments and in turn on their management. Their effects can be of a temporary nature, invariably will warrant adaptive management actions to maintain an area's purposes and many activities will engage with project and/or programme management principles of working. This chapter provides a review of project management in environmental contexts and identifies key challenges. We draw upon literature in the field of protected area, landscape and greenspace management. In this context, we discuss key principles of project management, with supporting theories and concepts from a generic perspective of the discipline of project management. Despite many managing agencies presenting themselves as able project-oriented organisations, key

¹ Head of Department of Responsible Management and Leadership, University of Winchester, Faculty of Business and Digital Technologies. Malgorzata.Radomska@winchester.ac.uk

² Richard N Clarke, Marlborough, Wiltshire, UK Richard.Clarke069@btinternet.com

³ Professor of Knowledge Exchange (Project Management & Protected Spaces), University of Winchester Business School.

challenges that appear to be common amongst all projects are highlighted in protected area contexts and examples are provided within the text and through case studies provided.

Key words: project-oriented organisation, project governance, stakeholders, leadership, funding, team management, hybrid working.

7.1 Introduction

Many of our natural environments in rural areas and in urbanised contexts of public parks, green ecological corridors and wedges, survive in a dynamic, if not tumultuous, context, marked by change (Bretschger & Pittel 2020; Head 2022). This is a situation which has been exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of the pandemic (Crossley & Russo 2022; Ding et al. 2022). Key challenges to their existence and consequently implications for their management, include an increasingly disconcerting and politically unstable world exacerbated for examples by declining economies and financial systems, social unrest, wars, extensive migration of populations, all of which, has an impact on funding mechanisms required to support the continued management of many of our urban greenspaces and protected areas. In addition, their managing agencies face additional demands on natural environments to help ameliorate environmental concerns including managing impacts of climate change, pollution (air, water, noise), natural disasters, and biodiversity crises (Geldmann et al. 2015; Ranius 2023; UNEP 2022). And yet, often concurrently vast swathes of natural land rich in biodiversity are regularly being exploited for humanity's development purposes.

To work within this dynamic and highly challenging context demands that managing agencies of protected areas and greenspaces, frequently need to exercise their abilities in what is considered as best practice governance, planning and management (Pantaloni et al. 2020). To lead on such projects, requires an appropriately supportive organisation and project-oriented culture from within the managing agency. That agency can underpin the necessary processes for the effective management of multiple projects, with skilled project managers who can manage limited resources in an optimised way (Yan & Tang 2021). There are many examples found in greenspace and protected area contexts of project orientated

organisations who can be characterised by their ‘seemingly endless ability to carry out small and extensive management of internal and external projects, (of) projects that can be repetitive’, i.e., related to land management regimes, but many ‘projects can also be considered quite unique’ (Gareis 1991, 71). Additionally, the drive towards a project orientated structure in these organisations, is driven by not only a need for change, but potentially could be interpreted as engineered through traditional funding mechanisms driven by national governments for which project teams need to competitively bid for funds with managing agencies and from funding authorities. This is a common approach used in the UK and EU contexts.

Moreover, in this region, due to increasingly limited staff numbers, and yet a wide-ranging knowledge base required to effectively manage greenspaces and protected areas, it is quite usual to find a culture of sharing best practices, and knowledge, This is frequently supported through project work amongst a variety of agencies with responsibility for a given geographic area. Furthermore, similar threads of working amongst managing agencies’ activities are evident. Following best practice governance guidelines, through stakeholder engagement, collaborative discussions, and often multiple discourse of compromises, a range of well planned, often multiple projects are developed to enable conservation, recreation and/or development goals for an area. Such projects are frequently targeted to achieve planned objectives, and are designed so that they can, on completion, be evaluated in terms of their output, outcomes, and benefits often for a wide variety of stakeholders. An important question regarding project management in green spaces is the extent to which such projects can be delivered successfully given the difficult context in which they operate. Another important point is whether such projects can be delivered in a sustainable way: a perspective frequently critiqued, that can be interpreted in multiple ways, but for the purpose of the focus of this chapter, sustainability is taken according to the IUCN as comprising of 4 key principles (Worboys et al. 2015):

- **Leadership** –considered essential for ensuring that sustainability is central to delivery and design.
- **Triple bottom line** – addressing environmental, social cultural and economic needs of an area.

- **Whole of life asset thinking** – programmes and projects should have due regard for the full extent of the life of programmes and projects.
- **Resource efficiency** - making maximum use of all-too-often, limited resources.

The aim of this chapter is to elaborate on a few selected aspects of project and policy management challenges in the subject of green spaces and protected area management. This has required drawing upon two bodies of knowledge: firstly, from green spaces' initiatives, regulations and policy contexts in the UK and representing international contexts, on policies, standards and best practice guidelines in protected area contexts; and secondly, recognising project management as a discipline in its own right, we examine project management in greenspace and protected area contexts against principles, concepts and current key theories generated in the generic literature on project management. This has provided useful insights on how the management of projects in greenspace and protected area contexts might be enhanced. Examples of the development of effective policy concerned with green spaces and protected areas in the UK include: UK government's 30 by 30 targets; the IUCN's pilot project to progress 'Green Listing' certification across the UK; and the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) along with the individual Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty partnerships, joint Colchester Agreement. These policy initiatives, resemble projects in that they have needed to be delivered in a coordinated and comprehensive way. A selection of policy initiatives and projects will be developed in this chapter to help us better understand the challenges faced by project teams and provide us with potentially useful tips on how to improve project management practices in green spaces and protected area management.

7.2 Green Spaces, Protected and Conserved areas: an Overview of International and UK Project Initiatives

Protected areas need to be well-governed, well-designed and well-managed in order to be able to conserve nature and provide social, economic, cultural and spiritual benefits (Puhakka et al. 2017; Verschuuren & Brown 2019; Jiricka-Pürerer et al. 2019). Therefore, over decades, many international and national initiatives and guidelines have been developed to protect the nature found in these areas and support green

space managers in their daily work. For example, in the UK, the Countryside Commission was established in 1968 and the Nature Conservancy Council in 1973. Both organisations aimed to provide protected area management with a sense of direction, outlined the aims and objectives to be met and equipped them with tools to assess their organisational performance (Young 2011; Jansson et al. 2019; Fros et al. 2021; Kelly 2022). At the international level the '30 by 30' initiative aims to designate 30% of the surface of our planet as protected areas by 2030 (see Chapter 1) and in addition, contribute to the UK's Net Zero Strategy (2021). This sets out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of economy following the COVID-19 pandemic. (Dinerstein et al. 2019; HM Government 2021).

Looking at UK national legislation, it is important to refer to the 25-year Environment Plan (HM Government 2018). This laid the foundations of the current UK environmental policy as it has aimed to improve the environment within a generation. It focuses on activities that would contribute to: providing for clean air clean and plentiful water, thriving plants and wildlife; reducing the risks of harm from environmental hazards; using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently enhancing beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment and mitigating and adapting to climate change. These objectives set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, were reinforced in the UK Environment Act (2021) the adoption of which, was to ensure that the UK's commitment towards green spaces and protected areas continued after Brexit (Reid 2021; Lee 2022).

Attention also needs to be paid to the Green Infrastructure Framework launched by Natural England in 2023 (Natural England 2023). This action demonstrates the implementation of a commitment by the Government to Defra's 25 Year Environment Plan, which aims to increase the amount of green cover up to 40% in urban residential areas and creating a good quality greenspace in every local area across the country. The idea behind this action is not new. Yet it does reemphasise, the importance of increasing access to natural green spaces for people's health and wellbeing and revives attention on setting a target for local government agencies to provide for public access to greenspaces within 15 minutes' walk from a residential area. In so doing, key aspirations are to contribute to improving people's health and wellbeing, enhancing air quality, contributing to support nature recovery, through which issues of

social inequality and environmental decline might be addressed (see Navarrete-Hernandez & Laffan 2019; Mosler & Hobson 2021).

However, whereas national and international initiatives and legislation outline some ambitious strategic goals to be achieved in the near future, they provide little detailed information about how exactly their content will be achieved, who will be responsible for delivery, and how to measure the progress, delivery or performance assessment that will be required. A common challenge for any strategic plan in an organisation, as in the case of the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, is that it is often not followed by a realistic, well-designed and detailed operational plan: a plan that would be supported by developing specific output-oriented projects, and would be aligned with a strategic plan which could produce the desired benefits (Kjersem et al. 2017). Even more importantly is the ability to assess the extent to which the actions taken have produced a measurable outcome that has contributed to achieving the overarching goals. This is not a unique situation in the context of UK's Protected Areas, rather it is a situation which has been identified worldwide (Hockings et al. 2019). In seeking to address this issue the International Union for Conservation of Nature or IUCN developed its Green List Certification that was launched in November 2017.

Green List Certification represents a global campaign for successful nature conservation, and has resulted in the production of the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas Standard (IUCN, 2017). This provides a global benchmark for successful green spaces and protected area management. It provides a list of seventeen criteria under four components that are accompanied by fifty indicators which help to measure site performance and progress assessments as to the extent to which governance and management has been effective, equitable and sustainable, i.e., 'a standard that addresses the social, environmental or economic practices of a defined entity, or a combination of these' (ISEAL 2023). Following these standards and using them to measure site performance is considered to help managers assess if their initiatives have contributed to the delivery of nature conservation results.

The three components of the IUCN Green List Standard, can be applied to management approaches of any green space or protected area. These are:

- Good governance,
- Sound design and planning,
- Effective management

and together they support the fourth component on achieving successful conservation outcomes (IUCN 2017, 10-14). The good governance component unsurprisingly draws upon previously established good practice guidelines (c.f. Borrini-Feyerabed et al., 2014). As such at the minimum, is concerned with ensuring that governance arrangements and decision-making processes are transparent, that they are clearly defined and appropriately communicated and that they represent and address the interests of civil society and other key stakeholders. Also, any site management is expected to draw upon expert knowledge using adaptive and responsive management practices (Jaafar & Yusof 2019).

The sound planning component concerns enabling a good understanding of the social, economic and environmental context, knowing the key environmental values and attributes of a managed green space/protected area and designing a long-term sustainable management plan.

Effective management highlights the importance of developing a long-term management strategy for an area that emphasises economic conditions, that has clear aims and objectives that are fundamentally supported by the adequate allocation of both financial and human resources (fig. 7.1).



Fig 7.1 IUCN Green List Standard components (IUCN, 2017)

However, as welcome as these criteria, components and indicators are, their construction is primarily related to process-oriented guidelines and these do not, we contend, place enough attention on key people skills needed for successful project delivery including leadership, team building and the abilities to communicate effectively and well . Multiple debates in generic project management literature demonstrates that this lack of attention on peoples skills, is not uncommon in all forms of projects although the significance of such skills on successful project management and its delivery has been gaining increasing attention (c.f. Madsen 2019; Whyte et al. 2022). The sections below discuss from a process and people aspect of project management, how principles of project and programme management have been identified in the framework set out in the IUCN’s Green Listing process.

7.3 Good governance

In the generic area of project management, the term governance is directed specifically to project governance. In practice it’s a key concept that is frequently reported as an oversight by project management teams and/or by funding authorities (Müller 2009; Turner & Müller 2017; Turner 2020). Good project governance aims to establish a set of policies, regulations and procedures that can enable a monitoring framework as to how a project is being delivered, how well or otherwise the project is achieving organizational objectives, meeting the aims and expectations of

stakeholders, and ensuring project viability (Too & Weaver 2013; Ahola et al. 2014). Also, in the current post COVID-19 challenging, economic situation, improving the governance structure of a project enhances the probability of a project's success (Bednarz et al. 2021; Pinto 2022). An important factor that will either enhance or impede project success, and is integral to governance and management practices, concerns stakeholder management (Aaltonen 2011). Stakeholders (individuals, groups or organisations), whether primary (organisation who deliver the project, their suppliers, project owners), secondary (organisations or provides or services the project is depended on, unions, customers) or tertiary (local communities, interest groups, media etc.) (Rolstadås & Schiefloe 2017) all can enhance/pejoratively affect project outcome(s) (Littau et al. 2010). Therefore, it is crucial for a project manager to consider how to engage and develop strong relationships with a wide range of stakeholders (Pollack et al. 2017; Sefiani et al. 2018), how to establish communications with each of them, that is built on a relationship of trust, leadership and interpersonal skills (Aladpoosh et al. 2012; Hartmann & Hietbrink 2013; Mok et al. 2014; de Oliveira and Rabechini 2019). Moreover, sharing information about the project aims and objectives, listening to stakeholders' feedback and providing them with regular updates about project development should be managed strategically throughout the whole project life cycle (Bourne & Walker 2005). For example, a lack of good understanding for internal stakeholders' views and skills might result in not using their full potential and consequently lead to the mismanagement of project resources (Beringer et al. 2012).

In cases of project management in protected areas, important stakeholders include: the public, local communities and residents whose expectations and perceptions should be expressed and taken into consideration at least, during public consultations. The purpose of their engagement includes ensuring that their rights are recognised and they are involved in management and decision-making processes. An important aspect of stakeholder communication management is choosing appropriate channels, tools and techniques (Walley 2013; Turkulainen 2015) and tailoring communication style to maintain stakeholders commitment, enthusiasm and prevent potential conflicts (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Helin et al. 2013). However, as practice often shows (see boxed case study below), activities in the contexts of protected area and greenspace management can attract controversy, often of political and economic

design, and can become hugely complex. If not managed appropriately, competing objectives and visions might result in stakeholder conflicts that can at the very least result in project delay or even failure (Aalbers et al. 2019).

“Box [Notec Valley Landscape Park (Dolina Noteci Park Krajobrazowy)] starts”

Notec Valley is an area located in Wielkopolska region, in the western part of Poland. It is characterised by a unique landscape and is inhabited by a range of endangered species that require conservation. At the beginning of 2023, intensive work started on the establishment of the Notec Valley Landscape Park. Based on the legislation drafted, the park is to be established on 42,000 ha spreading over thirteen municipalities (BIP 2023). It is to be the first landscape park in Wielkopolska region. The key aims of local government institutions, include the conservation of this unique green space and its inherent species, enhancing health and wellbeing of residents, and increasing tourism and recreation offers provided in the area, to support economic development. It was also hoped that the establishment of the park would enable local government to apply for national and European funding to enable improvements in green space infrastructure, and for economic development providing for a significant financial boost for the region.

However, the idea of the park was developed by government officials, in the Dolina Noteci Landscape Parks Team (*Zespół Parków Krajobrazowych Dolina Noteci*) without consulting with project stakeholders and particularly omitted communications with local farmers who became strong opponents to the idea of establishing a landscape park in the region. Their main point of concern was that the park would have negative impact on the management and development of their farms and, thus, would have an adverse impact on their income generation. As no public consultations took place when the idea of the park was being developed **and** there was no communication between the administrative officials and residents, misconceptions were widespread and opposition grew. A series of meetings was organised by Dolina Noteci Landscape Parks Team starting at the end of January 2023 to clarify issues, such as, soil fertility, deforestation, hunting, farm closure or further development of livestock buildings and to outline the potential benefits of the park establishment for the region and its residents (Danielewicz 2023; Wolski 2023). However, as they were

organised after the draft legislation for the park was shared with the public, the communication about this project was limited and the farmers did not feel that they were trusted partners whose views and interests would be taken into account. The farmers felt that when delivering this project, their economic activity would at best be limited, if not eliminated. They thought that their economic activities were perceived by decision-making authorities to have negative impacts on the natural environment.

“Box [Notec Valley Landscape Park (Dolina Noteci Park Krajobrazowy)] ends”

7.4 Good management: sound design and planning and leadership qualities

Management is defined as ‘the process of assembling and using sets of resources in a goal-directed manner to accomplish tasks in an organisation’ (Hitt et al. 2011, 4): it involves establishing planning, organising, implementing and controlling processes, assembling and using allocated resources to achieve a desired outcome. However, delivering a successful project is not only about the management of processes and being adaptive to change (Salerno et al. 2015). It is also about individual behaviour in relation to other members of a project team (Müller et al. 2018; Crevani et al. 2010). It involves personal and professional development skills, a people perspective to project management, an ability to empower team members’, good interpersonal skills (Gido and Clements 1999, 85), and well-developed emotional intelligence to be able to deliver anticipated results, even when unexpected events happen and things go wrong (Goleman 2004): all of which can be enhanced through engaging in mindful project management (Kutsch & Hall 2020).

The adoption of ‘balanced leadership’ is important (Müller et al. 2017), by ‘giving ‘power to’ others, empowering team members and using their hierarchical power to allow for distributed forms of leadership to accomplish project tasks (Whyte et al. 2022, 2). Additionally, trust is a key and important principle, which is influenced by and affects the level of confidence in the team that a delegated task will be delivered.

Providing team members with opportunities to learn new skills and improve their competences, helps develop the team’s morale, promotes open

communication, team cohesion, positive professional work relations based on mutual respect, support and understanding: all of which are key to contributing to the successful delivery of project outputs (Al-Ghazali 2020; Raziq et al.2018). Inspiring, encouraging and motivating the project team, co-creating and sharing a vision of a bright and prosperous future of an organisation (Keegan & Den Hartog 2004; Raziq et al. 2018) can boost employees' work engagement. Similarly, performance, creativity, as well as innovative and entrepreneurial behaviour can also be boosted (Afsar et al. 2017; Jansen et al.2009; Vaccaro et al. 2012; Ding et al. 2017). It is about what Barber and Warn (2005) have named as being able to be 'a firelighter', applying a proactive leadership and as the project manager, evoking 'both passion as well as reason' among stakeholders, to harness their emotional and cognitive commitment by promoting understanding of the potential benefits of the project, instead of being a reflective 'firefighter' focusing mainly on crises management and reactive problem solving (Barber & Warn, 1033-35). This is exemplified in the work undertaken by the National Association for AONBs as part of their 'Taking the Lead' project 2017-19 (box text below).

"Box [The National Association for AONBs and 'Taking the Lead' project (2017-2019)] starts"

The National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB) is a charity that promotes the conservation, enhancement, and understanding and public appreciation for a protected area network comprised of 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The charity is governed by a board of trustees who follow the charity's memorandum and articles of association which set out the objects for the charity. They are, to:

- promote the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in and around Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty,
- advance the education, understanding and appreciation of the public in relation to the conservation and enhancement natural beauty
- promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those organisations.

In the Autumn of 2017, the trustees held a special board meeting to review the function of the charity and the effectiveness of the AONB network. They identified some fundamental flaws in the charity and the operation of the AONB network. One of the areas of concern was how the individual AONB teams and their partnerships worked together because projects in protected areas often require collaboration with public agencies and private sector organisations at national and international scales of management. The AONB teams are based within a host local government authority and are influenced by that authority's culture and approach to management. This situation has resulted in the disparate collection of teams who have not functioned well as a network. There was little collaboration among them and few joint initiatives were undertaken. There was a lack of confidence among local teams to take responsibility and leadership of projects delivered at the national level due to what was considered as the organisational complexity of the AONB network, difficulties in the management of the geographically dispersed teams, and a general view that benefits of collaboration were considered few and far between.

To address these challenges, a professional and personal development programme was offered to a cohort of staff. This was aimed at supporting them develop greater levels of collaborative working and leadership at the national level. This included personality profiling using psychometric tests, coaching and to monitor and evaluate the project, methods of constructive inquiry. The result was the 'Taking the Lead' (TTL) project. This took place over two years (2017-2019), and enabled good communication mechanisms to be formed between individuals taking part in the project. There was regular engagement between the senior officers in the AONBs' teams and with the TTL project team. From the perspective of trustees, participants and other staff, the project was deemed to be successful. This was reinforced by an evaluation report that was prepared by independent consultants who undertook one to one interviews with participants and other stakeholders.

The overall achievements included: increased collaboration between individuals in different AONB teams and many examples of staff taking on national roles. Participants reported increased self-awareness, greater confidence to deliver activities at a national level and dramatically increased levels of collaboration and cooperation between individual teams.

“Box [The National Association for AONBs and ‘Taking the Lead’ project (2017-2019)] ends”

7.5 International Teams: online management and hybrid working

Managing international teams, is a common practice in the management of green spaces and protected areas, especially in terms of research and consultancy work where information and expertise on topics related to social, environmental and political sciences are warranted. Internationalization of project teams, for project leaders and team members brings to the fore additional challenges creating by managing the diversity of people from different ethnic, national, linguistic, socio-economic backgrounds, of potentially if working online, of different IT knowledge and abilities, and who are in different geographical locations and time zones (Lientz & Rea 2003,3). The team members may well have different work and organisational cultures, different perceptions of leadership and expectations towards the project lead, different values and social norms. They might have a different and culturally driven perception of ‘a project success’ and might face linguistic challenges during the communication process. Therefore, making an international project team work efficiently requires from the project manager well-developed cross-cultural management skills (Schneider & Barsoux 2003, 217; Müller & Turner 2010, 58; Haghirian 2011, 124).

The 21st century has significantly changed the way we communicate and the pace of our information exchange. Phone/tele-conferences arranged well in advance have been replaced by ad hoc MS Teams and Zoom meetings scheduled via apps that are easily accessible on our PCs, laptops and mobile phones. However, scheduling a team meeting at a time that would work for all members located in different time zones remains a challenge. Research has shown, living in one time zone but adjusting the work schedule to a different one might negatively impact health and wellbeing of team members and become a source of stress (Nurmi 2011). Another challenge is how to organise efficient teamwork, given the various patterns of work delivery modes. Remote and flexible working has become a new reality of a workplace culture since the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and restricted movement regulations required workers to switch to online and hybrid working (Al-Habaibeh et al.

2021; Merchant 2021). Some people and teams welcomed this new organisation of work and encourage the maintenance of flexible working policies in the post pandemic world. Consequently, many companies have responded positively considering hybrid working as of benefit for both their employees and organisations (Ipsen et al. 2021).

Remote working can give employees a better work-life balance, but it can also make employees feel burnout and isolated by having lack of face-to-face social contact with their colleagues (Moglia et al. 2021). Some individuals would like to have the possibility of a choice and switch between office work and working from home depending on their tasks and day schedule. An important task for a project manager responsible for day-to-day delivery of a project is to think about how to organise the teamwork given those various modes of work delivery. How to ensure high productivity of a project team, how to work efficiently combining work of those who are in and outside the office or how to organise the communication among the team members if the technology is interrupted or when there is no Internet access available (Lippert & Dulewicz 2018).

This hybrid project management context demands refined leadership skills particularly in terms of communication, abilities to adapt, and ultimately to build trust among project team members and maintain team cohesion. Soft skills are key.

A case study that covers each of the principles laid out in this section, implications for management and communication is provided in the box case study below.

“Box [Significant Spaces Research Team] starts”

The Significant Spaces research team was brought together through common interests to investigate how greenspaces influence people’s health and wellbeing. A multidisciplinary international team representing social, environmental and microbiome sciences of ten people was brought together. The skills and knowledge found in this team, were squarely focused on one aim: the design of a valid, robust and 5-year conceptualisation study that could advance much-needed knowledge as to how greenspaces enhanced people’s health and wellbeing. Various methodologies needed to be agreed, synthesised and validated by embedding decisions and methods in the disciplines’ respective theoretical frameworks. Extensive knowledge in

quantitative and qualitative methods was required amongst all members in the team. To collate and test environmental and landscape data required, to the project team need to engage with a 54 external organisations comprised of environmental managers, landowners representatives from protected area agencies, and public health practitioners.

The working up of this project took two years to complete: the result of which has been a fully tested conceptualisation of how environmental characteristics of distinct landscapes could impact on people's health and wellbeing. An agreed project management framework of timelines and documentation was developed and agreed very early on in discussions. This was fundamental to the working of the project as each of the research team, held full time jobs and had additional personal responsibilities.

The aims of the project were defined very early on in team discussions, as were also project deliverables, including timescales. These were revised and updated regularly, and information was disseminated on a regular basis. All project documentation adopted strict version control protocols. Documentation was archived by all members in the team in their own records, albeit one central SharePoint archive was created and archived according to date order. All documents were read only, unless access to any one document was required by a team member.

Time zone differences fundamentally challenged the organisation of project meetings, with some of the team working within EU time zone, and others in the Oceanic region. Such time differences, required compromises on the part of each of the team members, to meet in evenings or early in the mornings. To keep meetings within time frames agreed, agendas and clear instructions were sent out by email to all in the team allowing for any preparation on the part of team members to deliver responses to key questions posed by others in the team. Minutes of all meetings were brief bullet points and sent out within seven to ten hours of each of the meetings. Hybrid working amongst those in the UK occasionally took place, but with those in Australia, New Zealand, and in Spain, all staff had to be proficient in the Microsoft Teams and 365 contexts. All meetings started and ended punctually.

Key skills of each team member were identified very early on. This helped to divide the team into mini working groups led by one representative, whose role was to manage activities to key deadlines agreed by the whole team. This also meant that not all team members had to attend all project team meetings instead the representative of each of the key stages attended on behalf of the mini working group. This additionally was useful in that one person amongst the ten in the team, was identified as the key representative working with external organisations, updating team members, and collating data from the organisations that in turn could be passed amongst the research team for testing. Fortunately, few cultural differences were experienced, all in the team spoke English fluently, including those whose first language was not English.

“Box [Significant Spaces Research Team] ends”

7.6 Effective management

The effective management of protected areas is not possible without sufficient allocation of resources, especially of financial resources. Yet funding is always challenging in this area and invariably will reflect the political climate of the time. . Increasingly we are experiencing in the protected area context decreasing funding streams, and in urban areas the demise of the public park has in the English context, for example, been regrettably reported upon for some time. This situation warrants project teams abilities and skills in terms of external income generation, needing to have a good command of funding opportunities, and in turn, when identified, the ability to orientate activities to meet strategic funding priorities of potential sponsors. Additionally, bid writing skills and knowledge of tendering and bidding processes are essential (Lindgreen et al. 2019; Blume-Kohout & Adhikari 2016): all of which can take time to develop and will invariably need skills in project budgeting and costs estimations. A lack of these skills, especially the underestimation of project costs, is highlighted as a key challenge in delivering projects successfully, resulting in the delay of project outputs and frequently increasing project costs.

Exacerbating challenges in budget management, sharply rising inflation as currently being experienced worldwide, will additionally challenge accurate forecasts

on costs, and management of project expenditure. In some cases, funders/sponsors might be able to extend their financial support to a project further. In other cases, projects might remain unfinished, bringing financial losses (Flyvbjerg et al. 2003,12-21; Miller & Lessard 2000,14) and holds the potential to damage reputation, impeding successful future bids for funds. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate to a potential funder that not only a project constitutes good value for money, given its potential impact and the estimated total costs, but also that proper governance mechanisms and processes are developed and that they can be implemented by a proactive, effective project leader.

Another important issue in protected areas, which is directly linked with funding, is what happens once the project has been delivered and the funding has ended. Organizations that innovate through projects do so by delivering tailored interventions in each topic (Hornstein 2015). Once the project is delivered, it and the team are closed, and their outputs become mainstream business as usual (BAU). In a business organization, it is assumed that the costs of transition and integration into BAU have been considered when assessing the project affordability. However, that might not be the case in protected areas where organizations have limited resources and are heavily dependent on limited funds due to increased context of financial austerity in the public sector (Carmona et al.2019; Whitten 2019; Mell 2020). Projects delivered in protected areas are projects delivered for the public good, to protect areas/locations because of their natural, economical or cultural values and not primarily for the income generation (Dobson 2018, 75-75). Therefore, once a project has been delivered, it usually requires either obtaining further external funding to manage its outputs and benefits or requires a team reorganization, or relies on the good will of staff to absorb additional work *gratis*, holding the potential to exceed/stretch their capacities or potentially, has to consider the abandonment of other initiatives due to zero funds, staff shortages, political redirection of local funds and/or recruitment freeze, for examples (cf. Khan & Munira 2021).

“Box [Funding of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB)] starts”

The NAAONB has a staff compliment equivalent to less than four full time employees funded by the funds received from government and has reserves in the order of £70,000 for its charitable activities. However, in order to deliver any national activities, campaigns or programmes additional funding is always needed. One of the potential funders that was willing to support the initiatives of the NAAONB was the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), now the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Under their Resilient Heritage Funding Programme, they provide grants to strengthen organisations, and build the capacity of staff and volunteers to better manage heritage in the long term. The NAAONB was successful in securing a grant from the HLF of £170,000 to cover the costs of the “Taking the Lead” project development and delivery (2017-2019). This success was a result of an intensive collaboration between the charity’s Development Manager and an experienced external bid writer who together wrote the funding application and shaped the project leading to successful award of the funds by demonstrating measurable benefits of the project. However, once the project finished, there was no further financial support, highlighting the challenges of project delivery by organisations who are heavily dependent on public funding. .

“Box [Funding of the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB)] ends”

7.7 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to overview project management practices in green spaces and protected areas, examine challenges and consider opportunities for improvement. National and international project initiatives provide useful guidelines on the direction and scope of the work of 21st Century, post-pandemic project managers whose work focuses on conserving nature and managing public access to protected areas and greenspaces. There is a lot to be learnt, especially from the generic project management literature, on how to deliver such projects successfully and in a sustainable manner for which communication skills and stakeholder engagement are critically important especially if working in a hybrid mode using available IT technology.

This context increasingly demands a new context of virtual leadership to engage and collaborate effectively in project teams that are invariably comprised of multidisciplinary and international team members. Soft skills are key. The

development of these skills can be enhanced using psychometric testing and analysis, albeit we do recognise that some of these tools have been criticised for their inaccuracies. Yet in the case studies provided, the use of psychometric testing with individuals, then at the team level and then at the organisational level, showed the importance of developing greater understanding with individuals about their preferred working style and additionally demonstrated the importance to team-working of understanding the diversity of working styles amongst colleagues. Through appreciation for the value of complementary working styles, we can effectively co-create activities and project manage. Only through this enhanced awareness by individuals and teams can we approach complex tasks and deliver them in an efficient way.

What is also overwhelmingly obvious worldwide, is that many protected areas and other forms of green and blue spaces, of value to the public, exist in a state of financial insecurity. This situation warrants additional, if not enhanced abilities of managers and project teams to be able to identify opportunities for external income generation as a key operational priority. This means that bid writing will continue to be one of the most important management skills.

It also seems reasonable to rethink the idea of project management delivery in green spaces' management. This we contend, needs greater emphasis on project delivery that is both aligned with the organisation's strategic goals and priorities, and that is delivered in a sustainable manner, balancing costs and benefits of project delivery.

We would also recommend that albeit Green Finance Initiatives are evident across the EU, further research into income generation strategies of green places and protected areas in public organisations is critically needed. The results of such a study could a) inform best practices in project management from a financial perspective; b) identify and evaluate potential collaborative and funding opportunities, to improve organisational efficiency; c) there is even, we contend, a potential to establish communities of funding practice amongst staff working in the protected area/green space management contexts; and d) through these points, there is a potential to address the age-old concern for how outcomes and outputs of projects can be continued long after a project has been defunded and the project team has been disbanded.

And finally, given the challenges of project management practices in green spaces and protected areas, an emphasis on leadership training and soft skills development would be useful in project management training. Such attention would address criticisms of the discipline of project management for being primarily a process-driven practice. Project management processes and procedures are essentially supportive to a manager's role and are relatively easy to review, manage and learn. However, working efficiently with people requires going beyond processes and the knowledge of approaches to team management. It requires the development and application of sound leadership, of soft skills and of a greater mindfulness for context and for the value of the people perspective to project management.

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