

Community Ownership and Management of Assets Programme

2015–2016

Over the period of a year, Shared Assets worked as a partner in the Community Ownership and Management of Assets (COMA) programme, funded by the central government (the Department of Communities and Local Government) and co-ordinated by Locality.

The programme was designed to support new and existing community organisations to explore the transfer of the ownership or management of public assets to the community, in its various forms. Shared Assets worked with 7 of the 51 partnerships across England that participated in the programme.

Country Parks

A number of the partnerships we were involved in worked on country parks. In Derbyshire, we worked with Derbyshire County Council and the National Trust to create a new trust to take on the management of Elvaston Council; establishing a development board to act in the interests of a future management body, and worked with the council to develop an implementation plan for the asset transfer. We also worked closely with both the Staffordshire and Herefordshire Wildlife Trusts at coordinating the transfer and management of countryside assets in their respective counties. We helped the Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and New Leaf Co-op to access the legal advice they needed to take a long lease on Queenswood Country Park and Bodenham Lake, and supported them in thinking about the governance of and community involvement in their new organisation.



Image:
[Queenswood](#)
[Country Park and](#)
[Arboretum,](#)
Herefordshire.

Urban parks:

We also worked on numerous urban parks under the COMA programme. We helped Southbourne Parish Council to explore the best way to create a new “green ring” of footpaths, orchards and other woodland spaces around the village. Through the programme we explored what sort of organisation is needed in order to acquire and manage land for community and ecological use in an area of development pressure. We supported The Friends of Meersbrook Hall, working with Heeley Development Trust and Sheffield City Council to consider the future of a neighbourhood park and hall and the possibility of bringing it into community management.

As a consultant with the Crystal Palace Community Stakeholder Group and the London Borough of Bromley, we helped explore how a range of different community interests, passions and expertise can best support an independent organisation to manage and govern a significant urban park.

Finally, Shared Assets provided consultancy services to Totnes Community Development Society and South Hams District Council, as the community looked at the potential for taking more control of the green and public spaces in the town. We produced a report to outline good models of community green space management, and advised the community on this unprecedented level of interest in transferring these types of spaces out of council control.

The COMA programme gave us the opportunity to work with a large range of organisations, councils and trusts, to examine how community ownership can be implemented in order to manage land in a community’s best interest. Our Key lessons were as follows:

- Community asset transfer requires local authorities to ensure that they put sufficient time and resources aside to plan an asset transfer properly: a ‘quick fix’ will not be sustainable, and this cannot be a simple budget cutting measure.
- Transfers are a slow transformatory process: redesigning the complex relationships and practises that park management involves will take time and resources for both local authorities, and communities.
- Although an asset transfer is a huge challenge, approached in the right way, it is a huge opportunity to create better places for everyone.

A full report of the programme can be found [here](#).