

# Restorative Parks

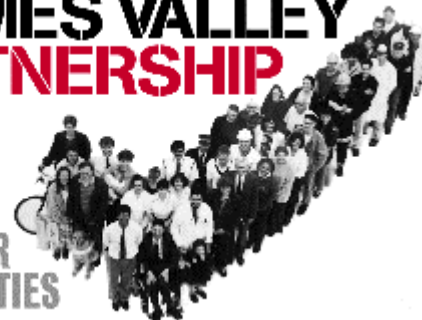
Reparation and  
Community Safety -  
Building on Experience

December 2004



**THAMES VALLEY  
PARTNERSHIP**

**WORKING  
FOR SAFER  
COMMUNITIES**



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# **1 - Preface**

**Sue Raikes, Chief Executive, Thames Valley Partnership**

This report is about reparation by offenders in local communities which improves local neighbourhoods and thus contributes to community safety. The case study on which this report is based demonstrates that involving local people actively in the project both strengthens the project itself and creates greater confidence on the part of the public in community sentences and the work of the criminal justice system.

The report is particularly timely because in recent weeks a debate has emerged about the nature of community punishment and opportunities for local management or involvement in determining the work undertaken by offenders.

The report of the Rethinking Crime and Punishment initiative which came to an end earlier this month promotes the concept of "punishment with payback" and suggests that reparation should be much more widely used within sentencing. The Coulsfield Enquiry which was an independent enquiry into alternatives to prison also funded by the Rethinking Crime and Punishment initiative, makes a specific recommendation for greater local management of community sentences and community punishment. The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, has this week promoted the involvement of local people in determining the nature of community punishment as part of his civil renewal agenda. On the same day Baroness Linklater of Butterstone opened a debate in the House of Lords with a call for greater local involvement in community punishment in order to boost public confidence in the criminal justice system.

Reparation in the community by offenders is certainly not new. But greater local accountability and opportunities to develop reparation schemes that contribute more directly to the public's concerns about safety and to the improvement of local neighbourhoods, parks and open spaces are now firmly on the political agenda. The Thames Valley Partnership believes that both local communities and offenders benefit from community punishment and reparation that contributes directly to the quality of life for local neighbourhoods. We now need to find stronger and more sustainable ways for this to happen.

The report draws on the Thames Valley Partnership's direct experience and also on the contributions and discussions of other agencies at a seminar in November 2004.

We hope you find the report interesting and stimulating. We are committed to trying to continue to promote and support this work. If you are interested in working with us or contributing in any way please contact us at: -

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## **2 - The Role of Restorative Parks Projects in Community Safety**

**Rebecca Leathlean, Thames Valley Partnership**

“One of the vital tasks of local authorities, as recognised by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, is to ensure that their communities are safe and that people feel secure enough to live their lives. The Restorative Prison Project encourages the creation of local strategies that allow offenders to develop their potential as citizens in a way that benefits their communities. The involvement of prisons, prisoners and prison staff in local authority planning has the potential to improve the resettlement chances of released prisoners, reduce the fear of crime and remind local authorities that some of their citizens live and work in the difficult world of prisons. The developing relationships between people, parks and local authorities are mutually beneficial. The restoration of public parks and communities is a symbol of one possible future.”

*Viv Francis, Project Officer, Restorative Prison Project, International Centre for Prison Studies (ICPS)*

Parks projects play into several key government and community safety agendas, such as anti-social behaviour, active citizenship, regeneration, sustainable communities, corporate social responsibility, restorative justice, improved health (physical and mental) and prisoner resettlement. They can also provide a base for high profile, meaningful and effective community sentences.

Early experiences at the Thames Valley's first restorative parks project at Edenham Crescent in Reading (launched 19 January 2004) have shown improvements in community cohesion, community empowerment, health, and public attitudes to crime and justice. Furthermore, local residents say that it has resulted to a cut in anti-social behaviour. Equally important, the project has given offenders opportunities to make reparation to the community. It has also contributed to their rehabilitation. Part of the park was previously owned by Courage Brewery and, due to this and the fact the project 'took courage' to realise, the park is to be renamed, 'Courage Park' – a suggestion made by a local resident.

The restorative parks project was born under Thames Valley Partnership's Creating Confidence in Justice project (funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's Rethinking Crime and Punishment initiative). It unites Reading Borough Council (RBC), the Prison Service, National Probation Service Thames Valley, Inside Out Trust and others in the restoration of run-down open spaces for the council. The scheme is inspired by the Albert Park Project in Middlesbrough, where prisoners in prison workshops and released on temporary licence (ROTL) donated £125,000-worth of labour to the restoration of a run-down Victorian 'people's park'. In Reading, Thames Valley Partnership's role was to act as a catalyst. We brought the idea to the council, and invited the main players to a series of meetings before handing the project over to the council. We continue to sit on the steering group. Our role is now to ensure that the project remains truly restorative, and that the story is told.

In Reading, work in the park was preceded by a large meeting in the local community centre. Following a leaflet drop by local residents, an audience of some 50 people came to discuss issues with representatives from the council, prison and probation services. A community steering group was formed the same evening and continues to play a lead role in the project.

## **The View from Reading Borough Council**

### *Anti-social Behaviour*

The council decided to pilot the restorative park project in Courage Park, where anti-social behaviour was a problem. It was kick-started with GOSE funding – 20K for tackling anti-social behaviour. Reading Borough Council's parks department provided the management and supervision, as well as a base for the project to operate from. For six weeks, there were staff on site six days a week, with up to six offenders working with them. Now that the work teams are not on site all the time, a small amount of anti-social behaviour has returned. However, it is hoped that proactive partnership work with both the community and the police will nip this in the bud. Importantly, the way the park is used has changed with scores of children and families using it again. "We have broken the cycle of misuse and abuse," says Adrian Lawson, RBC Parks and Open Spaces Development Officer. "Where before the land was dominated by small groups of youths riding motorcycles and abusing solvents and drugs, it is now occupied by families, dog walkers and youths playing ball games. The change has been rather remarkable, and was noticeable even in February. The vast majority of messages have been positive. Even people who were sceptical at the outset have been impressed.

"The project has been amazingly cost effective, too. Once the equipment and materials had been paid for, we were able to carry out high quality detailed work – often in direct response to park users' requests. The progress was rapid, and the site was noticeably improved every day."

### *Community Cohesion and Empowerment*

Says Adrian Lawson: "We have made incredibly good contact with the local community and there has been a lot of community input. We have a 20-plus strong community steering group. The project has repaired the relationship between the council and the community – and the prison and probation teams have made a very good impression on the community. They have been able to act instantly. For example, we had a request to improve access for mothers with baby-buggies. The work teams installed a ramp the next day! Without this project, the council may have taken weeks to respond."

There continue to be regular community steering group meetings in which residents put forward their ideas. The project has also brought the community closer together – people from council houses on one side of the park are now mixing and working happily with people from private homes on other side. The youth club now sends representatives, street wardens have joined, and existing members have persuaded other residents to come to the meetings. The last meeting was held in the park on a lovely sunny May evening!

In Reading, as in diverse areas of all kinds, parks projects have a unique potential to bring many sorts of people together. There is also the opportunity to involve schools in park restoration projects, perhaps working on designs (artwork, sculptures etc) for young

offenders to manufacture. Furthermore, there is scope for educational projects, both for offenders and for the wider community, based in parks – something now being explored in Reading.

### *Health benefits*

As well as bringing the community closer together, the improvements at Courage Park mean that people are now using it again – getting exercise and relaxation opportunities. There are improved sports opportunities with plans for a new multi-use sports pitch, a cricket pitch (or at least wickets) and environmental improvements, for example plantings of spring flowers, woodland flowers and wild flowers. In terms of mental health, less anti-social behaviour brings with it less fear of crime and a better quality of life.

### *Mainstreaming*

Reading Borough Council is now looking to create a post – someone to manage the restorative park initiatives as they roll out across Reading. Adrian Lawson says that far from taking away work from existing staff or local contractors, this is work that the council could not afford/would not have the facilities to do without offenders. So, in fact, by virtue of the fact that it will need to employ staff to manage and run it, the restorative park project will be creating work.

The project manager will engage with local communities to see what they need, develop the projects and make sure the needs of all the partners are met (ensuring offenders get accredited skills as well as reparation opportunities, for example).

*Prizes:* The parks project has become high profile at the council. The Parks Department is already being encouraged to enter for awards.

## **Rehabilitation, Training – and Active Citizenship**

Training is key for the Prison Service. There are many training opportunities in parks – horticulture, construction, fencing, machinery-use, arboriculture, estate management; learning about health and safety and First Aid. Reading Prison is working with Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) to set up a training plan, with work in parks preceded by basic level training within the prison garden. (BCA will be training Reading Borough Council staff as quality assessors.) Furthermore, prisoners are diversifying, with benches and signs for Courage Park soon to be produced in prison workshops. The various activities appear to be having a good effect on prisoner morale, too – with a happier atmosphere reported in the jail.

The project is also forging some very positive links between the prison and the community. Seeing the success of the Courage Park project, other community-based organisations are expressing a desire to work with the prison on restorative projects. Says Andrew Mondaye, Scheme Manager for Thames Valley Probation Area's Enhanced Community Punishment (ECP) in the Berkshire area: "I have been tremendously impressed with the cohesive integration that the Restorative Parks Project has made with the local community. As the probation service we have, of course, worked in the community undertaking valuable work for many years. However, an initiative such as the parks project has enabled us to forge more permanent and sustainable links with all concerned. To be able to meet with and discuss the needs of the local people before work actually began, has I believe, been highly constructive and vital in securing an outcome that has

actually reduced crime and generated a safer environment for those who live in the area."

For the Inside Out Trust, rehabilitation and restorative justice are key. The charity has developed, with the Open College Network (OCN), a seven-unit 'Evidence of Work-Based Skills' package, offering qualifications in seven 'generic' key skills such as team-working, problem solving and personal development. In the North East, this is being offered in conjunction with parks projects. The Inside Out Trust also offers an ASDAN certificate in Community Volunteering – this fits in with the government's active citizenship agenda and, again, gels with restorative parks projects.

## **Restorative Justice/Public Attitudes**

"My home is the nearest to the work going on. I'm retired, so I'm there every day and I have seen these young people working day in and day out. I've been very impressed by them. They've been polite, friendly, hard-working, diligent – I could go on. That goes for the council, too! I've been impressed by the whole approach" (Elderly Edenham Crescent Resident)

Research by the Rethinking Crime and Punishment (RCP) initiative has found that the public are not as punitive as is often believed. In particular, the principles underlying sentences resonated strongly with interviewees who talked about the importance of making good the damage to victims and society, and of victims' need for closure. *"The term 'Restorative Justice' evoked an immediately positive response: 'justice' summarised notions of fairness and truth, while 'restore' was interpreted as putting things right, fixing the damage or righting a wrong. These were the very values respondents wanted their criminal justice system to address."* (Stead *et al*, University of Strathclyde, for RCP) (1)

In Reading, after some initial scepticism from the community, local residents have taken the offender teams to their hearts – especially the prisoners who were on site six days a week. The boys worked in all weathers, and made a huge difference to what, for years, had been an ugly dumping ground frequented by drug-abusers. Residents say they removed some 100 tons of undergrowth, rubble and fly-tipped rubbish – in the words of one man, "The equivalent in volume to two-and-a-half sperm whales!" As the project got underway, there were reports of residents taking the work teams tea and biscuits, and letting their children out to play, happy that a 'responsible presence' (the prisoners) was there to keep an eye on them.

The project also gives offenders a chance to undertake active, meaningful work, and make direct amends to the community. Offenders have clearly valued this opportunity, and have been moved to see how much it has meant to the residents. In the words of one offender: "You can feel good that you are doing something for the community, not just sitting back and doing your time. And it was nice to see that they had faith in us, that they believed we could be rehabilitated. In that sense, they were giving something back to us."

We have had much positive media coverage, with restorative justice given a high profile. For example, in a report announcing the start of the project, John Hartley, Reading Borough Council's lead member for cultural services was quoted as saying: "This is an exciting and innovative project to transform the Edenham Crescent area and it shows the real potential of restorative justice. I hope it will lead to a greater sense of community

ownership and pride in this valuable green space.” (Reading Evening Post, 20 January 2004)

### **Respect Due...**

We are now arranging a celebration barbecue in the park, when the offenders will be awarded thank-you certificates in front of an invited audience including the community, their families, local businesses and media. A plaque commemorating the Courage Park project as the first in a series of restorative parks partnerships will be unveiled.

### **The impact of National Offender Management Service (NOMS)**

Parks projects provide a good opportunity for the prison and probation services to work together, jointly steering parks projects to fulfil both resettlement and community punishment agendas. Parks projects have been recognised as a very valuable initiative, with both agencies eagerly anticipating further joint working under NOMS – across the Thames Valley and beyond. There may also be other ways in which the council can get involved with helping offenders/ex-offenders: in Middlesbrough, for example, the Albert Park project spun off into a scheme where the council helped people leaving prison to find housing.

### **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

There is masses of scope for businesses to volunteer sponsorship and support as part of their CSR strategies – for example, building contractors could loan tools or help with digging ponds, laying sports tracks etc. We have had a meeting with the Morrison Utility Services, and hope something positive will come out of this. A member of the Reading Business Community Partnership has also been to some of our steering group meetings. However, more work needs to be done on linking up with business to make effective partnerships.

#### **(1) *What do the Public Really Feel about Non-Custodial Penalties?***

Martine Stead, Lynn MacFadyen and Gerard Hastings of the Centre for Social Marketing at the University of Strathclyde, 2002.

Rebecca Leathlean, Thames Valley Partnership, June 2004



'What I love is the sound of the children playing in the park again,' says Maureen Tegg. 'A few months ago, their mothers wouldn't let them out. There were drug dens hidden in the undergrowth – we didn't dare walk there. You couldn't even sit in your garden because of the smell from the fly-tipping. The park just wasn't useable.'

The idea for a 'restorative park project' in Reading came from the community safety charity Thames Valley Partnership and Inside Out Trust, a charity running restorative justice projects in prisons.

Inspired by the Albert Park initiative in Middlesbrough, where prisoners contributed £125,000 worth of labour to the restoration of a run-down Victorian park, Thames Valley Partnership invited the probation service, youth offending team and prison service to take part in a similar project.

Reading Council was approached and after a series of meetings, woodland next to the park at Edenham Crescent, close to the city centre, was identified for a pilot.

The proposals, put to public consultation, drew a cautious response. 'Some people were surprised offenders were going to do the work, but we were assured that they would be risk-assessed and supervised,' says Maureen Tegg's son, Gene. 'Ultimately, everyone was just relieved that something was going



to be done at last, regardless of who was doing it.' A community steering group was formed and on 19 January 2004 the Edenham Project was born.

Reading Council's parks department managed and supervised the project. Parks and open spaces development manager Adrian Lawson explains: 'We had a team of six boys from the prison five days a week, and a community punishment team from probation on site one or two days a week, plus some from the youth offending team. We identified three objectives for the first month, but the youngsters were so motivated that those objectives were met inside the first week!

'By the end of February, not only had we made the area safe, tidied up and resurfaced the path, we had repaired fencing, cleared overgrown vegetation, improved access into the park, created new paths, landscaped around the children's play area, performed minor tree surgery and much more. The speed of work was absolutely incredible.'

The community was impressed. Brian Wood, a retired teacher whose house backs onto the park, says: 'The young people were polite, friendly, hard-working and diligent. I was very impressed by their attitude, and the work they did has made us feel a lot more secure.'

Young people from Reading Prison came from the Kennet Unit, which prepares them for release through a mixture of life-skills tuition and work in the community. The unit boasts a recidivism rate of just 10%, compared with a national average of 75% for young offenders.



In Reading, young offenders have transformed neglected woodland into a valued public park.

**Rebecca Leathlean** explains



Young offenders at work on the Edenham Project

'It was great to get out and do some active work,' says Dean, a prisoner who worked on the project. 'Working on the park helped to get us into the rhythm of normal life. When you're in prison, you think, "sod everything". But when you got out there, you started realising you had to get on with your life.'

'And you could feel good that you were doing something for the community, not just sitting back and doing your time,' adds Tommy. 'It was nice to see that people had faith in us, that they believed we could be rehabilitated. In that sense, they were giving something back to us.'

The project has also improved the council's

relationship with the prison and probation services. 'It's taught us that we need to identify more big projects with a clear beginning, middle and end so that offenders can see a tangible outcome for their work,' says Adrian Lawson.

'Also, as parks officers, our contact with young people can be quite negative. This has been a wonderful opportunity for both parties to learn more about each other, and our experience of these youngsters has been totally positive.'

'The project has been incredibly cost effective,' he adds. 'We were able to do far more than normal at a cheaper cost. That means there is money left over for other things, such as a new ball games area at Edenham Crescent.'

Important knock-on effects include much greater community cohesion. 'Meeting local people and discussing their needs before work began was highly constructive and vital in securing an outcome that actually reduced crime and generated a safer environment,' says Andrew Mooney, community service scheme manager from the Thames Valley Probation Area. Youth club representatives and street wardens now attend steering group meetings.

The council is working with Reading Prison and Berkshire College of Agriculture to set up an NVQ programme for offenders working on parks. There are also plans to commission other prisons to produce railings, signage and plants, enabling prisoners ineligible for temporary release to get involved.

The project will now be rolled out across the borough. Maureen Tegg says: 'We've spent so long behind closed doors, and now we're beginning to open up. The longer it goes on, the safer we are going to feel.'

**Rebecca Leathlean** works for the Thames Valley Partnership and runs *Creating confidence in justice*, a two-year project funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

For more information visit:  
[www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk](http://www.thamesvalleypartnership.org.uk)



# **4 - Restorative Parks – where do we go from here?**

**Presentations to a workshop held on  
1<sup>st</sup> November 2004**



## **Introduction**

Sue Raikes, Chief Executive, Thames Valley Partnership

This report brings together some of the experiences of the various agencies developing reparation work that contributes to community safety. It includes accounts based on Restorative Parks projects supported by the Thames Valley Partnership's Creating Confidence in Justice Project.

The report also includes presentations from practitioners and managers at a seminar hosted by the Thames Valley Partnership in November 2004.

We want to build on the experience from Prison and Probation Services, youth offending teams, and local authorities all of whom have been working with offenders on projects that improve local neighbourhoods, improve community safety and build bridges between offenders and local communities. Many of the lessons come from the restorative parks project at Edenham Crescent in Reading, but there have been other initiatives in Slough and elsewhere.

In June 2004 the Thames Valley Partnership hosted a seminar for the Thames Valley Probation Service and community safety colleagues to explore the potential for offenders on community punishment to undertake work that improved community safety. One of the lessons that came out of that event is the need to build strong and ongoing links so that sustainable projects can be developed, relationships built up and quality work undertaken that meets all of our objectives. Since then the work in Reading has gone on from strength to strength and provided us with many more lessons from which we can build today.

I believe that this issue is extremely timely as it fits with a number of policy issues and government agendas.

- Last year the government produced a Restorative Justice Strategy which promotes the use of reparation as an important element in restorative justice. Restorative justice is being promoted both within and outside the criminal justice system and we would want to see this kind of reparation as part of the RJ strategy.
- The new National Offender Management Service (NOMS) brings together the Prison and Probation Services and promotes 'end to end' management of offenders. Initiatives such as the work in Edenham Crescent in Reading involved both prisoners and offenders on community punishment and potentially provide a way forward for the National Offender Management Service in the Thames Valley and beyond.
- Thirdly there is considerable interest in the Home Office and across government departments in civil renewal, active citizenship and community engagement. It is recognised also that stronger and more positive links between communities and criminal justice agencies can bring about greater confidence in the criminal justice system and greater support for the objectives of rehabilitation and resettlement. The Reading Parks project also shows how local neighbourhoods can become actively

engaged in supporting local initiatives. It is this kind of engagement that we see at the heart of civil renewal.

- And lastly, but importantly, is the sustainable communities agenda and the focus on improving open and public spaces, improving 'liveability' and creating sustainable ways of improving and maintaining the environment in the interests of local people.

Reparation and work in local communities is not new. Community service was first introduced in the early 1970s and offenders have been working in local communities ever since. What is however new, is the opportunity to develop and link this more closely with community safety and to gain more mainstream support from the range of agencies. There are new opportunities to work with prisoners and offenders in the community together, maximising the potential to provide real benefit to local communities and to support rehabilitation and resettlement.

The Thames Valley Partnership has acted as honest broker in some of the early stages of this work. We can make links, bring people together and support initiatives at local level to get them off the ground. However we cannot make this happen in the longer term – that is the responsibility of the key statutory agencies. Organisations working with offenders need to link with local authorities and crime and disorder partnerships and that is the aim of this workshop today.

# **Restorative Parks Project – a ‘nuts and bolts’ account**

Rebecca Leathlean, Thames Valley Partnership

## **Inspiration – a ‘win-win’ project**

The idea for a restorative parks project came from the Restorative Prison Project (RPP), based at the International Centre for Prison Studies. The RPP held a series of four seminars in Chester le Street at the end of 2002. One of these, ‘Prisoners Working for the Benefit of Others’, was hugely inspirational. At the seminar, representatives from the Prison Service (North East), Middlesborough Council and the Inside Out Trust told delegates how they had joined forces in the restoration of Albert Park in Middlesborough, transforming it from a neglected, run-down space back to its former glory. Prisoners had provided £125,000-worth of labour and worked on a series of high profile projects such as restoring the Victorian rowing boats on the lake, creating giant mosaic murals and making colourful flags based on designs by local schoolchildren. The prisoners’ input had been recognised and celebrated. At the seminar, the three prisons involved spoke of how good it had been both to work together as prisons, and to gain a degree of acceptance in the local community. A prisoner spoke about the importance of meaningful volunteering opportunities. The council parks department said they had won several prizes. The community had a beautiful new park. It was clear that everyone involved had benefited.

### *Match-funding*

Albert Park benefited from Lottery and other funding – totalling over a million pounds. The value of the prisoners’ work meant that the project also qualified for a certain amount of match-funding, as would similar projects in the future.

## **Bringing the project to the Thames Valley**

Thames Valley Partnership immediately formed a strong alliance with Joe Harrison, the Inside Out Trust’s regional co-ordinator for the South West and Wales, to see whether we could help to set up a similar project in the Thames Valley. The hunt was on for a likely park!

A call to the Urban Parks Forum (now Greenspace) pointed us in the direction of Reading Borough Council (RBC). We consequently wrote to the parks manager there, to tell him about the Albert Park project and see if there might be a chance to do something similar in Reading. A meeting between Thames Valley Partnership, RBC Parks Department, the Inside Out Trust and Phil Novis from the Prison Service (at the time seconded to Thames Valley Partnership) was arranged.

Subsequently, a few potential locations for a ‘restorative justice park project’ were identified, but it was to be a year before a suitable venue came up.

During the year, Thames Valley Partnership kept the issue alive with a series of meetings, bringing together all the partners we thought could be involved in the project. Meetings were held in Reading Prison and were extremely well attended! Larger meetings were attended by Greenspace, Groundwork, business representatives, members of the council’s arts department, community members (identified by the council) and others. The community safety team at the council was also advised of the project. Later on, a steering

group was formed comprising Thames Valley Partnership, Reading Borough Council Parks Dept, Inside Out Trust, Reading Prison, National Probation Service Thames Valley and Reading Youth Offending Team (YOT). As plans progressed, some smaller working groups were also formed.

### **Wish Lists**

Reading Borough Council thought hard about what they might need. A 'wish list' was created for Phil Novis and Joe Harrison, who liased with prisons to see what was on offer. Through discussions with the Governor at Reading Prison, Phil negotiated a team of up to six young men who could come out to work on temporary licence. Joe, meanwhile, was able to source a huge array of prison workshops in the Thames Valley and beyond. These included metalwork and woodwork facilities, which could provide furniture for parks (eg. railings, benches, bird-boxes). Joe also knew about prison gardens, which could supply a wide selection of plants, including local wildflowers grown from seed. It is a little known fact that many prisons have extremely professional, large and well-equipped workshops and offer training in a wide range of skills, such as brick laying and path-making. As Tansee Cartwright at Middlesborough Parks Dept said: "Prisons can provide anything!" The Probation Team and YOT also thought about what they could offer – in this case work-teams one or two days a week who would work on a range of tasks, such as fence removal, wheel-barrowing, improving paths and levelling ground.

### ***Common Goals***

The key to getting the park project off the ground was to identify common goals:

For the prison service, the project hit quite a few 'key performance targets' (KPTs). In particular, it offered purposeful and meaningful work, valuable training opportunities, and a chance to bolster prisoners' successful rehabilitation. Voluntary work for parks in prison workshops would also help prisons meet training targets – a little imagination can make the creation of a park bench or bird-box fit into a woodwork training syllabus, for example. The Inside Out Trust, which specialises in creating restorative justice opportunities for prisoners, is especially skilled at spotting this sort of potential!

For the probation service and YOT, the park project provided meaningful work that met the needs of the community. As a high-profile project, it was a great example of a community sentence that was both effective and restorative. The project has also given the probation and YOT teams a valuable link in to the local community – and a chance to contribute to community safety.

For the council, the project (which continues) is enabling the parks team to do work they previously would not have had the means to do. The value of the work done by offenders is considerable. It has meant savings, which can pay for other things, such as a new sports pitch at Edenham Crescent (since re-named 'Courage Park'). The project has attracted much praise, and positive press. It has also given the parks team a chance to support young people with problems. This has made a deep impression on them.

For the Inside Out Trust and Thames Valley Partnership the gains were to provide a first-class restorative justice opportunity. To help with offender rehabilitation, to create positive links between offenders and the community, and to show the public that offenders have much of value to offer.

### *Security*

Discussions inevitably concerned security. How would the offenders (especially the prisoners) be risk-assessed? Who would supervise them? In Reading, these issues were very professionally addressed by all parties, as they would be for any release on temporary licence (ROTL) or community punishment scheme. Prisoners and others were thoroughly risk-assessed before being granted a place on the park project. Once on site, the offenders serving community punishments were supervised by probation staff, while YOT work parties included a YOT worker. Prisoners who had been assessed as suitable for release on temporary licence were supervised by members of the parks team. The parks team was fortunate in this respect to already be working with a young man with a gift for motivating young offenders. He became the team leader. A high degree of camaraderie and pride in the work soon developed.

### **What makes a successful park project?**

The Reading experience has taught us a few useful lessons:

#### *Determination, patience, imagination – and funding*

It took tenacity on the part of Thames Valley Partnership to keep the project in the minds of the various partners for the first year. We played a key role here, arranging a series of meetings, writing minutes, reminding people to come. We were helped by the offer of free tickets to a RPP conference in Middlesborough towards the end of 2003. Members of the Reading Borough Council came and it was not too long after this that funding for the work at Edenham Crescent was identified: £20K from GOSE for tackling antisocial behaviour. It took imagination on the part of the council to pull the various elements on offer together. The success and promise of the scheme now proves that it is important not to give up on a project, to be patient and to trust that, eventually, all the elements will fall into place. That said, a degree of funding is necessary. A proposed parks project in Slough foundered because none was identified. To get support from a local authority when setting up a park-project, it is good to take the idea to a council meeting. It is also wise to bring the proposals to the chief executive, community safety team and the council cabinet, if possible.

#### *A problem site*

The park at Edenham Crescent turned out to be perfect for our radical plan, because the area was clearly identified as a problem. The community was extremely fed up with the fly-tipping, drug-taking and antisocial behaviour happening behind their homes. As the problems had been going on for some time, the community was ready for action – even if this meant employing offenders to do the work!

#### *Community involvement from the start*

As soon as Edenham Crescent was identified as the site of a possible project, a community consultation was arranged. The council used its links with the local community centre. A leaflet was delivered door-to-door inviting people to come. The meeting was addressed by a local councillor, members of the parks team and representatives from the prison and probation services. The aims of the project were presented and the audience was assured that the offenders would be thoroughly risk-assessed and supervised. The community was invited to comment on the plans. It soon became clear that who was going to do the work was less of a problem to them than what was going to be done. A community steering

group was formed the same evening to decide just that. This gave the community a real say in the project, and the steering group continues to play a lead role. The press were also present at the meeting. Being open and positive with the press meant that a positive piece about the proposed project was run – the first of many.

### *A BIG project*

At Edenham Crescent, work involved resurfacing paths, repairing fencing, clearing overgrown vegetation, improving access in to the park, creating new paths, landscaping around the children's play area, performing minor tree surgery and removing some 100 tons of fly-tipped rubbish and rubble. The young offenders literally tore into the work – the prisoners were particularly energetic and motivated. Work expected to take several months was virtually complete in weeks. It became clear that young men – especially those who have been locked up – have vast amounts of energy and strength! The volume of the work, the tangible results and the recognition from the community made this particularly satisfying for the youngsters. Reading Council is now identifying more big projects to fill the demand!

### *Training*

All parties have been keen to look at training opportunities in horticulture and related areas. A new link has been made with the Berkshire College of Agriculture and a training plan is being developed for offenders. Council staff will be involved with this as quality assessors. Furthermore, accredited training schemes within community punishment make this an important opportunity for rehabilitation and resettlement, as well as repairing harm.

### *Recognition*

As with the Middlesborough project, all the partners made a real effort to celebrate the work of the offenders. We all publicised the story in the press and hosted visits. In August, the community held a barbecue to launch the project and to thank the offenders for their work. A commemorative plaque was unveiled, paying tribute to the work of offenders who helped to reclaim Courage Park for the community. Thames Valley Partnership has promoted the project widely in the community safety world, and we have written about the project for our own magazine, *RJ News*. We have interviewed young offenders and given them a voice, too. We have consistently pushed for recognition of the offenders' role. Such steps are crucial to the health of a restorative parks project.

### *Keeping the project going*

Undoubtedly, it was important to have someone championing the project, keeping people in touch with each other and keeping the interest alive in the early/mid stages. Communication between partners continues to be important although, having 'cut their teeth' on Courage Park, Reading Borough Council has now got a parks strategy in place and is in contact with key partners. Street wardens, youth workers and police have joined the partnership. There are no longer big steering group meetings as the council has taken ownership of the project and is rolling it out across Reading. In this way, working restoratively with offenders has become an ongoing element of the park team's daily work.


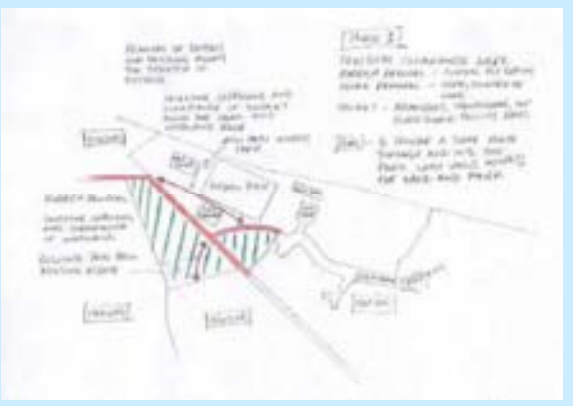
## **5 - "On the Ground"**

**Presentations from: -**

- **Adrian Lawson, Parks and Open Spaces Development Manager,  
Reading Borough Council**
- **Janet Power, Assistant Chief Officer  
National Probation Service - Thames Valley**



**Adrian Lawson, Reading Borough Council**

<p>ADRIAN LAWSON          PARKS AND OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT          MANAGER          READING BOROUGH COUNCIL</p>	<p>EDENHAM CRESCENT          2002 - 3          PROBLEMS IN THE PARK          ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR          AREAS NOT UNDER OUR CONTROL          NEW HOUSING ESTATES BEING BUILT          COMPLAINTS ARRIVING IN THE PARKS          OFFICE ALMOST EVERY DAY</p>
	<p>POLICE AND LOCAL RESIDENTS MEET          SAFER READING FORUM APPROACHED          PARKS DEPARTMENT GET INVOLVED</p>
<p>PARKS TEAM ARE IN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE          TALKING TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE          PROJECT THROUGHOUT 2003          THE IDEA THAT THE SOLUTIONS TO THE          PROBLEMS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE          RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROJECT EMERGES          THE FLEDGLING PROJECT IS NAMED THE          EDENHAM PROJECT</p>	
<p>JANUARY 2004          MEETING WITH LOCAL PEOPLE 55          RESIDENTS ATTEND          PRESENTATIONS GIVEN BY PRISON STAFF          PROBATION STAFF AND PARKS          DEPARTMENT          RESIDENTS FARLY HOSTILE, AND WANT TO          SEE SOME ACTION</p>	<p>PROJECT STARTS ON SITE ONE WEEK          LATER          FIRST STAGE IS TO CLEAR THE SITE</p>



NEXT STAGE IS TO IMPROVE THE ACCESS  
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE PATHS  
IMPROVE THE LANDSCAPE  
MODIFY ENTRANCES  
MANAGE THE WOODLAND



THE PROJECT IS AMAZINGLY SUCCESSFUL  
WORK PROGRESSES FASTER THAN  
ANTICIPATED  
RESIDENTS VERY SUPPORTIVE  
PROJECT IS ABLE TO RESPOND VERY  
QUICKLY TO RESIDENTS IDEAS



PROJECT CONCLUDES WITH VARIOUS  
CELEBRATORY EVENTS  
A PLAY  
A COMMUNITY BARBECUE  
A VISIT FROM THE RUSSIAN MINISTRY OF  
JUSTICE  
RENAMING OF THE PARK



THE COMMUNITY STILL MEETS ONCE A  
MONTH  
THEY NOW WORK IN THE PARK  
THEMSELVES  
THE ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR HAS BEEN  
DRAMATICALLY REDUCED  
THE PARK IS MUCH SAFER  
MANY MORE PEOPLE USE THE PARK



THE PROJECT SPENDS THE SUMMER  
MAINTAINING THE RIGHT OF WAY NETWORK



A NEW MAJOR INITIATIVE IS PLANNED ON A  
MUCH BIGGER SITE

A NEW COMMUNITY STEERING GROUP HAS  
BEEN SET UP

THE PROJECT KICKS OFF ON NOVEMBER 15



#### LESSONS LEARNT

1 THE BIGGEST WINNERS ARE THE  
OFFENDERS !


2 IT CAN BE VERY COST EFFECTIVE

3 EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION IS ESSENTIAL

4 GET COMMUNITY SUPPORT

5 IT ISN'T EASY - THIS IS VERY HARD WORK

6 YOU WILL MAKE A LOT OF FRIENDS

 <p><b>NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE</b> for England and Wales</p>	<h3>Community Punishment Orders</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Community Punishment Orders (formerly Community Service Orders) are about 30 years old</li><li>✓ Popularity derives from their combination of being punitive and rehabilitative</li><li>✓ Punishment with a Purpose</li></ul> <p>2</p>
<h3>Community Safety Work</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ In existence long before 1998 Act</li><li>■ Contributes to reducing crime and fear of crime in our communities</li><li>■ Contributes to the social exclusion agenda</li></ul> <p>3</p>	<h3>Probation Service's Contribution</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ A century of assessing, managing and reducing risk in the community</li><li>✓ Use of OASys risk assessment tool</li><li>✓ Enhanced Community Punishment Scheme</li><li>✓ Home Office National Standards</li><li>✓ Knowledge of and liaison with local communities</li></ul> <p>4</p>
<h3>What's in it for you?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Free Labour</li><li>✓ Offenders who are risk assessed and managed throughout their Orders to National Standards</li><li>✓ Positive contribution to reducing crime and the fear of crime by purposeful punishment and rehabilitation of offenders</li></ul> <p>5</p>	<h3>What's in it for us?</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Systematic source of suitable work fitting the community safety agenda</li><li>✓ Integration into your action plans as a workforce provider</li><li>✓ Increased partnership between all community and Criminal Justice agencies as we enter the new world of the National Offender Management Service</li></ul> <p>6</p>

## Restorative Parks - Our work to date

- ✓ Salt Hill Park, Slough
- ✓ Edenham Project, Reading

7

## The Secrets of Success

- ✓ Being realistic about timescales and the work that can be achieved
- ✓ Specific working groups for different projects
- ✓ Having a long term vision
- ✓ Appreciating skill base of offenders
- ✓ Inclusion of local communities
- ✓ Positive publicity

8

## Difficulties Encountered...

- ✓ Different rules for different offenders
- ✓ Work schedule reliant on others
- ✓ Offenders don't necessarily work on the project until completion

9

## Positive Outcomes

- ✓ 350+ hours worked on the Edenham Project
- ✓ 700 hours so far worked at Salt Hill Park and work continues
- ✓ Offenders leave with a sense of achievement
- ✓ A safer environment is being created for the local community

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## 6 - Contributions and Discussion Points

**Tim Moulds, Director of the Inside Out Trust**, an agency pioneering resettlement through restorative approaches commented that the importance of these approaches lay in giving people in prison the opportunity to do well and to do good. Those taking part had not usually had either of these experiences.

He felt that the Trust had been good at setting up projects in prison, but the experience of Edenham had also involved many people on Community Punishment Orders, as well as young people undertaking reparative work from the Youth Offending Service. For prisoners the experience of being out in the community was a reward, which could be withdrawn. In those circumstances motivating participants might be relatively easy. For those on Community Punishment, living in the community, the work was in their free time and in addition to their day to day working lives. Motivating them and ensuring that they worked well presented other challenges. Motivations, rewards and sanctions were different for the three groups and this required careful management on site and good partnership working between the agencies involved. Managing such partnerships required time and effort.

**Adrian Lawson of the Parks Department** commented that his site supervisor was critical to the success of the project. He had a background and experience, which enabled him to be firm and strict, but he also had credibility in terms of youth culture. He not only supervised the Prisoners but also had overall control of the site. The other groups, from Probation and the YOS had their own supervisors (also an important factor) but they answered to the site supervisor operationally. This was all agreed in advance between the agencies, and had been important both in preventing problems, and responding to difficulties when they occurred. Good and consistent supervision was a major factor in the success of the project.

**Glyn Grace of Reading YOI** described the resettlement work of the Kennet Unit in Reading YOI. It had 20 places and had built up a range of employment training options, which had developed over time, enabled young prisoners to work in the community and helped them get good quality training at the same time. The Parks project had offered opportunities for good accredited skills training, at the same time as providing a restorative experience. Targets for early release on HDC could cause problems because they limited the take up of places at the Unit - at present they had only 7 prisoners. This had emerged as a real problem.

**Elaine Morgan of the Reading Youth Offending Service** highlighted what she described as the 3 Ms- Momentum, Management And Maintenance.

These issues were very important in involving young people for quite short periods on a big, long- term project as part of reparation work involving a limited number of hours. They needed to be involved quickly, be supervised carefully, and enabled to contribute in a way, which assisted the overall project but did make sense to them as participants.

Obviously there were major advantages in having a large- scale project and inter-agency partnership, but these issues needed to be taken into account from the outset. She agreed that good quality, motivational supervision was crucial. It was assisted by an

allocation of tasks, and overall perspective, which enabled younger participants to have a good and positive image of their contribution. She felt that 14 years was about the lowest appropriate age for projects of this kind in terms of risk management. However young people on a variety of Orders including Referral Orders had taken part.

## 7 - Summary of Lessons Learnt

The success of the Edenham Project had highlighted a number of important lessons, which need to be taken into account in trying to develop similar projects elsewhere.

- Good partnership planning took time but was essential from the initial planning stage.
- Careful selection of the location was important. At Edenham although the project was a big one, some early visible impact was possible for local residents.
- The level of problems being experienced by the community needed to be serious enough for local people to feel strongly that something had to be done- strongly enough that they were prepared to 'take the risk' with offenders doing the work in return for a prompt start and serious action.
- Community involvement had to be worked hard for, and might not be achievable in areas of multiple deprivation. At Edenham the agencies had had to contend with initial anger, but the energy involved enabled a work plan to be developed with local people's input. The level of involvement and participation had developed over time, until there was a high level of 'ownership' and direct participation. Feedback and response to concerns were of great importance.
- The Community could sometimes want options, which were not advisable. An example at Edenham was the wish for restoration of a fence, whereas the Parks professionals felt that this would limit safety, and an open space was better. This had to be talked through patiently.
- Partnership working was difficult and time consuming. Co-ordination was vital. This needed to be recognised. The brokerage role in getting people to together and enabling them to keep with the task was important, and had been carried out in this project by Rebecca Leathlean of Thames Valley Partnership. Brokerage was needed at the 'front end' of the project especially, when time and commitment from the broker could help keep the pace up and momentum going.
- The Parks Department in Reading was engaged with communities, but this is not always the case, and management of public spaces is often quite traditional and functional, with limited links to Community Safety and Criminal Justice agencies. This needed to be recognised in setting up partnerships and dealing with concerns. Experience from successful projects needed to be shared and promoted.
- In order to sustain community involvement regular meetings with members of the community are necessary- this supports local ownership of the project and makes it possible for the public to become more directly involved. This is continuing in the Reading project.
- Celebratory events can be very helpful in binding people together and recognising achievement. The Face to Face Theatre group and a community barbecue are examples of this from Edenham.

- Supervision of the work is crucial, with clear overall site leadership, and agreed levels of supervision where offenders from more than one agency are involved. Differences in the make up, turnover and motivation of groups was inevitable, and could only be managed if this was recognised.
- Successful media coverage was helpful for all concerned; giving recognition and affirmation, but this needed to be managed well.
- Access to relatively small amounts of money could really assist community choice and involvement- bulbs, plants etc. There was also potential for sponsorship by local firms.
- One of the key lessons learnt is that this approach, though hard work, and demanding of the partners can be very cost effective, making it extremely attractive to the local authority.
- Risk assessment of the offenders is easily handled by use of the existing procedures in Prisons, Probation and the YOT. These provisions would apply equally well in other Parks settings.
- Good Health and Safety planning and practice were very important. This needed to be dealt with effectively both at the planning stage and in the working of the project, but expertise was available from the partner agencies.
- Problems had been experienced in delays over items manufactured in Prison Workshops. It was also not that easy to get things agreed because Prison Industries had contracts to meet. Similarly Probation no longer ran a workshop for Community Punishment, because of the difficulty in meeting current legal requirements on Health and Safety. It was felt that a workshop, outside prison, but capable of taking both prisoners and offenders from the community would be very helpful in taking this model forward. It could be very relevant to NOMS implementation, and also the new proposed sentencing options. Development might best be done by an agency like the Inside Out Trust.
- There could be scope for using projects of this kind as a vehicle for increasing community involvement in Criminal Justice and problem solving solutions- it may be that some local residents would take their positive experience and become volunteers or mentors.
- This approach brought together a number of overlapping agendas, which could be used to promote the development of collaborative work. These included environmental interests, civil renewal, community engagement and restorative justice.
- Edenham had dealt effectively with a range of public space anti-social behaviour problems, including discarded needles, irresponsible use of motor bikes, threatening behaviour and criminal damage. The project had achieved a massive reduction in anti-social behaviour. The use of offenders had also contributed to reducing local fear, and increasing community resilience. These were strong arguments for extension of the approach, given the current importance ascribed to anti-social behaviour, and the need to involve communities in responses.

- Having an agreed exit or maintenance strategy is important, and needs thinking about in advance.
- Good strategy emerges usually from the experience of good projects and not usually the other way round. It may be important to go ahead and do things without waiting until the overall macro level strategy is in place.



## 8 - Useful contacts:

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And beyond: -

### **North Eastern Restorative Community Partnerships (NERCP)**

(This is carrying on the work of the Restorative Prison Project)

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Email: [lynette@iotrust.plus.com](mailto:lynette@iotrust.plus.com)
- Tony Galley, Chairman  
Tel. 01388-526203  
Email: [tonygalley@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:tonygalley@tiscali.co.uk)

### **International Centre for Prison Studies** (hosted the Restorative Parks Project)

[www.prisonstudies.org](http://www.prisonstudies.org)

### **Greenspace**

[www.green-space.org.uk](http://www.green-space.org.uk)

### **ENCAMS**

Tel: 01942-824778  
[www.encams.org](http://www.encams.org)

### **Relevant Government Initiatives**

- Living spaces, cleaner, safer, greener - ODPM
- Liveability and Sustainable Communities Division - ODPM
- Urban White Paper
- Home Office Active Communities and Civil Renewal
- National Offender Management Service – Civil Renewal and Community Engagement



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