The Benchmarking Method and Realistic Evaluation as tools for the assessment of urban regeneration programmes: the case of Regional Parks.

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

By

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ABSTRACT

The Benchmarking Method and Realistic Evaluation as tools for the assessment of urban regeneration programmes: the case of Regional Parks.

Despite the fact that urban regeneration has been practiced for more than 40 years, there is still a lack of rigorous research on what constitutes best practice in evaluating urban regeneration interventions. It can be argued that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, evaluations were mostly focused on assessing the feasibility of projects, while in the mid 1980s evaluations were mostly conducted to examine the outcomes of projects or programmes instead of their effectiveness. It was only after the late 1980s that programme evaluations were carried out to examine the effectiveness of a programme. However, in spite of this development, such assessments were still considered inadequate. In this research, for example, it was soon discovered that the evaluation of urban regeneration initiatives through a regional park programme was almost entirely performed in isolation without any attempt to compare them with other similar initiatives. The practice of a regional park programme in delivering urban regeneration initiatives is seen as an important programme in the UK given that it promotes a large area within a high urban population location. Additionally, a regional park provides the opportunities for recreational and leisure purposes especially for the locals and the region therefore plays a vital role as a visitor destination. Hence, in order to serve its purpose completely, the performance of this intervention is essential.

The essence of this research therefore seeks to address the gaps and to inject a comparative dimension and find the appropriate tools to measure the performance of urban regeneration initiatives in contrast to the current standard evaluation procedures. The research has been designed with the aim of seeking practical and effective ways of applying the *benchmarking method* and *realistic evaluation* as a combined assessment tool in evaluating the performance of such initiatives. For this reason, the research focuses on the functioning of the urban regeneration schemes delivered through regional park programmes in the UK.

In relation to this, a decision was taken to 'benchmark' the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park against the Lee Valley Regional Park and to examine both case studies by means of 'realistic evaluation'. The rationale for choosing these particular regional parks was made based on the parks' background. Both regional park programmes have placed emphasis on regeneration of their respective areas. The idea of this comparative exercise is therefore to explore the differences between the Mersey Waterfront and the Lee Valley in terms of programme implementation, project delivery, mechanisms for efficiency, outcomes of programme, the institutional arrangement, the key success factors and the key learning points. These areas of research were therefore justified for the purpose of measuring the performance of a regional park thus teasing out the practicality and potential of both evaluation methods.

The end-result of this research discovered that there were various mechanisms affecting the performance of a regional park. Additionally, it was discovered that programme outcomes are influenced by programme settings and delivery mechanisms. The findings also reveal the key lessons to programme performance and the variations of work processes. Nevertheless, the most significant result is the practicality and benefits of using the benchmarking method and realistic evaluation as a combined assessment tool in examining urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional parks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Four
The Theory of Realistic Evaluation

---RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter Five
Research Methodology

--CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Chapter Six
Benchmarking the Mersey Waterfront Against the Lee Valley Regional Park

Chapter Seven
Benchmarking the MW and the LV Programmes Using the Realistic Evaluation Method

-----------------------------REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Eight
Reflections, Recommendations and Conclusion

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDICES

ABBREVIATIONS

APQC	American Productivity and Quality Center
BURA	British Urban Regeneration Association
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCPs	Comprehensive Community Programmes
CDPs	Community Development Projects
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CMO	Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations
CSF	Critical Success Factor
DoE	Department of the Environment
EDM	Estuary Development and Management
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
ELM	Electronic Leisure Money
EP	English Partnerships
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EU	European Union
GAO	United States Government Accountability Office
GLA	Greater London Authority
GORs	Government Offices for the Regions
HE	UK Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council For England
IBA	International Building Exhibition
IBC	International Benchmarking Clearinghouse
IEF	Impact Evaluation Framework
IPD	Investment Property Databank
Knowsley MBC	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LDA	London Development Agency
LSPs	Local Strategic Partnerships
LTGDC	London Thames Gateway Development Corporation
LV	Lee Valley Regional Park
LV-PDF	Lee Valley-Park Development Framework: Thematic Proposals 2011
LV-QAS	Lee Valley Quality Assurance Statement
LV Park Act	Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966
LVRPA	Lee Valley Regional Park Authority
LVRPA-R&B	Lee Valley Regional Park Authority Assistant Director Resources & Business Development
MBC	Mersey Basin Campaign
MW	Mersey Waterfront Regional Park
MW-QAS	Quality Assurance Scheme
NCR	New Commitment to Regeneration
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NHS	National Health Service
NWDA	Northwest Development Agency
NWRA	North West Regional Assembly
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPLC	Olympic Park Legacy Company
PACEC	Public and Corporate Economic Consultants
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PDF	Park Development Framework
PDF-VAP	Park Development Framework: Vision, Aims and Principles

PMF	Performance Management Framework
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDAs	Regional Development Agencies
RICS	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
RMCS	Royal Military College of Science
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Sefton MBC	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SIM	Subscriber Identification Module
SPA	Special Protection Area
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget
SSSI	Sites of Special Scientific Interest
St Helens MBC	St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities
TAGs	Technical Advisory Groups
TECs	Training & Enterprise Councils
TEF	Treasury Evaluation Framework
TGB	Team Great Britain
TMP	The Mersey Partnership
TQM	Total Quality Management
UDG	Urban Development Grant
UK	United Kingdom
UKA	UK Athletics
UP	Urban Programme (then known as Urban Aid)
URG	Urban Regeneration Grant
US	United States
Wirral MBC	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This research has a special interest in evaluation method. It focuses on the application of two different tools for programme assessment. The core idea is to conduct an experiment on the suitability and potential of the *Benchmarking*[1] procedure in assessing the performance of urban regeneration programmes. In addition to this key task, the research also has another significant purpose in examining those initiatives with special reference to an approach called *Realistic Evaluation*[2]. This method of evaluation is employed to analyse the causal effects of case studies' achievements. With this further attempt, the research is intended to provide lessons from the case study experiences as well as testing the benchmarking technique and realistic evaluation as strategic approaches to evaluation and performance measurement in evaluating urban regeneration programmes. In order to achieve this, the research embarks on performing a comparative examination of case studies. In the light of this, the study puts greater emphasis on examining one particular type of urban regeneration intervention, namely the regional park.

Before setting about this task, in order to convey the information, the thesis will carefully address the approach to each topic at different stages and levels, precisely looking at the context of evaluation in a wider scope and gradually shifting to the specified research area of benchmarking and realistic evaluation through case study investigation. Hence, this opening chapter will provide a general overview of the research context. Moreover, this chapter also serves as a foundation to the study as it establishes the aim and objectives of the research. For that reason, the chapter begins with an explanation of the background to the research topic (research context) which entails a brief description of the wider view of the research, in particular the practice of *evaluation* and the rationale for the study. Following this, it will present the aim and objectives set up for the research, as well as addressing the key research questions. Thereafter, it will also describe the research design and strategy in brief. Finally, the chapter provides an overview of the content of the whole thesis.

[1] The topic on benchmarking is extensively presented in Chapter 3.
[2] Realistic Evaluation is further discussed in Chapter 4

1.2 Research Context

Evaluation is currently widely adopted in the United Kingdom (UK) and elsewhere. To many, evaluation is no longer a peculiar operation and is a requirement for enhancement and development. Today, the idea and practice of evaluation is recognised by many organisations (Alexander, 2006). The magnitude of the evaluation process nowadays is largely accepted and practiced by decision makers within the government and is often regarded as a systematic way of examining public policies, programmes and projects (Pollitt, 2003; Hall and Hall, 2004; Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004). Evaluation is therefore thought to be a form of social research (Stockmann, 2011a:p17), and a way to investigate the performance of a programme (World Health Organisation, 1998; Stufflebeam, 2000; Moore and Spires, 2000; Hall and Hall, 2004; Green and South, 2006).

Green and South (2006:p12) cite the definition given by the World Health Organisation (1998:p3) which defines evaluation as "The systematic examination and assessment of the features of an initiative and its effect, in order to produce information that can be used by those who have an interest in its improvement or effectiveness". Furthermore, Green and South (2006:p13) provide the principal aim of evaluation, quoting Springett (2001:p144) as the action to solve problems "in terms of what works and why" as well as learning from others. An extensive description of the importance and purpose of evaluation is provided by Moore and Spires (2000:p204-205) who indicate that "Evaluation is a key tool in gauging the extent to which policies and initiatives are effective and efficient in terms of meeting aims. Evaluation provides a basis for judging whether there is still a rationale for policy intervention (or policy needs to be adjusted) and whether implementation is resulting in the designed outcomes in the required time-scale". Additionally, Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004:p16) specify this in detail, stating "The concept of evaluation entails, on the one hand, a description of the performance of the entity being evaluated and, on the other, some standards or criteria for judging that performance". The significant role of evaluation is described as being to assess the effectiveness of an intervention and who gained the benefits from it, as well as understanding the mistakes that were made and prevention measures for the future (Stockmann, 2011b). Evidently, evaluation is not just a tool for measuring performance but also plays an essential role in providing the required evidence for development and upgrading. Having given those broad descriptions and principles of evaluation, it is fair to say that evaluation plays an important role in investigating the effect of an intervention and can provide a resolution or guidance for decision makers for the purpose of improvement.

Hall and Hall (2004) recognised that the evolution of evaluation had started in the 1960s, be it in the UK or in other parts of the world when governments were allocating more funding to solve social problems. Even so, when evaluation is predominantly applied in the UK since then, it is still unclear as to what constitutes the best approach to evaluation when assessing urban regeneration schemes. And, although urban regeneration is seen as a significant practice in the UK and has taken place for more than 40 years, sad to say, there are still issues concerning its evaluation. An argument by the Policy Action Team 16 in 2000 puts this bluntly:

> *"There is currently no reliable system for learning from what works (and what doesn't) and ensuring this knowledge informs the development of future programmes"* (Policy Action Team 16, 2000:p21).

It was claimed that the reason why urban regeneration had failed to influence the mainstream services was due to the lack of information in measuring effectiveness (Policy Action Team 16, 2000). The Policy Action Team 16 (2000:p22) then emphasised that "Manuals, guidance, seminars, conferences - the main methods of good practice – dissemination – do not on their own, change attitudes and behaviour". In another account, Bradford and Robson (1995) expressed their opinion that evaluations have tended to ignore the measurement of outcomes but have focused instead on the outputs. Additionally, Ambrose (2005) believes that it is generally recognised that any urban regeneration programme ought to be examined during its life span. To add more challenge to that, Carter (2000:p38) mentioned that, "the strategic context for urban regeneration has not been well developed in the past. A feature of much urban policy has been a lack of strategic vision and longer-term perspective". Five years later the same issue was brought up again by Evans (2005) who stressed that:

> *"The call for 'hard evidence' and measurement tools is part of the larger question of how regeneration itself is measured, how long should it 'take' and what makes for successful intervention in meeting policy objectives and community need-or more fundamentally, how choices over development are made and evaluated and 'Pareto effects' are distributed and felt at a local level"* (Evans, 2005:p961).

Nonetheless, it was also discussed by Bentivegna (1997) arguing in mitigation that there are limits in assessing the built environment. For that reason, the same author suggested that the method of evaluating the natural or built environment should be to examine its impacts and this can be achieved through evaluation of urban policy. However, Mondini (1997) also claimed that evaluating the built environment is a complicated task as it includes evaluating the transformation of the built environment. Therefore, it was suggested that any urban or regional scale project requires expertise from various fields (Mondini, 1997).

It is therefore apparent that, as far as evaluation is concerned in urban regeneration, there is a need to formulate a systematic approach and procedure for urban regeneration performance measurement. Moreover, Jones and Gripaios (2000:p229) mention that "monitoring systems have lacked rigour and there is only limited evidence of good quality internal project appraisal". Apart from that, "many aspects of urban regeneration programmes are highly targeted on specific small geographical areas and on particular disadvantaged groups, establishing programme or project coverage is a critically important task for monitoring activities" (Moore and Spires, 2000:p213). Thus, there is no ideal solution as the choice of approach must depend on the context of the local environment or area itself. This, in turn, had resulted in common evaluation approaches to assessment for urban regeneration especially for larger schemes.

Furthermore, above all that, there is still no specific yardstick to measure 'best practice' in urban regeneration programmes despite the past evaluation instrument used by the British Urban Regeneration Association (BURA[3]) to assess best practice in urban regeneration. Best Practice in Urban Regeneration in the UK was however, an award scheme, being launched in 1991 by the BURA in order to recognise and proclaim the outstanding urban regeneration projects or schemes. These annual awards were judged by a committee of private sector practitioners, civil servants and academics, against five principal criteria that remained fairly constant throughout the lifetime of the awards (Jones and Gripaios, 2000:p219). This decisive aspect was highlighted by Roberts and Sykes (2000b:p307) who summarise the frailty of the practice at that time stating, "What is most important in considering the future of urban regeneration is that the weaknesses of current practice should be addressed and that the lessons of best practice should be recognised and accepted. Building upon the basis of best practice will hopefully help to resolve difficulties before they become problems". Unfortunately, ever since this argument was brought up, there has been no other standard guideline produced for best practice in urban regeneration right up to the point when BURA itself ended in 2010.

In relation to the BURA assessment criteria, Jones and Gripaios (2000:p219-220) outlined the criteria for judging best practice, whereby the project or scheme should:

- *i)* "*Make a successful economic contribution to the regeneration of the area and be financially viable;*
- *ii)* *Act as a catalyst for further regeneration and development in the area, thus creating a self-sustaining momentum with long-term benefits;*
- *iii)* *Contribute to community spirit and cohesion by raising levels of confidence in the long-term living and working environment of the local area and should contribute to building the capacity of local people;*
- *iv)* *Contribute to environmental sustainability;*
- *v)* *Have been completed to the point where there is a track record of success;*
- *vi)* *Represent best, rather than good or average practice;*
- *vii)* *The desirability of involving an appropriate range of partners and take action on a number of fronts;*
- *viii)* *The need to consider and plan for long-term planning, development, management and continued operation of a scheme or project; and*
- ix) *Qualities of imagination, innovation, inspiration and determination*".

[3] BURA started in 1990 and was perceived as an important organisation to regeneration schemes for almost 20 years until it was forced into voluntary liquidation on 17 August 2010 due to the body's dependency on diminishing income from training courses and membership subscription. However, on the 13 September 2010, it was re-launched as UK Regeneration and operates through online database resource.

Based on BURA's evaluation criteria above, Jones and Gripaios (2000:p229) too had argued that "the general quality of the baseline information has been patchy; objectives, targets and details of intended benefits have not always been clearly defined, monitoring systems have lacked rigour and there is only limited evidence of good quality internal project appraisal, and also little evidence of the formal widespread dissemination of the operational details of the winning "best practice" other than via the annual awards ceremony". To them, the exercise was still imperfect.

In reviewing the above qualities outlined by BURA when evaluating and judging best practice in urban regeneration, it is fair to say that the elements and criteria delineated by the BURA were equivocal and imprecise. The features were subject to individual perceptions and judgment. The criteria outlined by BURA's Best Practice in assessing the regeneration projects were open to interpretation, depending on the context and the judgment made by the assessors. Surprisingly, despite the debates, the judging criteria remained the same particularly the criteria listed from 'i-v' as shown earlier (see BURA, 2007:p2) until BURA came to an end.

Sadly, at present there is no specific award to praise best practice in urban regeneration. Furthermore, the fact that little is known about urban regeneration best practice and the lack of a rigorous measure of how best practice in the UK is addressed is obvious. The truth is, notwithstanding the fact that urban regeneration has been practiced for almost half a century in the UK, and the reality of the past appraisal guidance introduced by BURA to evaluate best practice in urban regeneration, there are still no clear parameters as to what constitutes best practice in urban regeneration and what would be the best evaluation tool to measure its performance. Moreover, it was emphasised by Turok and Shutt (1994:p212) that "…problems are being addressed in a piecemeal manner and the linkages between different aspects of regeneration have not been developed. Planning and action on a city-wide or regional level have also been sidelined by the focus on local authorities".

At this point, the research has drawn attention to the situation and issues of the lack of strategic approach and the limitation of urban regeneration assessment, as well as the call for a robust approach to investigate the performance of this intervention. In understanding those issues and challenges, the research then discovered the lack of information and publications on assessing the performance of urban regeneration programmes through regional park intervention (see Figure 1.1 which describes a regional park in brief).

As a result of this line of reasoning, several questions were raised; "What would be the best evaluation tool to examine the performance of urban regeneration through programmes and is *benchmarking* suitable in assessing those interventions?" Also, a further underlying question was posed asking, "Is *realistic evaluation* appropriate in assessing the effectiveness of programme delivery and can it be combined with the benchmarking method?"

A Regional Park is a form of Regional Plan. A Regional Plan, on the other hand, was first introduced to solve the issue of urban growth in the mid and early 1940s (Alden and Morgan, 1974). The early proposals included the Greater London Plan in 1944, Clyde Valley Regional Plan in 1946, South Wales Plan in 1947 and North East Development Area Outline Plan in 1949 (Alden and Morgan, 1974). Unfortunately, these regional scale plans were unsuccessful as a result of deficiency in the administrative system. Alden and Morgan (1974) generalise regional planning as an approach to areas where problems occur due to its huge area and population like the highlands, valleys, rivers or coastal area. It was therefore suggested that regional planning is designed to solve the problems faced by those areas through distribution of resources.

In the UK, regional parks were first initiated in 1966 as part of urban regeneration initiatives. The first regional park in the UK was the Lee Valley Regional Park situated in the Southeast of England (in the Northeast of London). The purpose of this initiative was to regenerate a large urban area with high population and serve the region as a recreational and leisure place. Additionally, the main aim was to improve the physical, social and economic conditions of the area. The idea of a regional park was therefore decided according to a number of key principles, which were observed as:

(1) "Areas of at least 2,000 acres in extent;
(2) Must have several extensive blocks, pockets, wedges or strips – wholly open to and continuously available for public use for a wide range of active and passive recreation activities;
(3) Should be located within 10 to 15 miles of the city, and the nearer they are to people's homes, the better;
(4) Should be subject to proper management with facilities, with services and with permanent ground staff".
(Travis and Towner, 1985:p3)

In addition to that, the elements of a regional park comprises of "recreation, countryside, wildlife / habitat conservation, agriculture, forestry and water resources" (Travis and Towner, 1985:p3).

Figure 1.1: A brief description of a regional park
Source: see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969; Alden and Morgan, 1974; Travis and Towner,1985.

In answering these questions, the researcher was fortunate to come across the idea offered by Bracken (2007) quoting Newton and Sharpe (1977) who thought that policy analysis is effective through case studies and by means of comparative investigation. Bracken (2007) therefore recommended the use of case studies for thorough policy analysis of any discipline and the application of comparative measure for the purpose of efficiency. Following the earlier argument and the suggestion addressed by Bracken (2007), the research therefore sets out to explore the application of the benchmarking procedure (as the comparative method) for urban regeneration programmes and examine its relevance in assessing the performance of those interventions using the case study method. The research had then decided to use regional parks as case studies and to bring together the application of the two methods. To perform this, the researcher decided to look at two examples of regional parks; both of which concerned UK practice (see Figure 1.2 which demonstrates the relationship between the two case studies). The case studies were selected to compare a completed regional park programme with another longstanding and ongoing programme. The core principle was to observe, discover and learn their experience with the prospect that it could impart some key learning points for similar interventions in the future.

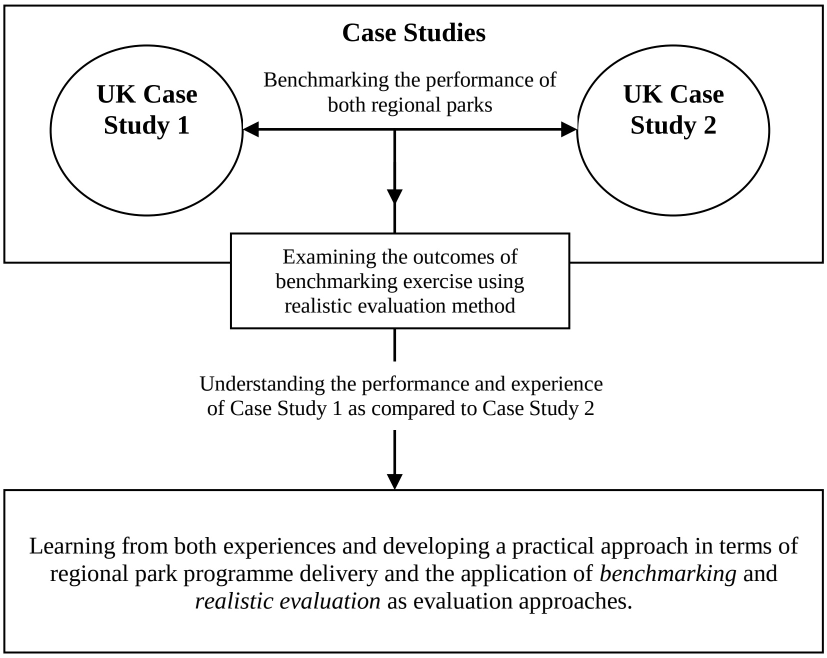

Figure 1.2: The relationship between the case studies
Source: Author.

Figure 1.2 above shows that two regional parks are used for this research. In relation to this, UK Case Study 1 is the main subject for evaluation while UK Case Study 2 is the comparative subject. The first stage of examination involves *benchmarking* UK Case Study 1 against UK Case Study 2. This is conducted to examine the variations of performance and practice of both regional parks. Additionally, the results obtained from this benchmarking process will be re-analysed using the r*ealistic evaluation* method. Investigations (through benchmarking and realistic evaluation) are expected to reveal lessons from both experiences and to suggest a practical approach to regional park programme delivery, as well as the use of both methods in evaluating such initiatives.

Meanwhile, to give an early understanding of *benchmarking*, the method may be described as a form of assessment by means of comparing. The advantage of performing benchmarking is that it can provide a measure which compares the performance of oneself to another (American Productivity and Quality Centre, 1993). The method can be used to compare an action, or process, or technique, or operation, or even a procedure. *Realistic Evaluation*, on the other hand, is a result of further development of the theory-driven approach to evaluation, suggested by Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley in 1997 through their book "Realistic Evaluation". In respect of this interesting technique, the researcher felt that other than measuring both case studies comparatively, it would be a valuable task to test the application of realistic evaluation for regional parks and see its relevance as a robust approach to programme evaluation.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

Aim: To examine the appropriateness and potential of applying the *Benchmarking* procedure in evaluating urban regeneration programmes through regional park programmes, and, to complement that aim, by exploring the extent to which *Realistic Evaluation* is germane to programme analysis and assessment of a regional scale programme.

1.3.1 Research Objectives

In realising this aim, the research sets out its objectives, as follows:

1) To appraise the concept of evaluation, its application to programme performance and the background of UK urban regeneration initiatives.
2) To review the concept of the *Benchmarking Method* and examine its modes of application.
3) To review the theory of *Realistic Evaluation.*
4) To apply the *benchmarking procedure* and examine comparatively the delivery of regional park programmes in the UK. In conjunction with this, to consider the applicability of employing the *Realistic Evaluation* for programme evaluation, i.e., the *Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations*, when analysing the regional park programmes.
5) To assess the reliability and potential of the *Benchmarking Method* and the suitability of the *Realistic Evaluation* method in assessing urban regeneration interventions through regional parks as well as developing a practical approach to regional park delivery and evaluation.

1.4 Research Design and Strategy

This section describes briefly the research design and strategy. A detailed discussion of the research methodology can be found in Chapter 5. To start off, this research applies *qualitative design* which focuses on descriptive analysis rather than quantitative analysis (see Patton, 1987; Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, the research process itself which involves interviews and document analysis depicts the work of qualitative research (Patton, 1987; Kumar, 2005; Haigh, 2008). In the light of the research context, aim and objectives, the research therefore employed a Case Study strategy.

A Case Study strategy was chosen in relation to the subject of examination for this research, i.e. the performance of regional park programmes, which requires an "exploratory approach" and an in-depth investigation of those interventions. It is believed that the case study method can provide a more compelling result to the research (Bouma and Atkinson, 1995; Groat and Wang, 2002; Yin, 2003; Berg, 2007). Since the research is testing the benchmarking method for regional park programme evaluation, therefore, the research requires more than one case study for the purpose of comparison. For this reason, the research will apply a multiple-case design. Additionally, Proverbs and Gameson (2008) believed that by having multiple case studies, even though with just two cases, the research will always produce a more compelling result. Nevertheless, the requirement of two major case studies for this research was underlined by the key principle to benchmarking, i.e. a comparative exercise which inevitably requires more than one case study. However, agreeing with Proverbs and Gameson (2008), and the goal of tackling the challenges of urban regeneration issue in evaluation, therefore, the need to examine two programmes is essential. Further details on this research strategy will be addressed in Chapter Five.

1.5 The Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is categorised into four major parts which comprise:

1) Part 1: An introduction to the research;
2) Part 2: The theoretical framework;
3) Part 3: Research methodology, fieldwork and the application of benchmarking procedure and realistic evaluation; and
4) Part 4: Reflections, Recommendations and Conclusions.

To bring about the focus of the research, the thesis will systematically present the topics from the wider topic of evaluation to the specific evaluation methods for this research. For this reason, evaluation, being the central idea of the research, will be described first (Chapter Two), demonstrating its concept in a broad perspective. The study then moves on to explore the benchmarking method and procedure (Chapter Three). This is then followed by consideration of another method of analysis Realistic Evaluation (Chapter 4). Following this, the thesis also presents the research methodology in detail (Chapter 5), and later, the analysis for both case studies (Chapter 6 and 7). The thesis then revisits the key findings of the research (Chapter 8) and thereafter formulates the practical approach to evaluation and finally concludes the thesis (also Chapter 8). Figure 1.3 demonstrates the flow of the thesis structure.

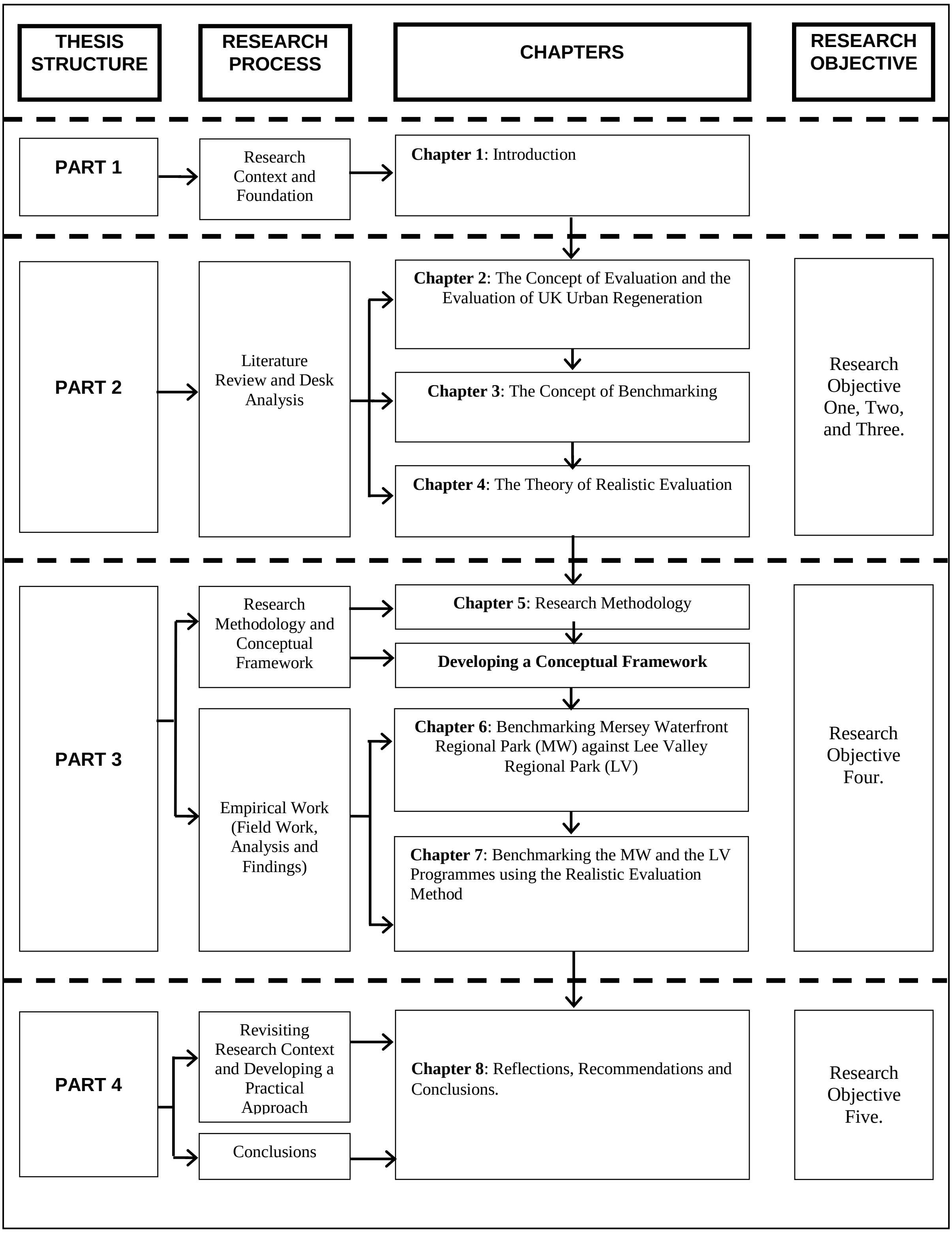

Figure 1.3: Thesis structure and its relationship to the research objectives and process.
Source: Author.

As shown in Figure 1.3 above, the thesis structure is divided into four parts, each of which with separate tasks. These tasks were justified under specific research processes, which in turn relate to the research objectives. This research processes therefore identify the research delivery stages as:

1) Justification of research context and foundation;

2) Undertaking literature review and desk analysis;
3) Justification of research methodology and formulation of a conceptual framework;
4) Conducting field work and analysis;
5) Developing a practical approach to regional park programme delivery and evaluation; and
6) Concluding the whole research.

Additionally, Figure 1.3 also informs the delivery of tasks through separate chapters. The following descriptions therefore provide a detailed explanation of the research chapters and their relationship with research objectives.

Part 1: Introduction

This part (*Chapter One*) introduces the research background. It describes the research context, outlines the research aim and objectives, as well as justifying the significance of the study and describes the research design and strategy briefly. Additionally, Chapter One also describes the thesis structure.

Part 2: Theoretical Framework

The second part is divided into three chapters (Chapter Two, Three and Four) and is designed to provide a conceptual framework for the research. The whole section addresses Objectives One, Two and Three of the research by concentrating on the theoretical part of the study. This conceptual framework unfolds the concept and practice of evaluation, the concept of programme evaluation, the evaluation practice of the UK urban regeneration, the concept and application of the benchmarking method, as well as the theory of the Realistic Evaluation. In short, this stage reviews a great deal of the theory, concept, history, procedure, method and practice.

To be more precise, *Chapter Two* is concerned with the first objective of this research. It emphasises on the theory and concept of evaluation. The chapter explores the definition, purpose of evaluation and approaches to evaluation as well as the link between programme evaluation and performance measurement. The section also includes a segment on the evaluation of the UK urban regeneration initiatives, the background of urban regeneration in the UK and the evaluation of UK urban regeneration.

Chapter Three tackles the second objective of this research. It is concerned with the notion of benchmarking, its history, application and procedure. The section also demonstrates the approach to benchmarking technique and the importance of benchmarking as a tool of evaluation.

Chapter Four provides the rudiments of the Realistic Evaluation approach introduced by Pawson and Tilley called the “Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) configurations”. It is concerned with the third objective of this research. The chapter is therefore designed to elaborate on the approach to this method of evaluation and the use of the CMO Configurations as an assessment framework.

Part 3: Research Methodology, Fieldwork and Analysis

Part 3 engages with the fourth objective of the research. It starts with the research design and followed by the case study method. The discussion provides a detailed description of the research approach and clarifies the case study selection. The topic then moves on to the case studies and discusses the comparative analysis of programme performance for both case studies. Subsequently, the study will attempt to analyse the case studies using the CMO Configurations approach.

In relation to Part 3 of this thesis structure, *Chapter Five* justifies the research methodology. The chapter begins with the research design and strategy, and continues with the descriptions of the case study selection. The topic also elaborates on the data collection method as well as the participants and interviewees involved. Drawing from these, Chapter Five will then formulate the research's conceptual framework linking the case studies and the benchmarking method, as well as incorporating the application of the Realistic Evaluation method into the research.

Chapter Six investigates the difference between the two case studies. Essentially, this is also concerned with the fourth research objective. At this point, the research conducts the benchmarking task. The chapter is intended to evaluate the performance of the two UK regional park programmes. The assessment reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the main subject as compared to its benchmarking partner. The chapter therefore presents the outcome of the benchmarking exercise and concludes benefits of employing the method as an evaluation tool for regional parks.

Chapter Seven deals with the application of the Realistic Evaluation. The results attained from the previous investigation through benchmarking exercise will lead to this part of assessment. This entails the examination of both programmes using the CMO configurations. The evaluation will include investigating the relationship between the context of both programmes, its mechanism for programme delivery and programme outcomes. The main purpose of this tactic is to understand the causal effects to programme outcomes as well as to tease out the application of the realistic evaluation as a method of evaluation for regional scale intervention.

Part 4: Reflections on Execution of Research and Key Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

Part Four sets out the final objective of the research. Its purpose is to present the recommendations and final conclusions of the whole research. The topic includes revisiting the key findings of programme evaluation, reflections of research context and practical approach to evaluation of urban regeneration initiatives carried out through regional park programmes. This stage is concerned with the final objective of this research and is designed to impart on some of the key lessons of regional park programmes, and to suggest recommendation for the purpose of improving the examination of urban regeneration initiative through regional park programmes. The fundamental purpose of this phase is to assess the reliability and potential of the *Benchmarking Method* and the applicability of the *Realistic Evaluation* technique in evaluating regional parks as well as developing the practical approach for programme evaluation. In relation to this objective, the research focuses on answering the key questions: What are the key lessons and issues to be addressed for benchmarking and the application of the Realistic Evaluation in assessing the urban regeneration programmes? And, the question of which key lessons can be adopted in ensuring the effectiveness of urban regeneration initiative through regional park intervention? The outcome of this phase is therefore expected to provide recommendations in relation to the results of the benchmarking and the realistic method of analysis, as well as proposing a practical approach to programme evaluation.

For this purpose, *Chapter Eight* starts by discussing the execution of research and revisiting the key findings from the analysis, and the potential and practicality of the evaluation methods for future regional park evaluation. The later part evaluates the whole research against the research objectives, discusses the contribution of knowledge and finally concludes the chapter by addressing the potential area for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF EVALUATION AND THE EVALUATION OF UK URBAN REGENERATION

2.1 Introduction

The essence of this research is *evaluation*. There are many types of evaluation method and this research will focus specifically on the benchmarking approach. Since the benchmarking procedure is one of the many evaluation tools, this chapter is therefore designed to consider evaluation in a broader sense. To be more specific, this chapter acts as an opening platform to the literature review section and is concerned with the first objective[4] of this research. The earlier chapter described the research context and the rationale of selecting urban regeneration initiatives as research topic. Following Chapter One, this chapter now continues with the concept of evaluation and its function as an approach to performance measurement. In addition to that, the review will also provide a brief background to the UK urban regeneration field. In brief, this chapter attempts to provide a basic grounding in the far-reaching theory and concept of evaluation, and the requisite information about urban regeneration in the UK.

2.2 The Concept of Evaluation

Evaluation is not a new concept or approach (Alexander, 2006). According to Shadish *et al.* (1991:p19), "We can evaluate anything – including evaluation itself". There is, therefore, no control or restriction in performing evaluation. However, Stockmann (2011b:p14) feels that "people are not always sure what it actually means. It appears in a very wide range of contexts and is used to denote a good variety of procedures". Evaluation is performed either incidentally in our daily lives, or as a formal procedure conducted systematically. Accordingly, Worthen *et al.* (1997:p7) considered an informal evaluation as "a basic form of human behaviour. Sometimes it is thorough, structured and formal". However, for the purpose of this research, the succeeding review will only concentrate on the systematic or formal approach to evaluation.

[4] The first research objective: To appraise the concept of evaluation, its application to programme performance and the background of UK urban regeneration initiatives.

2.2.1 The Definition of Evaluation

The terms *evaluation*, *assessment* and *appraisal* are frequently used interchangeably. However, Sesnan (2006:p37) argued that "It has not been possible to settle on one definition because the art and science of evaluation itself has been constantly evolving and has many definitions from writers with different viewpoints". The term 'assessment' is normally used to represent the practice or process of evaluation (Moore and Spires, 2000; Green and South, 2006; Stockmann, 2011b), while the very word 'evaluation' has its specific value and is frequently utilised when indicating an action of assessing an activity or intervention, or process, or policy or any subject that can be assessed (Shadish *et al*., 1991; OECD, 1991; Hall and Hall, 2004; GAO, 2011). A brief description of the notion of evaluation provided by Stockmann (2011b:p14) states, "Evaluation in its most general form is an assessment or judgment of a circumstance or object on the basis of information". The three key ideas that can easily be extracted from his statement are: 'assessment', 'circumstances / object' and 'basis of information'. Meanwhile, in another account, Weiss (1998:p4) described evaluation as, "a systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy". Weiss (1998) therefore recognises the action as an orderly approach to assess an operation or end-result of a programme or policy. The approach involves comparing the subject to a specific standard or an identified measure for the purpose of programme or policy enhancement.

Another term that often relates to evaluation is 'effectiveness' which, on the whole, conveys the degree of achieving the goal(s) (Green and South, 2006). And because of this, Patton (1990:p11) described, "when one examines and judges accomplishments and effectiveness, one is engaged in evaluation". Even though there are many variations of definitions and descriptions, inevitably, then bring about the same idea and purpose which aims to examine and observe the achievement and efficiency of an action or activity and so forth (Cronbach *et al*., 1980; Scriven, 1991; Patton, 2002; Bennett, 2003: Rossi *et al*., 2004). Ultimately, evaluation is an activity that judges the merit of an intervention (Pollitt, 2003; Hall and Hall, 2004).

2.2.2 The Start of Formal Evaluation

Formal evaluation is believed to have evolved rapidly since the 1960s whether in the UK or in other parts of the world as a result of government initiatives to allocate funding in order to solve social problems (Cronbach *et al*., 1980; Hall and Hall, 2004). It had therefore started as a result of the intention to assess the effectiveness of governments' social programmes. Evaluation procedure is deemed to be an important tool in assessing the effectiveness, competency and impact of those actions (Graham and Birchmore-

Timney, 1989; Lee and Sampson, 1990; OECD, 1991; Bennett, 2003; Suggs *et al*., 2006). Additionally, the exercise is thought to be capable of enhancing the planning and delivery process when applied as part of the management instrument (Suggs *et al*., 2006), and therefore very influential in the social science world in ensuring an effective process (Shadish *et al.*, 1991; Pawson and Tilley, 2001).

Another aspect that is worth discussing here when talking about the purpose of evaluation is the difference between the activities of *audit* and *evaluation*. There are distinctions between the purpose of audit and evaluation (Chelimsky, 1985; Pollitt and Summa, 1997). Pollitt and Summa (1997) claim that audit was introduced earlier as a practice of up-to-date bookkeeping, whereas evaluation is a recognised and mindful arrangement of activities initiated in the 1960s, especially in the United States of America (US) due to the progression in social science after the war. However, during that time, evaluation was not imposed strictly. They then added that the method grew from the mid 1970s creating pressure in terms of developing cooperation and relationship between the evaluators and those being evaluated.

2.2.3 The Purpose of Evaluation

Evaluation can be performed for various purposes (Graham and Birchmore-Timney, 1989; Owen and Rogers, 1999). It is generally carried out for the purpose of providing management and decision-makers with feedback, as well as recommendation for improvement (Cronbach *et al*., 1980; Shadish *et al*., 1991; Stufflebeam, 2000; Chen, 2005; Royse *et al*., 2010). It is often regarded as a helpful means of offering policymakers with advice in attempting to address public needs (Wholey, 1991; Rossi *et al*., 2004). Chelimsky (1997) links the activity to three categories of purpose; firstly, evaluation as *accountability* which may include examining the end results and its effectiveness; secondly, evaluation for *development* by providing management with solutions or recommendations for improvement, and; thirdly, evaluation for *knowledge* which leads to the provision of information either for the programme or for other similar interventions, or conceivably for reference by other disciplines. Most importantly, from another angle, by doing evaluation, we tend to understand the reasons (causal effects) for programme achievement or outcomes (Chelimsky, 1985; Moore and Spires, 2000; GAO, 2011). Stockmann (2011a) therefore recognises evaluation as asking ourselves whether our actions were right or wrong. Similarly, Lee and Sampson (1990:p158-159) assess the focus of evaluation as:

- "*What needs to be done (about context)?;*
- *What can be done (about input)?;*
- *What is being done (about process)?; and*
- *What has been done (about results)?*".

Additionally, Green and South (2006:p5) proposed four main reasons for evaluation which are listed as: "evaluation for accountability; evaluation for learning; evaluation for programme management and development; and evaluation as an ethical obligation". Also, the central aim of evaluation is described as assistance to judgment, a drive to knowledge sharing and learning as well as validity (Stormer and Schubert, 2007). In Figure 2.1 below, Stockmann (2011b:p26) summarises the aims of evaluation under four headings including; "(1) gaining insights, (2) exercising control, (3) creation of transparency and possibilities for dialogue in order to promote developments, and (4) legitimisation of the measures implemented". However, he also considers these aims as densely interrelated even though they can be analysed independently, and sees evaluation as a practice with many interconnected purposes. To him, evaluation serves and offers many functions including achieving insights, dissemination of control, advocating improvement for development and validation of actions.

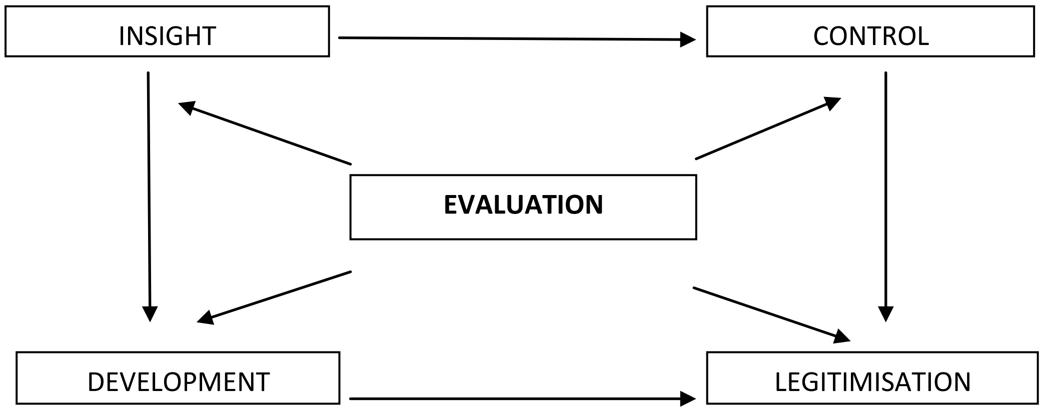

Figure 2.1: Aims of Evaluation
Source: Adapted from Stockmann, 2011b:p26

Consequently, having reported on the purpose of evaluation, it is also important to highlight other features of the approach. Evaluation is normally carried out in a working administrative environment since its end-results aid management in improving the programme (Pollitt, 2003). However, evaluation is also affected by a few components including the access to resource, expertise, staff and the ability to perform the task (Moore and Spires, 2000). Still, evaluation is deemed as a useful approach to enhance society in every aspect through its exercise (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007).

2.2.4 Evaluation Approach

There are no boundaries to the subjects for evaluation (Stockmann, 2011b). Owen and Rogers (1999:p24) listed the subjects for evaluation which include "programs, policies, organisations, products and individuals". It was also proposed by Rossi *et al.* (2004) that the general purpose of evaluation inevitably forms its shapes, its direction, choice and development. This explains that the nature of evaluation depends on its subject which in turn influences its features. To give an example of this, assessing the effectiveness of the regeneration policy and practice is just one of the many subjects of evaluation (Parkinson, 1997; UK Parliament, 2003).

Regardless of what the purpose of evaluation is, the common steps to performing an evaluation are through: (a) collecting data; (b) evaluating the information; and (c) judging those results (Stockmann, 2011b). These steps arguably characterise similar actions to basic/fundamental research. For this reason, this research draws a distinction between an evaluation and a piece of basic research. In order to see the demarcation of an evaluation and a basic research, the thesis values the comparison outlined by Shaw (1999), and the differentiation of those two actions summarised by Weiss (1972).

Table 2.1: Comparison between an evaluation and a basic research

EVALUATION	RESEARCH
Addresses practical problems	Addresses theoretical problems
Culminates in action	Culminates in description
Make judgments of merits/worth	Describes
Addresses short-term issues	Addresses long-term issues
Evaluation methods	Research methods
Is non-disciplinary	Is disciplinary
Includes insider evaluation	Is always conducted by outsiders

Source: Outlined by Shaw (1999:p8)

Shaw's comparison above (see Table 2.1) shows that evaluation takes a rather more pragmatic approach as it operates within a non-disciplinary area and addresses practical problems, as well as finishing in action, whereas basic research seems more flexible in terms of its exercise and purpose. A basic research is therefore a form of disciplinary area and focuses on theoretical problems. Unlike evaluation, a basic research ends with description. Also, from the evaluator's side the focus of an evaluation portrays an obligation to the organisation, while a researcher's direction concentrates on the theoretical viewpoint.

Nevertheless, almost 30 years before Shaw's idea, Weiss (1972) had already made a comparative analysis of the differences between the two (see Table 2.2 below). Clearly, Weiss (1972) observed more distinctions between an evaluation and a piece of research. She notices the responsibility of an evaluator is greater towards conforming to the requirements of the decision-makers while a researcher is only obligated to his/her study. It is evident that the evaluator's focus of assessment is very much for the benefit of the organisation whereas the end-result of a research is to contribute to the body of knowledge. To her, evaluation is carried out to aid decision-makers, while research puts emphasis on contributing to the body of knowledge. An evaluator is therefore obliged to meet decision-makers' need whilst a researcher shapes his/her own focus. Most importantly, an evaluation is undertaken in an action setting, but a research project is more flexible depending on the type of research.

Table 2.2: Difference between an evaluation and a research.

DIFFERENCES	EVALUATION	RESEARCH
Use of decision making.	Evaluation is intended for the use of decision-makers.	Research emphasises on production of knowledge and leaves its use to the natural processes at dissemination and application.
Program derived questions.	Evaluation considers the decision-makers' questions rather than evaluators.	A researcher has a good deal of say about the shape of the study, and he approaches if from the perspectives of his own knowledge and discipline.
Judgmental quality.	Evaluation compares "what is" with "what should be".	The questions for study are formulated, somewhere in the formulation appears a concern with measuring up to stated criteria.
Action setting.	Evaluation takes place in an action setting.	Not frequently, research requirements run up against established programme procedures, which tend to prevail.
Role conflicts	Interpersonal frictions are not uncommon between evaluator and practitioners.	A researcher is not jeopardised by the result of research.
Publication.	Probably the majority reports go unpublished.	Basic research is published.
Allegiance.	The evaluator has obligation(s) to the organisation.	Seeks to advance the frontiers of knowledge.

Source: Extracted and Adapted from Weiss (1972:p6-8)

2.3 The Types of Evaluation Practice

There are various approaches or types of evaluation in practice. However, this section does not attempt to elaborate on each type of evaluation comprehensively as the focus of this research is *benchmarking*, which will be presented thoroughly in a subsequent chapter. For this reason, the types of evaluation method discussed below are given based on their common application in planning. These are; Black Box Evaluation, Theory-driven Evaluation, Balanced Scorecard, Impact Assessment and Process Evaluation.

A widely acknowledged yet conventional type of evaluation is called *black box evaluation*[5]. Black box evaluation refers to an assessment which concentrates on the actual result of the programme but does not examine its process and the cause of those outcomes (Rogers, 2000). Rogers added that black box evaluation is more suitable when assessing a product or a standardised initiative rather than a programme (Rogers, 2000). Moreover, Chen (2005:p231) reveals that, "black box outcome evaluation, whether efficacy or effectiveness, does not systematically evaluate transformation processes…Instead, black box evaluation largely searches out information about a programme's merits". However, despite the lack of attention to causal investigation, this method has not been discarded. Regrettably, this researcher cannot comment conclusively on the extent of its practice at present.

[5] Black box evaluation is further described in Chapter Four, under Section 4.3.1

Unlike black box evaluation, which only examines the output or outcome of a programme, the *theory-driven evaluation*[6] approach adds an extra merit as it provides information on how the programme works or why it has not succeeded. Chen (2005:p232) describes theory-driven evaluation as an "evaluation that takes into account both the underlying causal mechanism and the implementation process when assessing the effect of a programme". He added that, theory-driven evaluation is capable of providing stakeholders with information on the extent of the programme's goal achievement, and constructively records causal effects to a programme's achievement (Chen, 2005). It is therefore apparent that this method has an extra value or function as compared to the traditional black box evaluation as it investigates the causal effect of programme delivery. This method was further developed by Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley in their 1997 book, and the improved method was named the *Realistic Evaluation* or the *Realist Approach*.

Another type of evaluation which is also widely recognised is the *balanced scorecard*. This technique was formulated and further developed from the 'controlling' method by Kaplan and Norton in the early 1990s. The principle of the balanced scorecard focuses on the management aspects and is used by companies to measure and assess their performance (Stockmann, 2011c). The method informs corporate strategy by looking at the financial aspects, customers' views, internal business operation, and knowledge (Stockmann, 2011c). The difference between the balanced scorecard and other evaluation methods is that it concentrates on the factors that can stimulate the company's profit as well as other profit-associated indicators. To set down the balanced scorecard, the approach includes identifying the strategic process, concern with the financial side and target, as well as drawing up the causal factors to the outcome of the operation. The concept and application of the balance scorecard is illustrated below (see Figure 2.2).

Based on Figure 2.2 below, it is obvious that the balance scorecard's approach to evaluation is interrelated between the central vision and the subjects of evaluation. As described by Stockmann (2011c), the assessment focuses on the core aspects which can accelerates the company's profit. For that reason, the balance scorecard is normally conducted by examining the financial aspects, strategic approach, customer appraisal and the development of the company.

[6] A detailed description of theory-driven evaluation is provided in Chapter Four, under Section 4.3.1

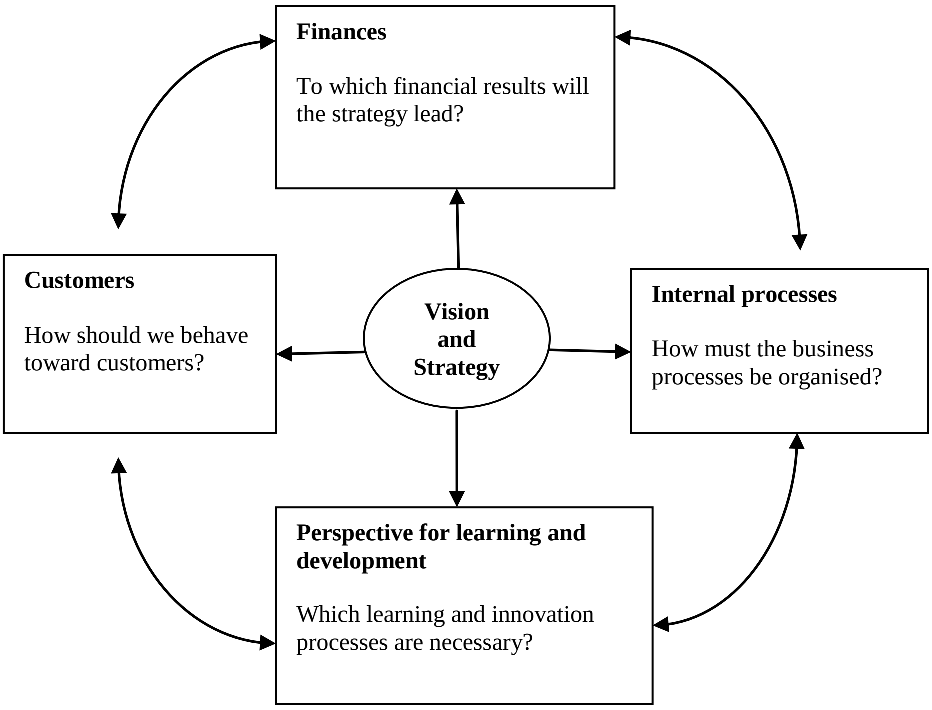

Figure 2.2: Networked balanced scorecard model
Source: Adapted from Kaplan and Norton (1997:p9), cited by Stockmann (2011c:p69)

Meanwhile, *Impact Assessment* is carried out to examine the observed outcome of a programme and is "likely to involve quantitative rather than qualitative data" (Hall and Hall, 2004:p45). According to GAO (2011), impact assessment examines the net effect of a programme. This is possible by comparing the forecasted output without the existence of the programme as compared to the actual programme outcomes. This approach is therefore very similar to black box evaluation due to its nature of looking at the end-result only. Clearly, by applying this method, the degree of programme effectiveness is not measured too but rather the focus is on the impact of an intervention.

P*rocess evaluation* on the other hand is performed with the purpose of understanding the programme delivery process and "judging the merits of the implementation process" (Chen, 1996:p124). The idea behind this approach is to investigate the internal processes in order to develop the strategic approach for the delivery of programme. It is normally performed to examine a programme's "activities conformance to statutory and regulatory requirements, program design, and professional standards or customer expectations" (GAO, 2011:p2). Furthermore, Chen (2005) disagrees that process evaluation is to be conducted at a programme's mature stage, which is why Hall and Hall (2004) concluded the activity as a 'formative evaluation'. In relation to this, they (Hall and Hall, 2004; Chen, 2005) suggested the use of qualitative data especially through interviews and observations as they can provide rich and in-depth data about the programme process. In addition to that, Chen (2005) classifies process evaluation into two types which are the identification of implementation issue (also known as the 'development-oriented process evaluation') and examination of programme efficiency (otherwise known as 'assessment-oriented process evaluation'). From another viewpoint, Royse *et al*., (2010) mentioned that, the reason to conduct process evaluation is to examine the achievement of a programme and to evaluate why it had or had not met its intended outcome(s). Moreover, they believed that an advantage of process evaluation is that it enables the programme to be documented, thus allowing the programme to be replicated, which also makes it beneficial for future reference.

2.4 Programme Evaluation

The word 'programme evaluation' does not possess a regulated meaning (Rutman, 1980) but does have a role in judging a programme (Posavac and Carey, 1989; Weiss, 1998; Hall and Hall, 2004). More than 20 years ago, programme evaluation was considered as something innovative and inspiring (Posavac and Carey, 1989) but today, programme evaluation is a common procedure in many institutions and organisations. When examining a programme, Hall and Hall (2004:p6-7) thought that "usually evaluation focuses on the aims of a programme and investigates to what extent the intentions of the programme providers are being realised". For this reason, Posavac and Carey (1989) pointed out that programme evaluation should not be mistaken for any other evaluation research, or any particular assessment. This helps to explain why Rossi *et al.* (2004:p16) defined *programme evaluation* as "the use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programmes in ways that are adapted to their political and organisational environments and are designed to inform social action to improve social conditions".

It is therefore widely acknowledged that the purpose of performing 'programme evaluation' is to examine the programme's effectiveness (Rutman, 1980; McDavid and Hawthorn, 2006). Posavac and Carey (1989) believed, regardless of how many motivations or sub-purposes in conducting a programme evaluation, nonetheless, programme evaluation has two distinctive reasons and these were adapted from Scriven of 1967[7]. They (Posavac and Carey, 1989) supposed that programme evaluation can be performed as an attempt at *formative evaluation*[8] and the other reason as being the *summative evaluation*[9]. The former is carried out at an initial stage of the programme, in order to assess whether the programme is feasible, or should be continued, or should not be implemented, or which programme should be preceded. The latter is done at the end of a programme with the aim of investigating the input(s), process, output(s) and outcome(s) of the programme and to understand the extent of its goal achievement and effectiveness (Posavac and Carey, 1989).

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[7] Michael Scriven introduced the summative and formative evaluation in 1967, when explaining the main functions of evaluation.
[8] Formative evaluation is further described in Chapter Five, under Section 5.7
[9] Summative evaluation is further described in Chapter Five, under Section 5.7

McDavid and Hawthorn (2006:p15) distinguished one of the key questions that is expected from a programme evaluation is "to what extent, if any, did the programme achieve its intended objectives?" From another angle, Stormer and Schubert (2007) mentioned that a programme evaluation is carried out in order to assess the relationship between policy and projects, as well as its effect. Meanwhile, Posavac and Carey (1989:p8) identified some of the reasons for programme evaluation as:

- "*fulfilment of accreditation requirements;*
- *accounting for funds;*
- *answering requests for information;*
- *choosing among possible programs;*

2.4.1 The Difference between a Project and a Programme

Prior to the aim and objectives of the research, the study is intended to examine urban regeneration initiatives through regional park programmes. In order to better understand the concept of programme evaluation, it is useful to be familiar with the difference between a *project* and a *programme*. A project and a programme are naturally different in character. A clear distinction between a project and a programme is that a project is an activity executed to achieve certain goal(s) but a programme is made up of several activities with a common aim as a direction. To verify this statement, the following discussion informs.

A programme can be determined from the group of activities it embodied (Smith, 1989; McDavid and Hawthorn, 2006; Royse *et al.*, 2010) but encompasses several common features: "objectives, the use of resources, identifiable clients, content, processes, and outcomes" (Lee and Sampson, 1990:p157-158). Similarly, Moore and Spires (2000:p227) refer to a programme as "a group of interventions often linked together over time and encompassing more than one project" and describe a project as "a single intervention or discrete, one off, form of activity". This means that a programme may consist of more than one project or activities and is designed to attain a particular target whilst meeting the need of certain groups of people. Additionally, a programme has its distinctive feature of an evidently defined goal in targeting a specific population for the effectiveness of the programme (Chen, 2005; GAO, 2011). To Cronbach *et al*. (1980:p14), a programme is "a standing arrangement that provides for a social service".

Royse *et al.* (2010:p5) added, "Programmes are interventions or services that are expected to have some kind of an impact on the programme participants". Moreover, they also agreed that a programme can be determined from its exact characteristics which encompass staffing, budget, identity and service philosophy (or slogan, or vision). Stockmann (2011b:p20) too gave his idea and said, "programmes are derived from a political strategy, planned and implemented in individual implementation steps, and as a rule endowed with financial support for a limited period of time, in order to achieve desired effects". According to him, (Stockmann, 2011b:p20) "The course of a programme, moreover, is embedded in complex social multi-level processes. Programmes are not developed independently of other existing or planned programmes. Programmes are often used by different actors to pursue different aims".

From a different description, as classified by Owen and Rogers (1999), a programme is categorised under three levels, namely, mega level, macro planning and micro level. A mega level programme tends to focus generally on economic and social effects. Whilst macro planning may possibly be the duty of departments or branches and regions, micro level is seen as the responsibility of smaller groups within an organisation. In addition to that, they too added that, despite understanding the level of programmes, programmes can also be verified based on its type, for example, "educational, advisory, regulatory, case management, or service/product provision" (Owen and Rogers, 1999:p28). And for that reason they suggested that a programme should comprise two major elements which are a standard plan and strategic actions within the strategy (Owen and Rogers, 1999). Unlike a project, "the life course of a programme can be divided roughly into three main phases: the (1) planning and (2) implementation phases during the course of the actual programme and (3) the period following termination of the funding of the programme (sustainability phase)" (Stockmann, 2011b:p21). Conversely, "projects consist of a set of individual measures and programmes, in their turn, of a series of interrelated projects" (Stockmann, 2011a:p9). Furthermore, Maylor (2005:p4) describes a project as "any activity that has a start and a finish" and elaborated the activities defining a project as a "*non-repetitive activity, which carries particular characteristics:*

- *It is goal oriented – it is being pursued with a particular end or goal in mind;*
- *It has a particular set of constraints – usually centred around time and resource;*
- *The output of the project is measurable;*
- *Something has been changed through the project being carried out*" (Maylor, 1996:p3).

In relation to those sorts of definition, the researcher sees a programme as an intervention with a few or many projects but a project has only one scheme. It is therefore clear that a programme is larger in its components, with variety of projects whereas a project has a focus individually and specified plan.

2.4.2 Programme Evaluation and Its Relationship with Performance Measurement

There is a clear distinction between programme evaluation and performance measurement. Evaluation is conducted to assess a programme and to help understand the extent of the programme's achievement (Thayer and Fine, 2001; GAO, 2011). Meanwhile performance measurement is an ongoing exercise throughout the programme implementation for the purpose of programme evaluation. This simply means that performance measurement is part of programme evaluation. McDavid and Hawthorn (2006) strongly believe that performance measurement is a requirement in programme evaluation and not a replacement for evaluation. They believed that, for the last two decades, performance measurement had received greater attention whether through interest or resources. This was proven from a statement made by Jowett and Rothwell (1988:p21) stating, "Local government performance reviews began during the first half of the nineteenth century, when parliament established district auditors to investigate the extent to which spending related to authorised objectives".

Performance measurement is not only the concern of the public sector but also among non-profit organisations in measuring the effectiveness of a programme (Carmona and Sieh, 2004). Moreover, it provides information for programme managers and organisations in examining the extent of programme achievement (Wholey, 1996). Performance measurement has a distinct feature of ongoing monitoring and reporting of a programme's attainment. It is regularly undertaken to observe the programme's operation and process, its outputs and outcomes. On the other hand, programme evaluation is an individual systematic assignment which is carried out "periodically or on an ad hoc basis" (GAO, 2011:p2), in order to analyse the accomplishment of the programme in relation to its original objectives.

The link between programme evaluation and performance measurement is fairly seen as programme evaluation comprised of a wide range of functions; it can be achieved by assessing the operation of a programme, examining the programme's achievement, investigating the connection between the process and outcome, be conducted for the purpose of comparing its effectiveness with other similar interventions, as well as enabling an estimation of the impact (GAO, 2011). These activities, in turn, allow an in-depth investigation of the programme's performance, which consequently provides the management with an overall judgment of the programme, thus making further recommendations possible (GAO, 2011). On the contrary, unlike programme evaluation which is often carried out sporadically, performance measurement is generally regarded as a continuous procedure (Royse *et al*., 2010; GAO, 2011). The advantage of this ongoing exercise provides an initial warning to the administration and management (Royse *et al*., 2010; GAO, 2011). However, although performance measurement and programme evaluation are executed at a different mode, nevertheless, both are completed with the same aim; to assist decision-makers with solutions for improvements (Posavac and Carey, 1989; Royse *et al*., 2010; GAO, 2011). In addition, Jowett and Rothwell (1988:p21) pointed out, "although performance assessment has been traditionally regarded as a central task, in reality evaluation of the 'economy, efficiency and effectiveness' of local services has taken place within the departments, subject to review and criticism by both the Audit Commission (and, more recently, the National Consumer Council)". Not surprisingly, when evaluation itself has an important role in aiding management with an overall judgment of the programme, similarly, programme performance too has its benefits in an organisation. Jowett and Rothwell (1988:p31) have listed ways in which performance measurement can assist the management by:

- "*Providing a basis for policy planning and control;*
- *Enabling activities to be monitored at various levels to confirm that council policies are being implemented and that their intended results are being achieved;*
- *Providing information for the review of policies, management practices and methods;*
- *Providing evidence as to performance and as to the way in which management (collectively or individually) has responded to information revealed during the monitoring processes*".

Without doubt, performance measurement as an ongoing procedure in an organisation can continuously provide important information about a programme through its evaluation.

2.5 Evaluation of UK Urban Regeneration Initiatives

As mentioned in Chapter One, this research has an explicit concentration on evaluating 'urban regeneration' initiatives in the UK through regional park programmes based on the rationale that evaluation through benchmarking has never been attempted before. As evaluation progressed in the 1960s (Hall and Hall, 2004), UK urban regeneration initiatives underwent an evaluation process too. These evaluation activities were considered important in assessing the potentials, efficiency and effectiveness of those initiatives. According to Moore and Spires (2000:p205), in urban regeneration, "evaluation provides a basis for judging whether there is still rationale for policy intervention (or policy needs to be adjusted) and whether implementation is resulting in the designed outcomes in the required time-scale". To them, the main purpose of carrying out evaluation for urban regeneration projects or programmes is to examine the delivery of those interventions in relation to the programme or project's aim and to suggest any improvements.

2.5.1 Urban Regeneration in the UK

In the UK, urban regeneration initiatives were introduced as part of UK urban policies. Urban regeneration is an activity taking place within towns and cities in responding to the requirement needed for the purpose of improving the current situation as well as meeting future demands (Couch, 2003; Adair *et al.*, 2003; Lovering, 2007; Dargan, 2007). It had started out with the aim to solve urban decline and problems. UK urban regeneration is, therefore, a series of public policies (Lang, 2005) and approaches that have been progressed and developed over time since the late 1960s. It is fair to say that there is no absolute theory of urban regeneration, it is more of a concept, with associated principles and practice. It is "*considered as an aspect of the management and planning of existing urban areas rather than the planning and development of new urbanisation"* (Couch and Fraser, 2003:p2). According to Roberts (2000:p21) urban regeneration is "by its very nature an interventionist activity". Additionally, urban regeneration is claimed to be "rooted in practice" (Tallon, 2010:p5).

The practice of urban regeneration in the UK started off with the name "from 'reconstruction' in the 1950s, to 'revitalisation' in the 1960s, to 'renewal' in the 1970s, to 'redevelopment' in the 1980s, to 'regeneration' from the 1990s. In the same quarters, the 'in' term is now 'renaissance'!" (Knights, 2008:p19). To Couch, Fraser and Percy (2003:xv), the very term 'urban regeneration' appeared in the mid-1970s. However, even though urban regeneration has been practiced for a long time, it was argued that the practice was not fully recognised as a form of urban regeneration initiative (see quotation below).

> *"Urban Regeneration is a widely experienced but little understood phenomenon. Almost all towns and cities have been involved in regeneration schemes, and whilst many development companies, financial institutions and community organisations have participated in one or more such ventures, there is no single prescribed form of urban regeneration practice and no single authoritative source of information"*
> (Roberts & Sykes, 2000a:p3)

Roberts and Sykes (2000a) claim that urban regeneration is a well-known activity but comprehension was limited and that there was no specific stipulation on urban regeneration, not mentioning the lack of reliable information about it. According to Roberts (2000:p21) "Urban regeneration theory is principally concerned with the institutional and organisational dynamics of the management of urban change". The need for urban regeneration is described as fulfilling new demands due to the fact that urban areas inevitably tend to evolve thus constantly generating new demands in terms of urban elements. It is therefore suggested that urban regeneration is an activity which forms part of urban development, including the physical, economic, social and environmental agenda. Equally, Tallon (2010:p6) believed that "urban regeneration is required to keep pace with the consequences of continued processes of urban change".

Since man started building towns and cities and urbanisation has progressively taken place, urban areas and their constituents have developed to serve a wide range of functions. For many centuries, towns and cities served human beings for many purposes including living, working and social interaction. Inevitably, these roles evolved and therefore became inclined to generate demands for changes and improvements, including physical development, economic, and social welfare. This was mentioned by Roberts (2000:p10) stating that "The relative importance of each of these functions has changed over time, and such changes have created new demands for land, floor-space, infrastructure and the provision of a range of accompanying facilities". Other causes were also mentioned by Parkinson *et al*. (1988:p85) who mentioned that "the physical, environmental and cultural symbols of change do translate into tangible urban regeneration". Also, McCarthy (2007) explains that urban regeneration was carried out due to the deterioration of manufacturing, the growth in unemployment and social polarisation, as well as social exclusion. And, it was also pointed out by Home (1982) that the major cause to the inner city decline was rise in the mobility of goods and people. Accordingly, Parkinson and Boddy (2004) recalled the history of the UK policy agenda during the 1960s, right to the early 1990s was concentrated more on tackling urban problems and issues of the inner cities. Consequently, these beliefs help to explain how urban regeneration has come about.

Another term which is often confused with urban regeneration is *urban renewal*. However, the phrase 'urban renewal' is widely used in the United States of America (US), whereas the term *urban regeneration* was introduced and commonly used in the UK. In the US, urban renewal programmes go back as early as the 1930s with the redevelopment of New York City and New York State. The first major city to face the modern urban renewal programme was Pittsburgh in May 1950. Ever since the Housing Act of 1949 was launched, urban renewal has become an important approach to redevelopment in that country. There, urban renewal is seen as an instrument to revitalise the central business district, redevelop the existing communities, also the construction of new bridges, highways, housing projects and public parks. Likewise, Couch (1990:p1) described urban renewal as the transformation made to the physical environment and sees urban renewal as "a process which involves refurbishment, or even changes in building use, or demolition and reconstruction, or may also lead to the abandonment of buildings, vacancy and dereliction". He, therefore, concluded that urban regeneration has an added value as compared to urban renewal, given that urban regeneration also involves redevelopment of the physical environment of the area.

Nonetheless, in the UK, another phrase which may also be confused with the word 'urban regeneration' is *urban renaissance*. Urban renaissance has a wider scope of urban planning approach (or reviving the current situation) while urban regeneration is one of the key elements in urban renaissance. It was first initiated in the UK in 1999 by the Urban Task Force. Chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside, the concept was delivered through its report, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*. The goal of the report was to strengthen the practice of urban planning with the focus on design quality, economic concentration, environmental consciousness, management and social aspects (Urban Task Force, 1999). The Urban Task Force 1999 Report was therefore a very comprehensive report which presented a wide range of recommendations to the government for future planning. The contents include the planning for sustainable city, the idea of making towns and cities work, utilisation of urban assets, investment and sustaining the renaissance. Within these contexts, the proposed framework also included the delivery of urban regeneration. In relation to urban regeneration, the Urban Task Force (1999) report addresses the key lessons from the past practice in urban regeneration, while arguing for a coherent urban regeneration policy and the concentration of regeneration efforts. Nevertheless, it also highlighted the importance of partnership in regeneration. In a nutshell, urban renaissance was believed to be the latest tool in the early

2000s for planning practice which intentionally regards urban regeneration as another important key aspect, when it was first introduced.

2.5.2 Evaluation of UK Urban Regeneration

Evaluation of urban regeneration in the UK had started in the 1960s when the government was assessing the value and effectiveness of urban regeneration funding for social programmes. Burton and Boddy (1995) point out that monitoring and evaluation of UK urban policy was encouraged with the creation of the Urban Programme in 1968. This was seen as parallel to the movement and development of UK urban policy. The evaluation of urban regeneration is therefore not an isolated action but was part of the effort to assist decision-makers in formulating new urban policy. According to Bach (1990:p1), evaluation was perceived as a "good practice" in the mid-1970s when the UK was monitoring and assessing pilot programmes like the European Poverty Programme.

Martin and Pearce (1995) believed that project appraisals, being a form of an evaluation exercise, were given more attention during the 1980s when government was trying to assess the feasibility of projects before delivering them. Bach (1990) commented that evaluation research was undertaken on a significant scale in the late 1970s and had aided the government with understanding the current status of urban problems. These researches were named the Inner Area Studies. He also mentioned that since 1983, many of the Department of the Environment's (DoE) initiatives for Inner Cities Programmes were already being evaluated. The evaluation of urban policies in the UK was however, more focused on *ex ante* evaluation for the purpose of "determining a project's objectives, examining options and weighing up its costs and benefits" beforehand (Martin and Pearce, 1995:p101).

The series of evaluations performed by DOE then progressed from assessing specific projects to evaluating programmes. However, although the effort had increased in the mid-1980s, the concentration was mainly centred on measuring the outcomes instead of the "impact and effectiveness of these activities in meeting policy goals" (Burton and Boddy, 1995:p34). In the mid-1980s, evaluation was already an important exercise in examining the effectiveness of Urban Programme which had focused on industrial and commercial areas. It was from here that the manual of "Good Practice in Urban Regeneration" was introduced (Bach, 1990). During the City Challenge Initiative in the early 1990s, the practice of monitoring and evaluation was further progressed (Burton and Boddy, 1995).

In relation to the approaches in evaluating urban regeneration initiatives, Moore and Spires (2000) agree that evaluation differs in terms of measurement from one urban regeneration scheme to another. This is because evaluation needs to consider the process of delivery, the institutional framework involved, targeted outcomes, indicators and impacts of those initiatives. Nevertheless, they mentioned that evaluation frameworks were introduced in the 1980s and 1990s. These include “Policy Evaluation: A guide for Managers” (HM Treasury, 1988) and the HM Treasury’s guidance document, named the “Treasury Evaluation Framework” (TEF) which was published in 1995 (Moore and Spires, 2000:p215). The main aim of the manual produced by HM Treasury in 1988 was to provide policy managers with guidance in assessing public policy, while TEF was introduced to disseminate methods on how to examine the effectiveness of programmes or projects. This framework development had then assisted decision-makers in evaluating urban regeneration schemes.

Other than the HM Treasury’s guidance document, evaluation of urban regeneration in the UK also refers to the European Commission manual. On 8th May 1996, the European Commission had adopted a standard guideline for evaluation called the “Communication in Evaluation” which was a series of steps in promoting good practice in public expenditure (European Commission, 1997). The first guideline published in January 1997 called the “Evaluating EU Expenditure Programmes: A Guide” had then led to a systematic evaluation of European Union (EU) programmes (European Commission, 1997). However, these guidelines were meant for an *ex post* evaluation. An ex post evaluation is normally carried out after the completion of programme to assess the achievement of a programme. On the contrary, an ex ante evaluation is done at the earlier stage of programme planning in order to examine the potential and effectiveness of a programme (Lichfield and Prat, 1998). Voogd (1983:p16) regards this as “forward looking”. He then differentiates ex post evaluation as “backward looking nature” (Voogd, 1983:p16). An example of an ex post evaluation framework for urban regeneration policies provided by Moore and Spires (2000:p219) is shown in Figure 2.3 below.

Figure 2.3 illustrates a framework of an ex post evaluation process for urban regeneration schemes. The diagram shows that, an evaluation conducted after completion of an urban regeneration scheme should start off by looking at the programme’s strategic objectives. Additionally, these objectives were assessed in accordance with separates topics, i.e. economic, physical and social aspects, for which, each had its specific goal, for example, for physical aspects, which are targeted at tackling environment and infrastructure. Next was to evaluate its funding and expenditure. From there, areas of actions for improvement were analysed, like provision of floor-area, provision of school and new housing. Thereafter, the outputs and outcomes were evaluated by looking at all areas of improvement, for example, the output from the work on improving the business sector. And so, increased sales and start-up rates were examined. Following this procedure, the evaluation also looked at the programme’s gross impacts in terms of wealth, job opportunities, productivity and value added from the initiative. After that, the process continued by examining the net impacts on urban areas. And this was done by looking at gross accumulation, minus any displacement and taking into account any linkages and multipliers.

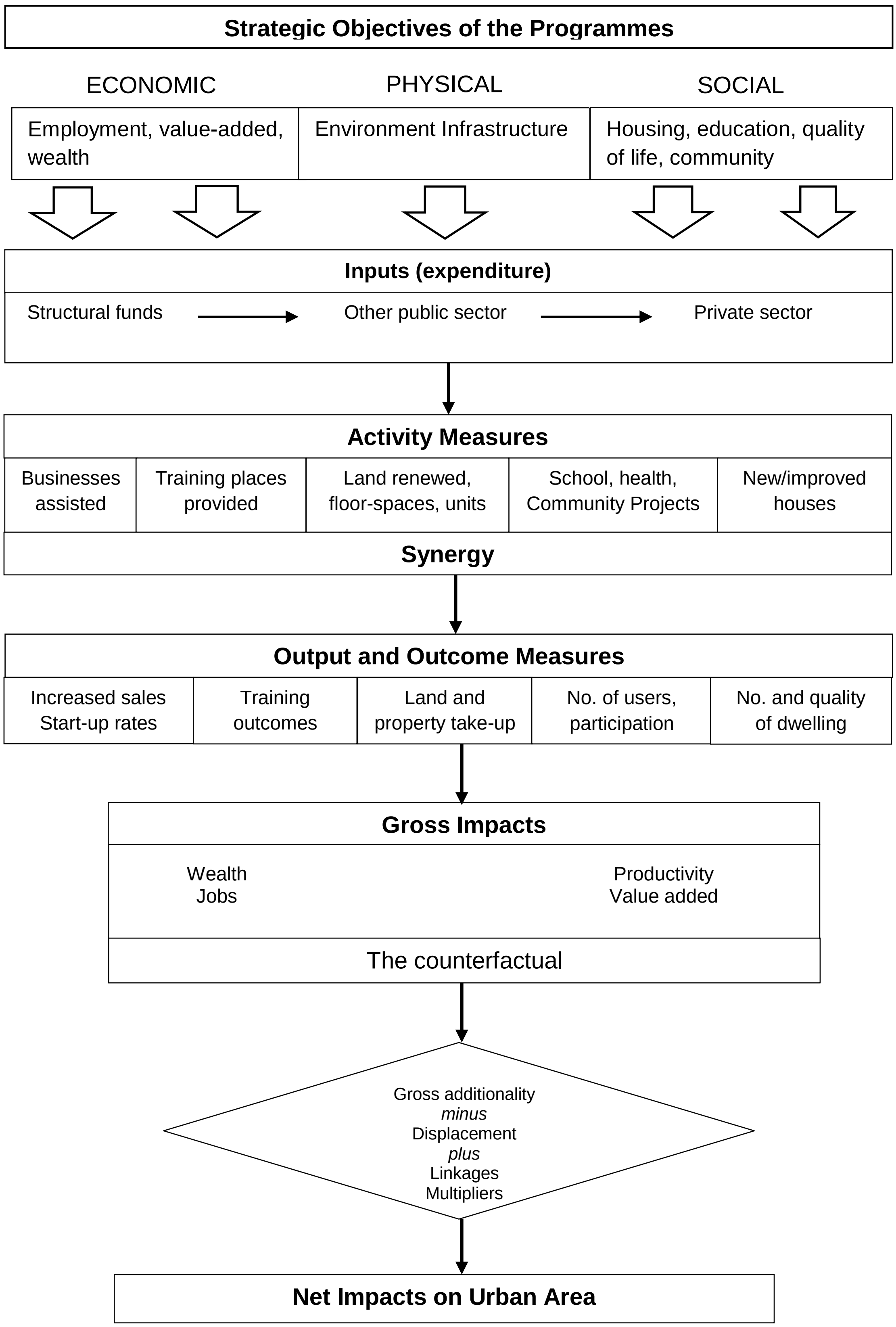

Figure 2.3: An example of an ex post evaluation framework for urban regeneration policies
Source: Moore and Spires (2000:p219)

2.6 Conclusions

Chapter Two has revealed the notion of evaluation, its various approaches and the link between evaluation and programme assessment. It has also uncovered the relationship between programme evaluation and performance measurement. Indeed, evaluation is widely regarded as an important tool in examining programmes and operates an essential role as assistance to policy makers in the social context.

The thesis therefore encapsulates the review of the evaluation concept as follows:

(1) Evaluation is not the latest approach to assessment but rather a time-honoured method;

(2) There is no permanent or fixed definition to describe the concept of evaluation. However, it brings about the same idea, i.e. to examine an intervention. The fundamental function of evaluation is its character of judging the merit and worth of the action / intervention, as well as its effectiveness;

(3) Formal evaluation is generally conducted to examine the extent of which a programme had or had not achieved its goal(s) against its intended outcome(s). In other words, to investigate the effectiveness and efficiency of an initiative;

(4) Evaluation may serve the role as a guidance for decision-makers, as well as those who have an interest in the intervention;

(5) Evaluation is flexible and can be conducted for many subjects and focuses;

(6) There are many types and approaches to evaluation which all depend on the subject and the purpose of the evaluation itself;

(7) A pragmatic way of assessing a programme is by using the case study method;

(8) The benefit of evaluation exercise is by and large seen as essential for the purpose of programme performance and improvement.

In addition to that, the research has also appraised the notion of urban regeneration in the UK. Based on the review, it is apparent that urban regeneration is not a theory but rather more of a practice and approach taken on board to solve urban decline and urban problems. In the UK, the practice of urban regeneration has been seen as a major approach to improve and redevelop urban areas since the late 1960s. These initiatives have evolved and progressed over the years and have become an important aspect of the British legacy in urban planning policies. As evaluation has progressed since the 1960s, urban regeneration initiatives have also experienced evaluation. The development of urban policy evaluation frameworks since the 1980s has then assisted evaluation of urban regeneration schemes.

CHAPTER THREE
THE CONCEPT OF BENCHMARKING

3.1 Introduction

Following the earlier review in Chapter Two of the concept of evaluation and the background of urban regeneration practice and evaluation in the UK, this Chapter now continues with a discussion of the notion of benchmarking. Chapter Three is, therefore, concerned with the second objective[10] of this research. For that reason, the appraisal will cover the definition of benchmarking, the historical background of formal benchmarking, the purpose and importance of the benchmarking technique, the types of benchmarking method, benchmarking procedure and process, as well as other benchmarking issues. Other than that, the review will also examine benchmarking in the UK public sector and urban regeneration initiatives.

3.2 The Concept of Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a method of measurement and is one of the many existing evaluation tools (American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993; European Commission, 1999; Stockmann, 2011c) like the Balanced Scorecard, Impact Assessment and Theory-Driven Evaluation. In fact, it is recognised as a useful method of evaluation in a company's strategic planning (Watson, 1992, 1993; Patterson, 1996; Town, 2000; Stapenhurst, 2009). The method, too, plays an important part in assessing an intervention, or process, or procedure, or delivery, or product, or service or even a system (Watson, 1992; American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993; Stapenhurst, 2009). Almost 20 years ago, Zairi (1994) proposed benchmarking as a new approach to evaluation. Today, needless to say, benchmarking is no longer an unusual method of assessment for many organisations. In fact, it is a widely-recognised method of evaluation.

[10] The second objective of this research is, "To review the concept of the *Benchmarking Method* and examine its modes of application".

The concept of benchmarking is far and wide distinguished as an elemental tool for improvement (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996; Garrod and Kinnell, 1997; Appleby, 1999; Anton and Gustin, 2000; Hansen, 2001; Huggins, 2010) which is intended to develop and enhance the current process or operation by adapting or improvising ideas and knowledge from others (Camp, 1989: Town, 2000; Beckford, 2002; Stockmann, 2011c). For this reason, Appleby (1999:p57) sees benchmarking as "a tool of Total Quality Management (TQM)". The approach is thought to be useful for business management (American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993; Garrod and Kinnell, 1997), as well as a good evaluation method in the manufacturing sector (Hansen, 2001).

Furthermore, benchmarking links with performance measurement as it relies very much on measuring the performance of an organisation. Benchmarking is therefore described as a way of achieving performance standards (Watson, 1993; Appleby, 1999; Stapenhurst, 2009). The method is an ongoing measurement and analysis process, and results in comparative performance measures. It is a self-evaluation procedure which enables self-development of an organisation (Owen and Roger, 1999; Jackson and Lund, 2000; Oakland, 2003). This helps to explain why the aim of benchmarking is to search for new ideas, methods or new approaches of working and also to achieve superiority (Camp, 1989; McGeorge and Palmer, 2002; Huggins, 2010). Equally, in relation to this, Stockmann (2011c:p77) poses a question "how do the others do it better?" and claimed it as a crucial enquiry for benchmarking purposes.

The common aim of benchmarking is to achieve *superiority* through a comparative exercise (Camp, 1989; Spendolini, 1992; Eaton, 2002; Beckford, 2002; Oakland, 2003). The application of this constructive method enables a company or organisation to continuously improve its work processes (The Department of Trade and Industry, 1992). And, the common approach to this method is to find another similar subject for the task, preferably of better practice rather than at the same par (Stockmann, 2011c). The practice therefore acts as a vehicle for sharing practice. Consequently, Zairi (1994:p62) also perceived benchmarking as "a powerful agent and as such it challenges existing methods of working". Nevertheless, benchmarking is not just a plain comparative exercise. It requires a systematic approach and should be conducted as a formal procedure (Beckford, 2002). Eaton (2002:p59) also added that the comparative exercise is essentially "a snapshot of performance at a particular instant in time". He believed that by doing so, one will understand the present operation, hence enabling some measures to be designed for the upcoming operation.

Benchmarking was broadly made known to the public from the author of the first benchmarking book, Robert C. Camp, in 1989 (Watson, 1992; Kozak, 2004; Stapenhurst, 2009). After seven years of experience within the benchmarking field (McGeorge and Palmer, 2002), Camp wrote *Benchmarking: The Search for Industry Best Practices That Lead to Superior Performance* which addresses benchmarking as the search for those best practices that will guide and lead a company to a higher performance. In his book, Camp (1989) describes the benchmarking process as establishing the operating targets based on the best practices, which, at that particular time, was increasingly being used by the US industries. Additionally, he suggested that benchmarking is a constructive, practical, and planned process which eventually leads to the transformation of operations and ultimately attaining superior performance and a competitive advantage. To him, by investigating and incorporating best industry practices, a company can obtain more profit and return on assets results.

Even though benchmarking had been known since Camp's book in 1989, seven years after that, Patterson (1996) claimed that benchmarking was still immature in Europe as compared to the practice in the US but was progressing particularly among large companies. Nevertheless, he did mention that vigorous attempts were then being conducted in the UK, France and Netherlands, for the purpose of continuous development. According to Huggins (2010), benchmarking in Europe became prevalent with the establishment of European Commission's Mutual Learning Platform in 2005 whereby several benchmarking projects were funded across the European Union (EU). Meanwhile, in the US, benchmarking practice has being featured in the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, an acclaimed quality award covering the business sector, education and health. It encourages companies to benchmark their performance (Patterson, 1996; McGeorge and Palmer, 2002). And so, benchmarking was thought to be a fundamental requirement for the achievements of the Award (American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993). The Award was established in 1987 under the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Improvement Act of 1987, Public Law 100-107 (Spendolini, 1992), making it a long-standing credited and experienced event in the US. This has made it a formal platform for best practice recognition through benchmarking, as well as encouraging knowledge sharing and promoting efficiency in management and operation of a company. An important element of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award is the benchmarking category with the characteristics of external comparison among companies. Additionally, in encouraging benchmarking practice, the American Productivity and Quality Center (1993) outlined a Code of Conduct for benchmarking (see Appendix 1) as a basic guideline for companies in the US.

Also, the idea of benchmarking is not restricted. The flexibility of benchmarking in terms of application and area for comparative measure makes it practical and applicable for many subjects. Moreover, the Department of Trade and Industry (1992:p15) believed that a benchmarking exercise "adapts easily to all cultures and environment". As justified by Spendolini (1992:p3), the method is not only applicable to a specific competitor, but can be utilised when making comparisons with other organisations as well- "competitor or non-competitor, large or small, public or private, foreign or domestic". Having said this, benchmarking is very much dependent on the purpose of the exercise and the area for improvement.

Benchmarking has been exercised by many disciplines, including business, the health sector, the construction industry and higher education. In the business management field, benchmarking is used to evaluate and compare the delivery of practices, or managing and administrative procedures, or products and the delivery of quality levels to the end customer or even for financial performance. In the health sector, benchmarking is employed for the purpose of developing principles for good practice and developing guidance for the government including to improve their practice in communicating about the risks and the health measures for their control. Meanwhile, higher education applies benchmarking in its educational processes and outcomes, for instance, when comparing external examining or programme accreditation, or to improve the departmental systems for the purpose of quality and standards in management, or benchmarking the outcomes of a learning process. Also, another discipline that conducts benchmarking for evaluation is the public library which utilises this approach to assess the library's resources and work processes, for examples, the number of books or journals, the quantity of books circulated against interlibrary loan, document delivery, and online searching services. All these purposes are systematically measured through benchmarking and learning from others.

Within the construction industry, benchmarking is conducted to evaluate the latest and innovative developments in the construction industry, for instance, the modification of site management process, whereby benchmarking is carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the management system. And the use of benchmarking in relation to assessing the procedure of drawing revisions issued, or even understanding other approach when issuing verbal instruction, etc. However, despite the fact that benchmarking is widely adopted by many other disciplines, benchmarking is not a renowned practice when comparing urban regeneration programmes in the UK. To support this contention, towards the end of this chapter, a small section (see Section 3.7) will describe the past experience of benchmarking application in evaluating urban regeneration initiatives, particularly for regional parks.

3.2.1 Definition of Benchmarking

There are many definitions to describe benchmarking. To start off, the thesis sets great store by Robert Camp's idea from his first notable benchmarking book in 1989. It is hard to disagree with Stapenhurst (2009:p10) who regards the book as "a definitive book on benchmarking". In his book, Camp (1989) marks his definition as a working definition, which he derived from his working experience and from other sources. Camp (1989:p12) therefore provides his definition as "*Benchmarking is the search for industry best practices that lead to superior performance*". Camp (1989) also agreed that benchmarking should be defined in accordance with its activity, which consist of several functions and activities like: (1) continuous process; (2) measurement; (3) products, services and practices; and (4) prominent companies within the industries. To him, a definition of benchmarking should portray these actions in order to demonstrate the concept of benchmarking itself. However, in the same book, Camp also gives a generic definition of benchmarking which he described as "*A basis of establishing rational performance goals* *through the search for industry best practices that will lead to superior performance*" (Camp, 1989:p250).

Also, from another perspective, McGeorge and Palmer (2002:p82-83) have a separate way of presenting the definition. They carefully addressed the meaning of benchmarking through separate key subject matter, namely: "(1) it is structured; (2) it is ongoing; (3) the comparison is with best practice; and (4) its aim is organisational improvement through the establishment of achievable goals". They meticulously described each subject and explained that being structured is to establish a systematic approach starting from planning, delivery and monitoring. The idea of 'ongoing' was described as making a continuous effort in order to be the best, since technology, methods and products tend to develop and progress constantly. The third key element of their definition suggests that merely comparing to others does not inevitably result in improvement. The essential factor is to find best practice for comparative measure. It is believed that choosing among best practices may lead to superiority. Lastly, they recommend that the final important aspect in benchmarking is to learn from the best practice and compare with the organisation's own goals. Hence, in doing so, the organisation can strategise its targets based on the lesson learnt.

Meanwhile, Stapenhurst (2009:p6) depicts his definition into a unique form of description which demarcates each point into a separate line of explanation, each of which brings a separate meaning. He therefore defines benchmarking as:

> "A *method* of
> *Measuring* and
> *Improving*
> Our organisation
> By *comparing* ourselves with the best".

In relation to the above definition, Stapenhurst (2009) spreads his definition into a sequence of action which delineates the task of benchmarking. The first line demonstrates the function of benchmarking as a method; the following line justifies the role of the approach as a measuring tool; the third line proposes the aim of action which is to improve the current situation; the fourth line then informs the application of benchmarking is meant for the benefit of one's own organisation; and lastly the definition suggests that benchmarking is to compare with best practice.

Nevertheless, of all the definitions provided in 1989, 2002 and 2009, the researcher was drawn to a definition given by Spendolini (1992) which was then selected as a direction for this thesis. It was almost a complete description, bringing together all the key aspects of benchmarking provided by other writers.

"*A continuous (1), systematic (2) process (3) for evaluating (4) the products (5), services (5), and work processes (5) of organisations (6) that are recognised (7) as representing best practices (8) for the purpose of organisational improvement (9)*" (Spendolini, 1992:p9).

In relation to Spendolini's (1992) definition above, it was understood that he had tested and narrowed down a total of 49 benchmarking definitions which he had discovered, and had finally resolved with an inclusive meaning of the benchmarking concept. Spendolini (1992) then arranged the definition into parentheses of his key idea (see Figure 3.1). The definition thus has a distinct feature of distinguishing some words into a specific context. These phrases were carefully addressed to denote certain actions. From Figure 3.1, it is obvious that the structure allows flexibility in justifying the subject for benchmarking. It accepts the use of more than one item for any boxes to accommodate the requirement and purpose of the benchmarking case. The blank space in some of the boxes informs the availability to add any word in relation to the evaluator, in order to fit into the benchmarking procedure.

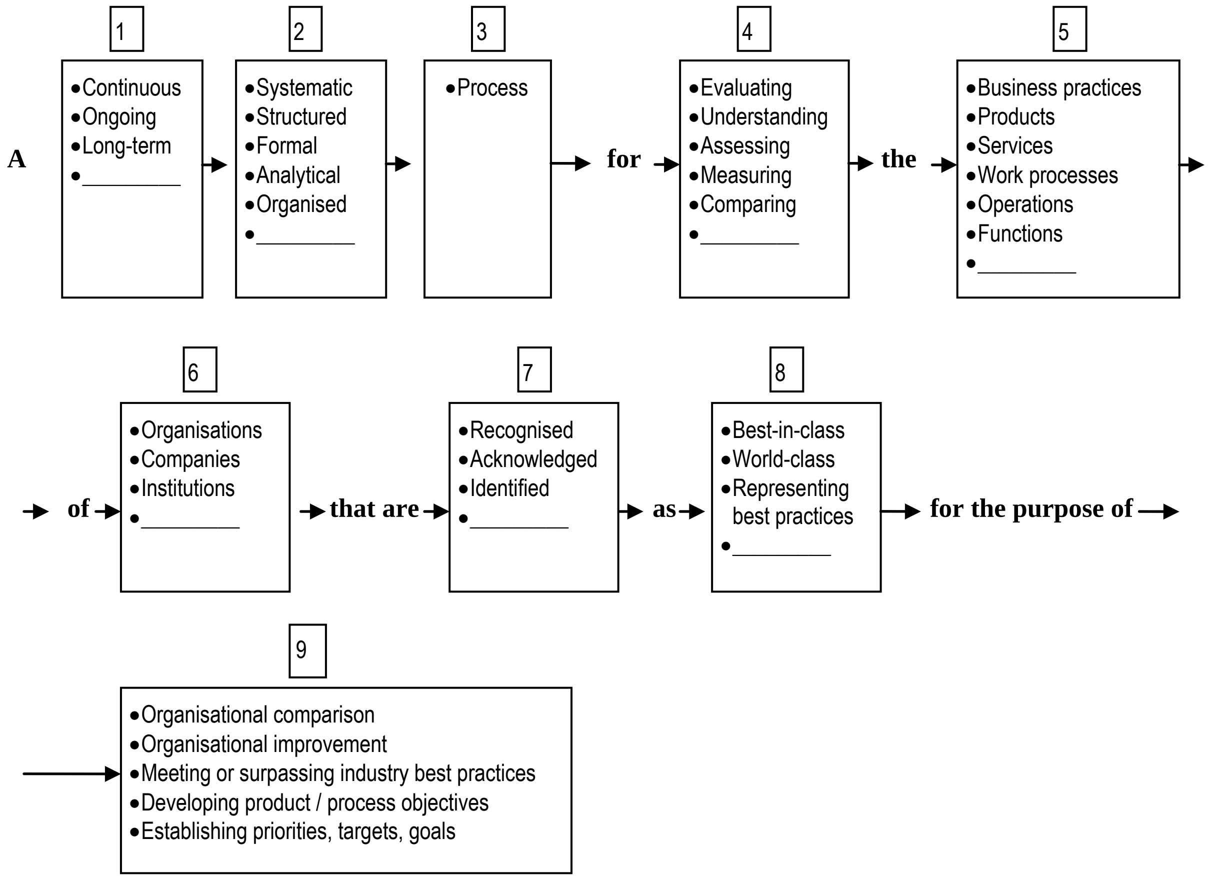

Figure 3.1: The benchmarking menu.
Source: Obtained from Spendolini (1992:p10)

At this point, it is also useful to consider the meaning of the phrase *Best Practice* and other related words in conjunction with the benchmarking activities. Given that 'best practice' is repeatedly being used and frequently being associated with benchmarking, as well as other words like the *Critical Success Factor* (CSF) and *World Class* which will appear either later in this chapter or in subsequent chapters, therefore, it may be handy and effective to grasp the meaning of those words.

(a) Best Practice

Best practice generally represents an exemplar of certain practice or process or approach. When an organisation or company achieves best practice, this means that the organisation or company demonstrates the highest level of achievement as compared to others. This can be portrayed by its performance and experience, including the awards or profits it had gained, or recognition or position it had placed itself. According to Town (2000), best practice is achieving excellence in certain action or practice. Benchmarking aims to seek out the methods of practices by which this performance is achieved". In another account, the American Productivity and Quality Center (1993:p10) mentioned that, "Best practices are leadership, management, or operational methods or approaches that lead to exceptional performance. Best practice is a relative term, not an absolute standard".

(b) Critical Success Factors (CSF)

Critical Success Factors are a number of factors considered by an organisation or company as a measurement in achieving certain targets. Critical Success Factors are referred to for the purpose of achieving certain performance, for example customers' satisfaction, efficiency in production or the effectiveness in a delivery process. Town (2000:p3) described CSF as "the small number of things that an organisation must have, or need to do, to fulfil its vision or mission and be successful. Usually expressed as a set of simple statements which define the most important things to achieve". Meanwhile, Andersen and Pettersen (1996:p24) describe it as "A limited number of factors that highly impact upon the company's competitiveness". For example, "price, quality, delivery time, product attributes, service".

(c) World Class

There is no absolute criterion to describe a company, or an institution as a 'world class company' or 'world class institution'. Generally, 'world class' is acknowledged from the perception or recognition it received from the general public, due to its leading image or achievement. As Maylor (1996:p235) describes it, "The definition of world-class performance is open to debate and that this is not always totally objective". Additionally, he too added that, "A world-class company is one that is considered to be world-class in a number of measures" (Maylor, 1996:p235). In relation to this, a world class organisation is likely to have certain characteristics or encompasses of certain aspects accepted internationally or meets the world standard. For example, an equestrian facility that trains and accommodates local riders and only equipped with facilities of a local context cannot be identified as a world class. Similarly, an equestrian facility which only facilitates at regional scale and has no experience at international scale cannot be labelled as world class too. In contrast, equestrian facilities and resources of international standard, delivering services of international scale and capable of accommodating international events, plus being acknowledged worldwide can be identified as a world class.

3.2.2 The History of Formal Benchmarking

Benchmarking is thought to go back for many decades (Camp, 1989; Stapenhurst, 2009; Zairi, 1994). However, formal benchmarking was initiated by the Xerox company in 1979 (Patterson, 1996; Stapenhurst, 2009). To many, the Xerox Company was responsible for introducing and exposing the idea of benchmarking to the world (The Department of Trade and Industry, 1992; Watson, 1992, 1993; American Productivity and Quality Centre, 1993; Zairi, 1996; Karlof *et.al*, 2001; Eaton, 2002; Kozak, 2004; Stapenhurst, 2009). It has been suggested that the existing application of benchmarking is based on the Xerox's experience (Stapenhurst, 2009). Nevertheless, the term 'benchmark' is thought to have emerged from the land surveying discipline (American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993; Patterson, 1996; Jackson and Lund, 2000). According to Patterson (1996), the word 'benchmark' was used when markings were made to denote a position or height applied normally in topographical or tidal examination. Similarly, Maylor (1996:p232) also believed that "a benchmark is a reference point – some standard by which other phenomena are judged".

Modern benchmarking is believed to have started in the 1940s as a result of government's efforts to benchmark military equipments (Stapenhurst, 2009). However, it was also mentioned that benchmarking activity had evolved widely in the 1950s when the Japanese were trying to examine Western technology and business practices (Stapenhurst, 2009; Kozak, 2004). And during the 1960s and 1970s, benchmarking activities grew along with the progressive development of computer technology. In contrast, Stapenhurst (2009) stresses that many people think of benchmarking as a management trend in the 1970s to the 1990s. In his review he regards this as wrong. He strongly believes that benchmarking did not emerge from that epoch. To him, benchmarking procedures were disorganised before the 1970s and appeared to be sporadic as a tool for management. Accordingly, he also mentioned that benchmarking practice spread largely in the 1990s (see also McGeorge and Palmer, 2002). In the UK, a report produced by Coopers and Lybrand, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), and the National Manufacturing Council indicated the increased percentage of companies performing benchmarking in the 1990s. Stapenhurst (2009:p10) wrote "a survey of benchmarking in the UK 1994 identified that 78% of The Times top 1000 companies claimed to be benchmarking". Meanwhile, it was also in the 1990s that the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) founded the International Benchmarking Clearinghouse (IBC). According to Stapenhurst (2009), the establishment of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the European

Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Award demonstrates the development and progress of benchmarking in the US and Europe. It is these two awards that require the contenders to at least be involved in benchmarking. Kozak (2004) and the American Productivity and Quality Center (1993) believed that the practice of Baldrige Award in the US had influenced and encouraged benchmarking even more, while McGeorge and Palmer (2002) claimed that the Award was one of the two major elements apart from Camp's book that made benchmarking prevalent.

3.2.3 The Importance and Purpose of Benchmarking

Benchmarking is claimed to provide many benefits. Unfortunately, the vast materials available which discuss benchmarking were mostly related to industries, manufacturing, companies, customer related services and profit making organisations, while most books address the importance of meeting quality standards and customer requirements (see Camp, 1989; Watson 1992, 1993; Patterson, 1996; Zairi, 1996, 1998; Anton and Gustin, 2000; Stapenhurst, 2009). Notwithstanding this discovery, one striking parallel element from all the references is that benchmarking is an essential tool in trying to learn from best practices, either from the production process or methods, in order to enhance and improve one's organisation (see Camp, 1989; Watson 1992, 1993; Zairi, 1994, 1996, 1998; Patterson, 1996; Appleby, 1999; Anton and Gustin, 2000; Oakland, 2003; Stapenhurst, 2009; Stockmann, 2011c). The following description outlines the purpose of benchmarking:

a. To become the best

It is generally accepted that the foremost aim of benchmarking is to move forward and develop into superiority, above the best (Jackson and Lund, 2000; Stockmann, 2011c). Appleby (1999:p59) claimed benchmarking as "a systematic framework for objective analysis and evaluation". Also, it was suggested that benchmarking can certify the superiority and efficiency of practice (Patterson, 1996; European Commission, 1999). And because of this, benchmarking should enable an organisation to identify best practices for the exercise (American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993; Appleby, 1999). As Anton and Gustin (2000) stressed, benchmarking against the best practice will ensure that one achieves excellence, but if benchmarking is performed with partners who are not the best, an organisation can only improve itself as far as this.

Since benchmarking plays a vital role in management, the management can act based on its results and improve the company's or organisation's performance (Eaton, 2002), as well as "heightening sensitivity to changing customer needs" (Oakland, 2003:p150). And, because the nature of benchmarking itself is finding ideas and lessons from best practices, therefore, inevitably, an organisation will try to position itself as a top organisation within the industry. Additionally, it can become a means in finding new technology and ideas, or conducted for the purpose of company's goal setting, or forecasting the outputs, or encouraging a company to establish new strategic planning (Spendolini, 1992; Appleby, 1999; Oakland, 2003). According to Stapenhurst (2009), benchmarking is not only acquiring lessons from others but it can also promote the custom of better practices. Also, as a result of this positive culture, an organisation will inexorably be motivated to strive for improvement (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996). In fact, Zairi (1996) claimed that this effort is a proactive attitude.

Furthermore, benchmarking can be used by organisations for all sorts of reasons (Spendolini, 1992). The practice is conducted as a problem-solving procedure (Spendolini, 1992), or conducted for the purpose of discovering new ideas and approaches to better planning and process or procedures or keeping updates with the latest innovative practice available (Jackson and Lund, 2000; Spendolini, 1992; Oakland, 2003). Camp (1989) believed that benchmarking is a constructive, hands-on procedure which can result in revolution of standard process to enhance a company's operation. Successful benchmarking may well lead to achieving a client's needs and demands (Patterson, 1996), as well as formulating an improved strategy by deriving achievable goals from the lessons learnt, and taking on board the best practices that exist (Patterson, 1996).

b. Understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses, as well as sharing the knowledge

Given that benchmarking is exercised through comparative assessment, it follows that it provides a means for sharing knowledge, practices, methods, processes and operation (Zairi, 1996; Jackson and Lund, 2000; Stapenhurst, 2009). Learning from others for the purpose of self-improvement is said to be the causal drive to benchmarking (Watson, 1993; Karlof *et al.*, 2001). This in turn enables an organisation to understand its strong points and weak spots. Benchmarking therefore provides a way of assessing and knowing an organisation's own performance and seeks to understand its own strengths and weaknesses (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996; Appleby, 1999; European Commission, 1999; Anton and Gustin, 2000). The essential task of comparative exercise makes benchmarking a good way of understanding the gaps and flaws in an operation or process in contrast to the recognised standard (Maylor, 1996; Karlof *et.al*, 2001).

c. Increasing awareness

It is also agreed that, by benchmarking, one is able to increase consciousness and knowledge of how others had attained from those of best practices (Camp, 1989; Zairi, 1994; Karlof *et.al*, 2001; Eaton, 2002). "It creates a sense of urgency for improvement and change and sees the need for both continuous and breakthrough improvements" (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996:p9). For this matter, Eaton (2002:p61) believes that benchmarking "does create the momentum to kick-start the change". Moreover, in doing so, an organisation can always ensure its position and performance within the industry and current development is consistent as latest technology is always pursued (Watson, 1992). Meanwhile, Zairi

(1994) felt that benchmarking can actually change people's attitudes as they tend to be more inquisitive in finding the latest methods or practices.

d. Reducing the process of improvement

Stapenhurst (2009) also thought that benchmarking can reduce the process of improvement. He believed that this evaluation approach could abbreviate the course of dealing with changes and transformation. He argued his logic as "Analysis, re-designing processes, re-training and other costs and even then perhaps not achieving the same levels of performance as others. It would be better to identify current best practices, adapt and improve them and then expend effort on implementing changes with a high degree of certainty that the performance will be at least amongst the best that we have found" (Stapenhurst, 2009:p12). He therefore, decided that benchmarking acts as short-cut to enrich our own performance. At its best, benchmarking can save time by learning from other best practices instead of employing the traditional way of experimenting through trial and error, as well as promoting continuous upgrading and transformation of an organisation (Patterson, 1996).

Having mentioned the importance and purposes of benchmarking, this researcher is inspired by a statement made by Patterson (1996:6) with regards to the merit of benchmarking, which motivates, "One of the great values of benchmarking is that, if you learn nothing else, at least you've taken a good, hard look at how you do business". Indeed, if a comparative exercise has been performed and yet our own process skill surpasses the others, no harm was done as this procedure inevitably facilitates and ensures that we do understand our own operation and process.

3.3 The Types of Benchmarking

When discussing about the types of benchmarking, it is generally accepted that the topic connects: firstly, the subject of comparison (*Benchmarking of what?*) or addressed by Watson (1993:p4) as "What should we benchmark?", and secondly, the parties involved in the benchmarking procedure (*Benchmarking against what?*) or "Whom should we benchmark?" (Watson, 1 993:p4). In relation to this, the following sections will emphasise the subjects of benchmarking activity and with what an organisation should make comparisons.

3.3.1 Benchmarking of What?

Benchmarking can be conducted for various purposes (Patterson, 1996). As stated by Andersen and Pettersen (1996), benchmarking can be exercised by assessing the entire organisation, or just selecting a partial element, or a specific area within the organisation, for example, its process or just the product or method. According to Spendolini (1992), benchmarking can be performed for anything that can be examined or assessed. Referring to this, one can conduct either *performance benchmarking*, or *process benchmarking,* or *strategic benchmarking* (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996).

a. Performance Benchmarking

Benchmarking of performance measurement normally involves the financial or operational part. This is carried out in order to confirm our own performance and how it differs from other good companies (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996). An example of this form of benchmarking is to assess one's own manufacturing technology and compare it with others to understand why others are making more profit or are the most preferred choice of brand. For instance, a manufacturing company (named 'A') that produces cereal may find that it is losing its revenue to its competitors, while another company (named 'B') with the same type of product is achieving a tremendous turnover. In this case, benchmarking can be conducted to study the competitor's brand or its packaging, or perhaps its recipe or promotions that the rival is offering. This in turn, allows company 'A' to understand its weaknesses and the strengths of company 'B', thus learning from its competitor at the same time and therefore improving its own operation.

b. Process Benchmarking

Process benchmarking is performed to assess the methods and practices in business operation (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996). By doing so, one can evaluate its one's own process and improve one's practices as compared to the best. This may involve benchmarking one's own procedure of tendering a project, or benchmarking the process of project management. For example, company 'A' and company 'B' are separate freight companies, but are similar in terms of operation. Both companies consign goods to China. However, company 'A' manages to make only 20 trips to China in a month but company 'B' is capable of making an extra 15 trips within the same period. In order to understand the competency of company 'B', company 'A' should benchmark its process against 'B'. The ability to transport goods 35 times in a month certainly has been influenced by certain approach or practice. It is this that company 'A' should investigate and *process benchmarking* should be the choice of subject.

c. Strategic Benchmarking

This method of comparison studies the strategic options and characters as practiced by others (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996). The idea is to target for improvement in terms of strategic plan and framework. An example of this approach is to compare marketing strategies or customer services. For instance, an organisation (named Organisation A) develops a regional park when other organisations have already ventured a similar intervention before. It was then discovered that the regional park developed by another organisation (say for example, Organisation C) was attracting more visitors and gaining more attention in terms of events and activities. In relation to this, Organisation A should benchmark its strategic approach against Organisation C. This would benefits organisation 'A' as it may find that Organisation C may have different marketing strategy or delivery framework, possibly through its method of promoting the regional park or development plan. Understanding Organisation C's strategic approach may provide clues to Organisation A of the right methods to attract more visitors and events to the area.

3.3.2 Benchmarking Against What?

Besides identifying the subject for benchmarking, it is also essential to determine the comparative measure involved in the benchmarking exercise. For this matter, benchmarking generally targets the four basic categories of comparators, namely the *Internal Benchmarking*, *Functional Benchmarking*, *Generic Benchmarking* and *Competitive Benchmarking* (Camp, 1989; Andersen and Pettersen, 1996; Oakland, 2003). According to Watson (1993:p60) "Rather than seeking the "best of the best", it may be advantageous to seek a partner that is considered to be an example of "performance success" in an analogous process". In relation to his belief, it is therefore observed that deciding on a benchmarking category requires an underlying principle to it and not just for the sake of comparing with the best. In this instance, we can see the flexibility of rule in finding the right comparison subject. Consequently at this point, it is also important to inform that the term '*benchmarking partner*' is generally used to represent the organisation or company engaged in the benchmarking process as comparison (see Camp, 1989; Andersen and Pettersen, 1996).

a. Internal Benchmarking

This form of benchmarking revolves around comparing internal operation, and fits larger companies as benchmarking is normally performed among different units, or sections, or departments, or subsidiaries within the same group or corporation. *Internal Benchmarking* involves a "two-way communication and sharing opinions between departments within the same organisation or between organisations operating as part of a chain in different countries" Kozak (2004:p10). This means, the method does not only cover within the organisation itself but can be conducted among the same company involving other branches. The benefit of having benchmarking partners under one roof allows any parts or units within the company to re-enhanced and improved. This in turn, will also enable any units within the company to re-think and alter their strategy or operation. In planning, this can also be applied considering that local government or central government have many separate units or departments. Internal benchmarking however does not suit this research as it involves separate regional parks of different institutions. An example of this form of benchmarking is provided in Figure 3.2 below.

A private electric company with many branches throughout the region discovered that one of its divisions is decreasing in terms of customer numbers and turnover. Conversely, another branch of the same company had multiplied its income and had extended its number of customers and therefore appeared to be the best branch among the rest. The company then benchmarked its declining branch against its best branch. Through this internal benchmarking, the company will understand how the other branch had made more progress and achievement comparatively and therefore giving measures for the declining branch to improve its work processes.

Figure 3.2: An example of an Internal Benchmarking
Source: Author

b. Competitive Benchmarking

Competitive benchmarking usually operates by comparing with another competitor of a best practice. Normally, this procedure takes on board by comparing the competitor's approach to operation or process, their product, technology or innovation, ways of marketing, or even management (Oakland, 2003). This method of benchmarking was seen from Xerox's experience in the late 1970s (see Camp, 1989). Additionally, it can also be done to compare other equal products but of another brand (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996). The force for this comparative exercise is important for a company that is experiencing competition or challenges from other rivals who are performing much better. In town planning, this is not a common procedure as it focuses more on business competitors, therefore is not applicable to this research. An example of competitive benchmarking is shown in Figure 3.3 below.

Like many other tyre companies, a tyre company (named Brand A) produces tyres with a life expectancy of four years. However, there appeared to be another innovative company (named Brand D) which had successfully produces tyres with a life expectancy of five years. In order to compete with this great achievement, Brand A needs to benchmark its product against Brand D. This can be achieved through examining Brand D's product and the formula behind its ground-breaking invention.

Figure 3.3: An example of a Competitive Benchmarking
Source: Author

c. Functional Benchmarking

In this approach, the benchmarking partner is of another organisation or company within a broader industry or of "industry leaders" (Camp, 1989:p254). The purpose of this benchmarking approach is to understand and compare the process and practice of another different company which does not inflict any challenges or competition to its own company. The name itself, *functional benchmarking*, conveys the idea of looking at the function and how it had achieved its position as the best. There is plausible area in planning to apply this method especially in understanding other organisation's practice. However, for this research, this method is not fitting as both case major UK case studies are of the same intervention, and the comparative subject is not being claimed as an “industry leader”. Figure 3.4 below demonstrates an application of functional benchmarking.

> A departmental store selling clothes realised that a toy store is making tremendous quarterly earnings within the same period. It was uncovered that customers’ preference was more towards toys and games during that particular season. Hence, the departmental store conducts a benchmarking exercise in order to learn from the toy store, whether causal affects were influenced by different approaches to practice and customer service, or business process. Even though the products offered by the departmental store and the toy store differ, yet both companies have the same purpose of selling goods and it is this functional benchmarking that can act as a way of achieving new ideas or approaches to business plan.

Figure 3.4: An example of a Functional Benchmarking
Source: Author

d. Generic benchmarking

A *generic benchmarking* is a benchmarking procedure which involves different organisations as benchmarking partner (Oakland, 2003). It is an approach to compare other organisations or institutions that may proffer new ideas and advancement in terms of delivery, or management or even operation. Camp (1989:p254) describes this method as “comparison of business functions or processes that are the same regardless of industry”. Meanwhile, Kozak (2004) describes this approach as an ‘external benchmarking’ and suggested that it may offer chances of adapting from best practices. It is anticipated that this form of assessment may provide key lessons for future planning and possibly a transformation in strategic approach to operation and process. In general, the generic process of benchmarking is divided into two parts, namely the practices and metrics. Practices are defined as the methods that are used, while metrics are the quantified effect of installing the practices. Essentially, benchmarking should be approached on the basis of investigating the industry first, while the metrics that quantify the effect of the practices can be obtained or synthesised later (Camp, 1989: p4). In this instance, given that the intention is to examine two regional parks’ experiences in terms of ‘delivery, management and operation’, the generic benchmarking concept therefore provides a probable application for this research. An example of this benchmarking method is given in Figure 3.5 below.

> A local authority (for example, Authority A) learnt that another local authority (say Authority E) from a different district has received with many performance awards and was commended in terms of its short length of processing planning application as compared to many other local authorities. As Authority A had never won any award and has a longer period of processing planning applications, it had decided to benchmark its practice and development plan against Authority E. This enables it to understand Authority E’s practice and how it had gained many performance awards, and how to reduce the timeframe for its planning application process.

Figure 3.5: An example of a Generic Benchmarking
Source: Author

Having mentioned the *types* of benchmarking approaches and the choice of *benchmarking partners*, the researcher is also inclined to present a proposal by Andersen and Pettersen (1996), which suggested an ideal combination of benchmarking *subject* and *benchmarking partner* for the evaluation exercise. Table 3.1 below illustrates their idea. Pointing towards Andersen and Pettersen's (1996) idea of the optional arrangement of benchmarking (see Table 3.1 below), it is apparent that internal benchmarking can be conducted to either compare the performance or process, but is unlikely to be appropriate in measuring the strategic plan of another practice. However, competitive benchmarking is highly recommended when looking at performance or strategic benchmarking, therefore suggesting that any benchmarking exercise that initiates as improving its performance and strategic plan should be conducted by comparing with other competitors. Additionally, they too thought that functional benchmarking and generic benchmarking are the best way to examine a company's processes. Also, the idea shows that any organisation determining to perform strategic benchmarking has only a greater prospect when comparing with competitors, but not through internal, functional or generic benchmarking.

Table 3.1: Recommended combinations of types of benchmarking

	Internal benchmarking	**Competitor benchmarking**	**Functional benchmarking**	**Generic benchmarking**
Performance benchmarking	⬮	▲	⬮	⬢
Process benchmarking	⬮	⬢	▲	▲
Strategic benchmarking	⬢	▲	⬢	⬢
Relevance/Value: High ▲ Medium ⬮ Low ⬢				

Source: Andersen and Pettersen (1996:p7)

From the review, it was apparent that Andersen and Pettersen (1996) had suggested that, the best means of generic benchmarking is through studying one's own processes. It is this idea that the researcher had selected to tease out the method in benchmarking the case studies for this research. Also, the fact that, 'internal, competitor and functional benchmarking' are not suitable in terms of the subjects for this investigation, and the intention is to examine the process of programme delivery, therefore, this research had opted for the combination of approach, i.e. the type of benchmarking would be *process benchmarking* and the comparative subject would be *generic benchmarking*.

3.4 The Approach to Benchmarking Procedure

The benchmarking process is a "structured process" and is guided by "a step-by-step process model" (Spendolini, 1992:p38). Any benchmarking exercise should start off with an objective; justification of the benchmarking purpose (Patterson, 1996). Hence, any organisation with the intention of comparing its own organisation with others ought to determine its target, which also relates to the previous section on the types of benchmarking – the approach and the choice of benchmarking partner. In relation to this, the researcher also provides the basic enquiries to benchmarking before committing to the process, which were suggested by Patterson (1996:p25):

a) "*Can your organisation afford to stop improving?*

b) *Can your organisation afford to stop learning?*

c) *Can your organisation afford to stop competing for its position in the marketplace?*"

To Patterson (1996), it is important that an organisation have its basic validation before initiating the benchmarking procedure. He added, "If you answered no to any of these questions, you should benchmark". If any of those clues were countered, it follows that the organisation compelled to conduct the exercise.

3.4.1 The Steps to Benchmarking

A basic process of conducting a benchmarking procedure includes (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996):

a. To review own practice;
b. To search for a benchmarking partner;
c. To review the partner's operation;
d. To analyse one's practice, or operation, or process, as compared to the benchmarking partner; and
e. To adopt and make changes based on lesson learnt.

To describe more of this, Andersen and Pettersen (1996) have provided a diagram to demonstrate the steps to benchmarking (see Figure 3.6). Their diagram shared the same idea as Spendolini's (1992). It differs only in terms of the categorisation for each stage. In their (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996:p14) illustration, benchmarking is shown as a cyclical process from the curved arrows and circular diagram. They describe this as a *recycling* process. This reflects the universal idea that benchmarking is performed as a continuous process. The first task named as the 'plan' stage is followed by 'search', then to 'observe', and thereafter the 'analyse' and finally to 'adapt'. However, the process does not stop there. It continues with the first task again, i.e. to 'plan' again. This mode of procedures represents the continual work of benchmarking for the purpose of its effectiveness (Watson, 1993; Andersen and Pettersen, 1996).

Additionally, in Figure 3.6 below, Andersen and Pettersen (1996) describe the task for each basic phase. The first stage is intended to justify the company's Critical Success Factors and to identify which aspect or area within the company requires benchmarking.

To them (Andersen and Pettersen, 1996), this planning stage is the most crucial part of the whole process. During this time, a benchmarking team needs to be established and, at this stage too, not only does a company need to understand its own strengths and weaknesses but it also needs to identify the performance measures and thereafter to document the review. The second stage, also known as the 'search' step, is designed to look for an appropriate benchmarking partner. This expects one to find any practices that are known as best practice in terms of achievement or performance. Subsequently, one has to establish contact with the chosen benchmarking partner. Following this step, is to observe the selected benchmarking partner. In this process, a detail study of the benchmarking partner's approach or practice or process is conducted. Nevertheless, the area of study depends on the company's subject for assessment.

According to Andersen and Pettersen (1996), for this matter, there are many methods to perform the investigation. A company can undertake its research through questionnaire, or interview, or even from observation. After the study, the benchmarking procedure continues with the analysis. It is at this stage that, from the gathered information, one needs to analyse the gaps and differences between its own practices as compared to the benchmarking partner. In addition to that, it is also important to identify the cause of the performance gaps. Finally, the last stage is to find a solution to the problems by adapting the idea and knowledge obtained from the findings. At this point, the approach to improvement can vary according to the purpose of the benchmarking itself. If the discovery proves that changes are needed in terms of strategic planning, or a modification to the operation is required, then the company is required to adjust and alter correspondingly. This in turn will result in an effective measure to benchmarking. And finally, the process repeats.

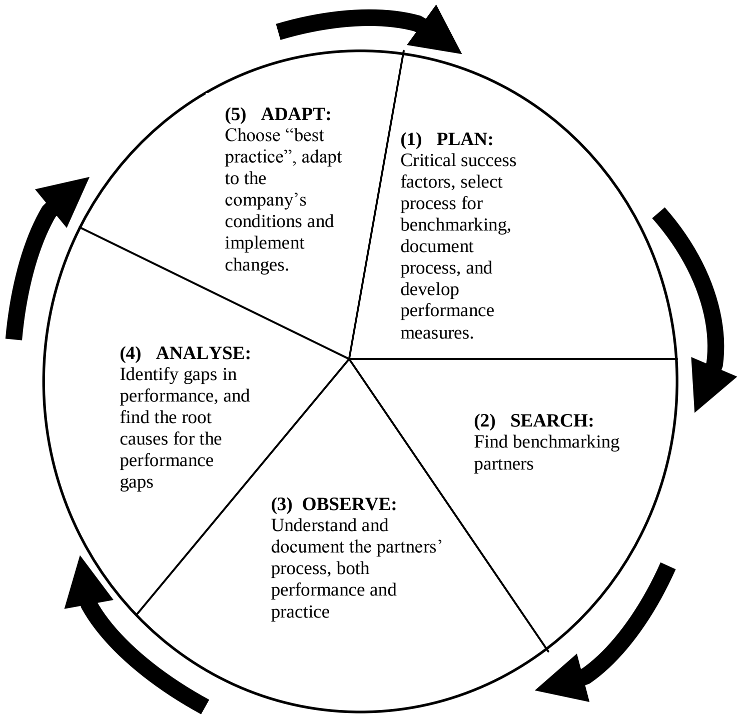

Figure 3.6: The benchmarking wheel
Source: Attained from Andersen and Pettersen (1996:p14)

Additionally, this researcher had also identified the connection of various ideas from several scholars derived after the first author of a benchmarking book. Table 3.2 below exhibits the various adaptations of benchmarking phases and its similarities to Camp's (1989) original idea. Based on Table 3.2 below, the research can conclude that other scholars have presented their benchmarking phases differently as compared to Camp's. Most writers concentrate on the four early stages of Camp's idea, while some break down and interpreted Camp's process into a more specified task (refer to Spendolini's and Rylatt's in Table 3.2). Camp's (1989) original benchmarking steps were categorised into five stages, namely: (1) Planning; (2) Analyse; (3) Integration; (4) Action; and (5) Maturity. Unlike Camp, scholars like Spendolini, Watson and Andersen & Pettersen do not explicitly include the 'maturity' phase in the process. According to Camp (1989), the last stage is when the process recommences again, making it a cyclical process. Regardless of the last stage by Camp (1989) which specifically addresses the ongoing task but was not particularly named by Spendolini (1992), Watson (1993) and Andersen and Pettersen (1996), nevertheless, their ideas still suggest the continuous effort of benchmarking. The fact that they named the process differently, yet the task were recommended in accordance with Camp's original proposal.

Table 3.2: Variations on Camp's original idea.

Camp (1989) / Other scholars	Camp's Benchmarking Procedure (1989)				
	(1) Planning Planning the study, collecting data and to search for best practice.	**(2) Analyse** Determining performance gap (comparing practices).	**(3) Integration** Revising performance goals and planning new targets (Establishing functional goal)	**(4) Action** Implementing new standards into practice (Developing action plan and implementing plan)	**(5) Maturity** Starting the whole process again (Benchmarking as an ongoing process).
Spendolini (1992)	**(1) Determining what to benchmark.** **(2) Forming a benchmarking team.** **(3) Identifying benchmarking partners.**	**(4) Collecting and Analysing**	**(5) Taking Action** Note: Spendolini integrates Camp's third, fourth and fifth together into "Taking action"		
Watson (1993)	**(1) Plan.**	**(2) Do**	**(3) Check**	**(4) Act** Note: Watson combines Camp's fourth and fifth actions together as "Act".	
Andersen and Pettersen (1996)	**(1) Plan** **(2) Search**	**(3) Observe** **(4) Analyse**	**(5) Adapt** Note: Similar to Spendolini, Andersen and Pettersen bring Camp's third, fourth and fifth benchmarking stages together and call it "Adapt".		
Rylatt (2001)	**(1) Starting the process** **(2) Forming a team** **(3) Identifying the parameters for the study** **(4) Identifying powerful benchmarking partnerships**	**(5) Collecting and analysing information**	**(6) Implementing recommended action** Note: Rylatt combines Camp's third and fourth actions together and call it "Implementing recommended action"		**(7) Identifying the benefits of benchmarking process**
Oakland (2003)	**(1) Plan** **(2) Collect**	**(3) Analyse**	**(4) Adapt** Note: Similar to Rylatt, Oakland too combines Camp's third and fourth actions together but named it as "Adapt".		**(5) Review**

Source: Adapted and reviewed from Camp (1989), Spendolini (1992), Watson (1993), Andersen and Pettersen (1996), Rylatt (2001) and Oakland (2003).

In Table 3.2 above, it is obvious that Spendolini (1992) divided Camp's idea of the 'planning' phase into three particular actions which include identifying the subject to benchmark, establishing a team and finding a benchmarking partner. He named Camp's second phase as his fourth stage (collecting and analysing), while Camp's idea of integration and action were combined as his last phase, which he called 'taking action'. In contrast to Spendolini's, Watson (1993) had followed Camp's four procedures only, designating them into simpler names. He named his procedures as: (1) Plan; (2) Do; (3) Check; and (4) Act. The 'maturity' stage proposed by Camp was then included in his descriptions. Andersen and Pettersen (1996) on the other hand, specified Camp's 'planning stage' to "plan and search", while Camp's 'analyse' phase was divided to "observe and analyse". He then grouped Camp's fourth and fifth stage to one action, called "adapt". Conversely, Rylatt (2001) and Oakland (2003) had specifically incorporated Camp's last procedure into their proposals. Both, however, had included Camp's four earlier phases into their ideas. Nevertheless, Rylatt's (2001) benchmarking procedure was more detailed, providing the whole process with seven stages, which ended with "identifying the benefits of benchmarking process", which he then described as reviewing the exercise. Similarly, Oakland (2003) had also specified Camp's last phase and named it as "review". All in all, Camp's original work processes were followed but were altered in trying to address the benchmarking phases in various ways yet remained within the same scope of procedures.

Moving from that conception, another important aspect within the benchmarking process is establishing the target for benchmarking. Accordingly, at this point, this researcher finds Eaton's (2002) idea on the strategic objectives for consideration when conducting benchmarking is practical. According to Eaton (2002:p63-64), the process of a benchmarking procedure should incorporate the four options of planned objectives which he had adopted and altered from Camp's (1989) idea: "(1) Paradigm shift; (2) Incremental change; (3) SWOT identification (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats); and (4) Critical Success Factor (CSF) identification". Additionally, Eaton (2002:p64) had addressed his suggestion through a summary table which informs the strengths of the link between the types of benchmarking and the four objectives (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Proposed appropriate benchmarking methodologies: Approach and objectives.

Objectives / **Benchmarking Partner**	**Paradigm**	**Incremental**	**SWOT**	**CSF**
Internal Benchmarking	+/-	*	*/+	*
Competitive Benchmarking	*/+	*	*	*
Parallel Benchmarking (otherwise known as Functional)	+	+	x	x
Best Practice Benchmarking (also known as Generic)	*	*	*/+	*
Note: * Typical + Possible - Unusual x Impractical				

Source: Adapted from Eaton (2002:p64)

Looking at Table 3.3 above, it can be seen that Eaton (2002) modified his subjects of benchmarking slightly different from Camp's (1989), Andersen and Pettersen (1996) and Oakland (2003), which were mentioned earlier in Section 3.3.2. When benchmarking generally targets four basic categories, i.e. *Internal Benchmarking*, *Functional Benchmarking*, *Generic Benchmarking* and *Competitive Benchmarking* (Camp, 1989; Andersen and Pettersen, 1996; Oakland, 2003), Eaton had changed the name of 'functional benchmarking' to *parallel benchmarking* and the 'generic benchmarking' to *best practice benchmarking*, but had retained the internal and competitive benchmarking into his proposal. Nevertheless, both titles signify the same idea as Camp and the rest. To Eaton (2002), his recommendation shows the relevance and potency of each approach to the objectives. From Table 3.3 too, it is clear that an internal, competitive and best practice (generic) benchmarking may include any of the four alternative objectives into the process. However, the parallel (functional) benchmarking does not have much choice. Eaton suggested that it only suits the paradigm shift and incremental objectives, yet the idea of using those objectives is still ‘possible’ and not common. Also, his idea suggested that having a ‘paradigm shift’ and ‘incremental change’ objectives for all types of approaches are common or feasible. And that the competitive and generic type of benchmarking can essentially apply all the four options of objectives.

Based on Eaton’s idea shown in Table 3.3, and the decision to apply generic benchmarking for case study investigation, the research is compelled to test whether his proposal that the method is the best approach to achieve benchmarking objectives, i.e. in looking at paradigm shift, strengthening one’s process, examining the ‘strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats’ of practice, as well as revealing the Critical Success Factors of a benchmarking partner.

Additionally, the review had also looked at Eaton’s (2002) recommendation on the method of conducting the benchmarking study (see Table 3.4 below). It is obvious from Table 3.4 that he had suggested that benchmarking study can be carried out through questionnaire, interview, case study and action research. To him, a questionnaire is an appropriate means of gaining information for any types of benchmarking partner. In fact, Eaton suggested that the questionnaire method is a normal approach for any Internal and Functional Benchmarking, and a feasible method for all Competitive, Functional and Generic Benchmarking. He then proposed that, not all benchmarking partners suit an interview approach, especially for Functional Benchmarking, which only goes well through questionnaire. He had also suggested that interviews are not practical in conducting Competitive Benchmarking, but a common approach when performing Internal Benchmarking and also a possible way when engaging in a Generic Benchmarking. In relation to the Case Study method, Eaton thought that the method is best applied for Internal Benchmarking but not a practical technique for Competitive and Generic Benchmarking. He too believes that the Case Study method is unusual for Functional Benchmarking. Additionally, Eaton believes that action research is not a good option in benchmarking as he feels that the approach is not common for Internal and Competitive Benchmarking, as well as impractical for Functional and Generic Benchmarking. Having said this, it is obvious that Eaton mostly recommends benchmarking exercise through questionnaire, interview and case study.

Table 3.4: Proposed appropriate benchmarking study

Benchmarking Partner \ Method	Questionnaire	Interview	Case Study	Action Research
Internal	*	*	*/+	-
Competitive	+	x	x	-
Parallel (Functional)	*/+	-	-	x
Best Practice (Generic)	+	+	x	x
* Typical + Possible - Unusual x Impractical				

Source: Adapted from Eaton (2002:p65)

In relation to Eaton's proposal (see Table 3.4 above), the research is going against his idea that, case study method is not practical for generic benchmarking. In fact, this research would also test the applicability of using questionnaire and interview approaches in delivering the benchmarking exercise. The research therefore, will test the potential of case study method and try out the techniques of data gathering through interviews and surveys.

3.5 Issues in Benchmarking

Despite the great value of benchmarking, in some way, inescapably, there are issues related to this method of evaluation. Based on scholars and practitioners opinions, to achieve the level of excellent, benchmarking should be conducted continuously and not as a one-off procedure. In order to keep track and maintain performance at a higher standard, an organisation needs to repeat the benchmarking exercise constantly. Benchmarking is effective through a continual action (Camp, 1989; Andersen and Pettersen, 1996). Additionally, Camp (1989) mentioned about the misconception of the benchmarking idea whereby it was thought to be a means of cost reduction when it does not. According to Camp (1989) "Benchmarking is not a panacea". Therefore, there will always be a constant need to update and review the latest approach or process or innovation, as new standards or approach are always being invented and improved (Camp, 1989; Zairi, 1994; Andersen and Pettersen, 1996). To Zairi (1994), benchmarking requires a lot of effort and constantly brings challenges to organisations to improve their companies. In addition to that, McGeorge and Palmer (2002) believed that a comparative exercise does not guarantee that an organisation can actually achieve superiority if the benchmarking partner is picked randomly.

Additionally, Patterson (1996) realised that the greatest issue in benchmarking is the courage to recognise that there are others that are doing better, and so to stop thinking that we have done enough and feeling satisfied with what we have achieved. It is never wrong to admit the flaws in our own process or operation and to take “a great deal of ego-suppression and an open mind to look closely at how you do and what you do and ask, but how can we be better?” (Patterson, 1996:p6). Additionally, Patterson (1996) also felt that one of the objections to benchmarking is that leaders or managers perceive the procedure as deception as one can easily extract other company’s technique or procedure instead of going through trial and error. It was also claimed as spying on another company’s technique and that benchmarking is likely to imitate the other company’s practice.

Another issue that was also highlighted was the fear of the management or organisation to reveal their weaknesses, and so, benchmarking is not an option (Patterson, 1996). However, it was also mentioned by Andersen and Pettersen (1996) that the trepidation of being labelled as unsuccessful hinders the effectiveness of benchmarking approach. Also, Town (2000) mentioned that benchmarking can be costly and may take a longer period than anticipated from the start of the process until the end. Eaton (2002), on the other hand, said that benchmarking should be motivated and established by the stakeholder. And that benchmarking should be conducted systematically, which meant following its procedures and not skipping any parts within the process. This ideally will lead to an effective benchmarking result as well as avoiding any failures in achieving the objective of benchmarking.

3.6 Benchmarking in the UK Public Sector

As mentioned much earlier in Section 3.2.2, McGeorge and Palmer (2002) believed that benchmarking practice grew in the UK during the 1990s. However, records suggest that benchmarking had started as long ago as the late 1970s when government was advocating ‘value for money’ studies in the public sector (see Bowerman *et al.*, 2002 and Cowper and Samuels, year unknown). At present, benchmarking has been applied in assessing public services and this can be seen through the practice of evaluating the delivery of health sector, higher education and local government. In the UK, the Audit Commission plays a significant role in evaluating the health service and local government through benchmarking since the 1990s (Bowerman *et al.*, 2002). In fact, it was mentioned that the government has strongly encouraged benchmarking ever since (Audit Commission, 2002; Bowerman et al., 2002 citing Holloway *et al*., 1999). It was also understood that part of the early formal approaches in benchmarking for the public sector was introduced in 1995 through the *Next Step Agencies*, a benchmarking initiative to compare the performance of central government against the private sector and other public services abroad (Cowper and Samuels, year unknown). Part of the Next Step Agencies’ responsibility were managing central government’s welfare benefits, provisions of forensic services to the police, preserving official records and protecting fish stocks (Cowper and Samuels, year unknown). The benchmarking exercise was therefore designed to evaluate the Next Step Agencies duties. Additionally, this examination had also included investigating the administration of these institutions.

The Audit Commission is a public organisation with the slogan "Protecting the Public Purse", aiming to enhance the economy, as well as ensuring the efficiency of public services. The Commission was established in 1983 under the Local Government Finance Act 1982. Its primary role is to appoint auditors and to carry out inspections of public services. It is with this responsibility that the Audit Commission commits to conducting benchmarking. In this respect, the Commission appoints auditors to the National Health Service (NHS) bodies, councils and other public services. Auditors are appointed either from the Audit Commission (in-house) or from private audit companies. In encouraging the practice of benchmarking, the Commission produced a manual for the NHS as a point reference to benchmark their practice (Audit Commission, 2009). Nevertheless, besides the important role of the Audit Commission in evaluation of the NHS, the NHS itself introduced its own benchmarking network. Figure 3.7 below demonstrates an example of benchmarking effort in NHS.

In NHS, benchmarking has been practiced actively since 1996 after the establishment of the NHS Benchmarking Network which is an in-house benchmarking service. The main reason for this network was to ensure an up-to-date benchmarking and to promote good health service (NHS Benchmarking Network, 2009). In 2012, members of the NHS Benchmarking Network include the Primary Care Trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Strategic Health Authorities, Community Health Services, NHS Acute and Mental Health Trusts in England and Local Health Boards (see NHS Benchmarking Network, 2009). Benchmarking is therefore conducted for various objectives, amongst others, to evaluate the expenditure of NHS, nursing skills, cost per bed day, total examination per radiology consultant and prescription cost per person. These evaluations were carried out by comparing among health practices. Additionally, besides performing benchmarking projects, the NHS Benchmarking Network also delivers events related to benchmarking. These events involved discussions of benchmarking outcomes, proposals for future benchmarking exercise and sharing good practices among members of the network.

Figure 3.7: An example of benchmarking activities in NHS
Source: NHS Benchmarking Network, 2009

It was also revealed that the local authorities' performance was very much influenced by the Audit Commission which encourages them to review their performance by providing the authorities with "benchmark performance statistics" (Bowerman *et al.*, 2002:p436). Benchmarking in local authorities was therefore, perceived as a method of evaluation for "accountability purposes" as well as for the purpose of improving the organisation's outputs (Bowerman *et al.*, 2002:p443). Nevertheless, Bowerman *et al.* (2002) argued that not much of these early experiences were revealed through literature. However, it cannot be denied that the Audit Commission has been publishing local authorities' performance results since 1992 (Cowper and Samuels, year unknown). Sadly, even though the Audit Commission was seen as an influential public organisation in benchmarking the public sector, it was planned to be scrapped in order to save £50m a year (BBC, 2010). This was expected by the end of 2012, but was also predicted to be delayed until year 2014 (Kuenssberg, 2011). Currently, the Audit Commission is still responsible for evaluating the public sector but has outsourced its duty. Several organisations like Ernst & Young LLP, and DA Partnership Ltd. had been awarded with this role which comprises a five-year contract (Audit Commission, 2012). See Figure 3.8 which shows the work of benchmarking in local government.

An example of a benchmarking task in the local government is to examine the wages of local authority's staff in order to suit the market value (Local Government Group, 2011). In doing so, the Local Government Group had produced its manual to guide for benchmarking called the "Local Government Workforce: A Guide to Pay Benchmarking" in September 2011. The main aim of this benchmarking exercise is to encourage local authorities to evaluate their level of job remuneration in ensuring the efficiency of recruitment, as well as understanding the existing job rate. By benchmarking, local authorities can avoid tension "between the need to meet equalities duties and the desire to target pay at the right rate for the market" and compete with other employers (Local Government Group, 2011:p6). In this benchmarking exercise, a local authority is recommended to measure its own current pay rate and compare with other organisation's pay rate. Thereafter, to identify the gaps and finally to make adjustment to its current pay rate (see Local Government Group, 2011).

Figure 3.8: An example of benchmarking exercise in the local government.
Source: Local Government Group, 2011

For UK Higher Education (HE), benchmarking started in the early to mid 1990s (Jackson, 2001), aiming to examine and improve HE policy and strategy, improve academic standards and for the purpose of improving the UK HE's position within the global marketplace (eLRC, year unknown). According to Jackson (2001) citing Lund (1998), early application of benchmarking in HE started within the management of library services. In fact, it was suggested that amongst the early benchmarking practice in the UK was carried out for academic libraries. This was realised from the first benchmarking project undertaken by the Royal Military College of Science (RMCS) library in October 1993 (Jackson, 2001). The benchmarking project had therefore, been performed to examine "the learning environment, staff development, user experience, education and feedback", and other aspects related to the operation of the library (Jackson, 2001:p.222). It was also recorded that part of the exercise had involved questionnaires and on-site studies. Since 2000, benchmarking for the HE has been funded by the Higher Education Funding Council For England (HEFCE) (Benchmarking in HE, 2011). In relation to this, the HE is benchmarked through the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), which had formulated "a series of QAA subject benchmarks" (eLRC, year unknown:p3). Figure 3.9 below shows the work of benchmarking in UK Higher Education.

An example of how benchmarking is conducted in the UK HE is to measure the HE in terms of 'internationalisation'. Benchmarking was therefore, undertaken to examine several categories like 'students', 'staff' and 'research' (PA Consulting Group, 2011). Under the subject 'students', benchmarking was carried out to assess the percentage of undergraduate overseas students or postgraduate overseas students as compared to identified comparative measures. Additionally, in terms of 'staff', benchmarking looks into the percentage of international academic staff and the percentage of UK staff with over sea experience. These investigations were done by comparing through the HE data system which were obtained from various resources and categorised into separate grouping, for example, Market Data Sources, Market Intelligence Sources and Institutional Process Comparisons (PA Consulting Group, 2011).

Figure 3.9: An example of benchmarking in the UK Higher Education
Source: PA Consulting Group, 2011

3.7 Benchmarking Urban Regeneration in the UK

Even though it is quite hard to find studies or research on benchmarking urban regeneration in the UK, fortunately, this researcher managed to find some recorded information yet still not exclusively about benchmarking.

There is one book however named "Benchmarking Urban Regeneration", published in 2003 by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Foundation. Nevertheless, the document title itself does not represent the idea of benchmarking in total as there was no proof of using best practice as a comparative measure. The overall study only looked at one component of urban regeneration; property investment through its challenges, trends and changes. The book was therefore an outcome of a study undertaken to see the progress and performance of the property market. Without doubt, the study had uncovered the strengths and weaknesses of the property market and therefore at one fell swoop had provided the evidence of the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities. But nevertheless, the researcher finds the title misleading as the study did not demonstrate the core principle of benchmarking, i.e. conducting a comparative evaluation with another best practice. Comparisons were made using the eight case studies and examining their total returns index (including from all properties, office, retail and industrial) and position as compared to the standard (benchmark) imposed by the Investment Property Databank (IPD) UK in 1990. The study was actually looking at the property market achievement and how it differs from one area to another. It is therefore felt that; overall, the available documents on benchmarking urban regeneration have not addressed the topic of benchmarking within the urban regeneration scope of work comprehensively but rather a good property market study for the purpose of providing property performance indicators which are "consistent with those conventionally used to inform investment decisions, namely the IPD total returns index, the CB Hillier Parker Rent Index and Average Yield Monitor" (RICS Foundation, 2003:p14). In a nutshell, the study was conducted to examine and verify the status of the property market as compared to the standard being recommended. The procedure of benchmarking was not being performed but benchmarking merely meant judging the case studies against the standard (benchmark) identified.

The review had also uncovered another study by Hemphill *et al.* (2004) which talked about research that looked into the evaluation of regeneration performance against sustainability criteria by means of applying the identified indicators. The approach was to develop a scoring framework to assist the indicators in order to provide a means of quantifying the performance of area-based regeneration, as well as benchmarking 'good practice' at a local project level. The focus of this study was area-based regeneration projects at a local level. However, the scale of this project differs from this research in terms of its area and scale of programme.

Another benchmarking study was conducted for the purpose of examining urban regeneration initiatives including schemes like the Health Action Zone (health), Sure Start (children) and Local Strategic Partnerships (planning) (see Burns *et al.*, 2004). According to Burns *et al.*, (2004), the study was performed in 1998, whereby the Yorkshire Forward Regional Development Agency had to outline a set of benchmark measures to ensure the effectiveness of public participation. However, this study was carried out by addressing the benchmark or standard of the performance. The outcome of study was expected to provide ideas and formulate a framework on how to encourage the local community into planning process. The standard was used as a benchmark guide to the delivery of projects. Strangely, the study did not specify any best practices which were used as a comparative exercise. Instead the outcome of the study was to provide others with lessons from their experience and was meant to support best practice. This researcher finds this study as inconsistent with the concept of benchmarking.

3.8 Conclusions

Chapter Three has delivered a comprehensive explanation of the concept of benchmarking. Historically, benchmarking was believed to have been delivered for many decades but formal practice was recognised and gained popularity in the late 1980s. It was the book by Camp in 1989 and Xerox's effective benchmarking practice that had exposed benchmarking to the world. The practice was then picked up and today has become a common evaluation procedure for many organisations.

Like other evaluation methods, benchmarking also aims at achieving improvement but has a significant element of trying to be the best among the best. In contrast to other evaluation approaches, benchmarking has a distinct character of comparing among others and learning from best practices. However, benchmarking is not just about comparing but most importantly it is to learn from others. Equal to other evaluation methods available, benchmarking would be more effective if carried out continuously as constant assessment will enable the discovery of the latest technology, or new approach or process, or other current practice. In short, benchmarking is essential in enhancing and upgrading one's process or operation.

Over the years, benchmarking definitions had been further advanced from the first definition made known by Camp in 1989. The definition of benchmarking from recent literatures has added value to its meaning and imparts much of its main function. The definition provided by Spendolini (1992) was seen as a complete structure, delivering the whole concept of benchmarking itself, therefore, ideal as a foundation for this research. By definition, benchmarking is therefore, a systematic evaluation method, through comparative exercise, by assessing one's own performance as compared to other best practice, for the purpose of achieving superiority.

In relation to benchmarking process, benchmarking procedure has an orderly stage in conducting the assignment. The common addressed phases are planning, searching for a benchmarking partner, collecting information and observation, analysing and adapting. However, benchmarking is not a one-off process and it does not stop there. The benchmarking technique is not a definite solution to problems as new approaches and innovations tend to develop over time. Therefore, a constant review and updating are necessary. Many scholars had highlighted this cyclical method of benchmarking which requires it to be performed continuously.

The benchmarking subject is divided into three aspects, namely the performance, process and strategic benchmarking. These categorisations represent targeted subjects for evaluation based on the organisation's aim of benchmarking. In lay terms, these types of benchmarking subjects are known as an enquiry of "benchmarking of what?" Also, in relation to the steps in benchmarking, an organisation also needs to decide on its *benchmarking partner*. It is therefore then, an organisation or company should resolve on the choice of the comparative partner, either within the organisation, or from another company of the broader industry, or another competitor, or another different organisation. Having identified those two important elements, benchmarking proceeds by examining the benchmarking partner and analysing the information obtained. It was suggested that data can be obtained through questionnaire, interview, survey, case study and action research. The company or organisation may choose these options depending on its benchmarking purpose. Following the analysis, the company can then adapt and implement the lessons learnt. And the process repeats.

In the UK, formal benchmarking was introduced in the 1990s when government was trying to promote the concept of 'value for money'. Benchmarking was then being encouraged and advocated in the health services and local government. Evaluation through benchmarking was seen as a significant approach to evaluation through the role of the Audit Commission which appoints auditors to assess public services. Additionally, the NHS had also introduced its own network in promoting benchmarking for the National Health Service. Other than that, benchmarking has been used widely in UK Higher Education, which started with benchmarking exercises for library management. These efforts proved that benchmarking is an important part of the UK public sector evaluation practice.

Unfortunately, although benchmarking has been commonly applied for improvement over many areas, it is apparent that, it is hard to find literature that shares the results of benchmarking exercise for regional parks. Benchmarking has been exercised for urban regeneration to a limited extent, but not being explored for regional parks in the UK. To sum up, benchmarking is a recognised evaluation tool. And when others are experiencing positive effects from benchmarking, urban regeneration in regional park programme should be put to the test.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE THEORY OF REALISTIC EVALUATION

4.1 Introduction

Following Chapter Two which discussed evaluation in a wider context, and Chapter Three on the concept of benchmarking, this chapter attempts to elaborate a specific theory called *Realistic Evaluation*. At this point too, the thesis re-visits the idea briefly stated in the first chapter, which referred to the intention to test this evaluation method for this research. The subsequent discussion should therefore provide an understanding of the theory of realistic evaluation and its application. In this research, when the benchmarking procedure is used as a key approach to UK case studies evaluation, this additional evaluation approach acts as a supplementary method of assessment for both major case studies. The importance of incorporating this theory into this research was decided based on arguments that theory ought to be integrated when evaluating a programme (Chen and Rossi, 1983; Chen, 1990, 2005; Rogers, 2000; Pawson and Tilley, 2004; Pawson *et al.*, 2004, 2005).

4.2 Introduction to *Realistic Evaluation*

To start off, the research adopts the idea that a programme should be analysed based on theory. The reason for this is that a programme links between a process or approach and its outcome, which in turn reflects the underlying function of theories (see Rogers, 2000; Pawson and Tilley, 2004; Pawson *et.al*, 2004, 2005). Realistic evaluation is therefore part of the *theory-based* or *theory-oriented* methods of evaluation (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007; Pedersen and Rieper, 2008) or part of an *evidence-based* policy (Pawson, 2002). In another account, Julnes, Mark and Henry (1998) classified this as a *realism-based evaluation* or also called as a *programme theory evaluation* by Rogers (2000). Additionally, there are many idioms that represent realistic evaluation. The word ‘realistic evaluation’ can therefore be replaced with *realistic approach*, or *evaluability evaluation*, or *realist evaluation*, or even *realist method*.

The root word had originated from the term ‘real’, which was then applied and conveyed in the theory of *realism* as a derivation of the notion of understanding the actual fact. Sayer (2000:p11) defines the concept of *real* as “whatever exists, be it natural or social.....the real is the realm of objects, their structures and powers”, while Williams (2006:p78) sees ‘realism’ as “most current common-sense and scientific physical claims are true (or approximately true) in a robust, correspondence sense of *true*”. Realism was also thought to be the “foundational philosophy and as an applied approach to inquiry”

(Julnes, Mark and Henry, 1998:p483). Additionally, French (2007:p92) perceived realism as *true* and for that reason a realist sees the '*truth*' as "in the standard….that is taken to be true if it corresponds to a state of affairs in the world". The word realism is typically used separately in various disciplines like "art, literature, film, politics, philosophy and social science" (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000:p5). And for that reason, a realist's belief varies from one to another (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000). Astbury and Leeuw (2010) suggested that Harre in 1972 and Bhaskar in 1975 were among the first to introduce the 'realist philosophy'. To Sayer (2000:p11), a realist "seek to identify both necessity and possibility or potential in the world". In plain words, *realism* is all about the facts and reality.

Accordingly, at this point, Ackroyd and Fleetwood (2000) construed that a realist approach customarily examines how things are related, and that the notion of realism is to look for reasons and causes by unravelling the attestation by making supposition. And lastly, they too felt that realism can actually divulge the reality and therefore suggesting a positive decision in making choices. According to Sayer (1992:p2-3), "Realism replaces the regularity model with one in which objects and social relations have causal powers which may or may not produce regularities, and which can be explained independently of them". It is this concept of truth and of causal effect that has influenced and improvised the theory-driven evaluation and hence created the idea of realistic evaluation. In short, it is reasonable to say that the notion of reality or truth had formulated the theory of realism and eventually was constructed into an enhanced concept called the *realistic approach*. And that a realist articulates the idea of facts and actual causation. The following further enlightens.

4.3 The Origin of Realistic Evaluation

Realistic evaluation is believed by some to have been emanated from the belief in 'truth' and therefore perceived as a belief and not a practice (Sayer, 1992; Kazi, 2003). The theory stemmed from another theory of evaluation called *theory-driven evaluation* (Ho, 1999). Realistic evaluation was actually further developed by Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley in 1997, as an improvement of the existing theory-driven evaluation. To understand more of the theory-driven evaluation and the creation of realistic evaluation, the succeeding explanation describes.

4.3.1 Theory-Driven Evaluation

Theory-driven evaluation, also known as 'white box' evaluation (or the 'clear box' evaluation) was developed as a result of the issues brought by the conventional type of evaluation; *black box evaluation* also known as the *method-driven approach* (see Chen, 1990; Astbury and Leeuw, 2010). It was claimed by Ho (1999) that theory-driven evaluation was initiated by Huey-Tsyh Chen and Peter H. Rossi in 1983. Intrinsically, black box evaluation was a prevalent approach to evaluation in the 1960s and 1970s, otherwise known as "black box impact assessment" (Chen, 1990:p8). Unfortunately, black box evaluation generally focuses on the merits or outcomes of a programme, but does not divulge the cause of achievement or the reason behind the unsuccessful results (Chen, 1990, 2005; Rogers, 2000; Astbury and Leeuw, 2010). Apparently, black box assessment only provides information on whether a programme succeeded or failed, and not the explanation and rationale for its performance or delivery (Lipsey and Pollard, 1989). Chen and Rossi (1983) observed the limitation of black box evaluation as described below:

> *"In the evaluation literature there has been no dearth of interest in implementation, but too much of the attention has been given to worrying about whether programs have been delivered as intended, and not enough attention has been given to understanding the process of implementation"* (Chen and Rossi, 1983:p296-297).

In relation to Chen and Rossi's (1983) idea, Bledsoe and Graham (2005:p307) defined theory-driven evaluation "as using a synthesis of both stakeholder program logic and social science theory to define what a program does, in what manner, and how much of an effect each goal and objective can have on the outcome". To Bledsoe and Graham (2005), the key idea to the theory-driven evaluation had enabled the assessor to determine the causal mechanisms of a programme. According to Astbury and Leeuw (2010), theory-driven evaluation encompasses two important elements; it anticipates the improvement of the current issues from the proposed programme and presupposes that the purpose and delivery of a programme can be effective in achieving improvement. Because of this, the newly derived theory-driven evaluation provides the answers in various situations, for various stakeholders involved (Astbury and Leeuw, 2010).

4.3.2 The Emergence of Realistic Evaluation

Even though theory-driven evaluation overcame the drawbacks of the conventional black box evaluation, yet, it was also realised that theory-evaluation was still lacking in certain aspect. It was obvious that, the method does not examine the cause for programme outcomes and who gains the benefit from programme's achievement. It was therefore realised too that, understanding just the end results and formulating recommendation for improvement were not enough. The idea of the theory-driven evaluation is to therefore seen as to just uncovering the questions of '*how and what'* but not '*how, what, and who?'* In relation to this issue, it was then believed that it would be more effective to understand; (1) what had driven the achievement of a programme or caused to failure?; (2) what means or procedure or approach suits better?; (3) for whom these measures are effective?; and (4) under what circumstances the approach is more efficient?. For this matter, the creation of realistic evaluation which focuses on the mechanisms of a programme had therefore fulfilled the needs to examine those measures. However, realistic evaluation is perceived as a framework to accommodate the process of assessing a programme and not an evaluation method (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2002). This was distinguished through a formulation of a specified framework named the *Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) configurations*. Pawson (2002:p340) stresses, *"The realist approach is not an evaluation technique as such, but a framework for the whole enterprise. It is being developed to encompass programmes of all types (local to transnational) and evaluation tasks of all modes (developmental to impact assessment)"*. The major difference between theory-driven evaluation and realistic evaluation is that realistic evaluation embarks on investigating the elements or factors that trigger or activate the mechanism, as well as understanding the efficiency or effectiveness of a programme from its outcomes through its contextual angle; meaning, under which context(s) that outcomes were produced and with what mechanism(s)? As pointed out by Pawson and Tilley (1997:p57) "Programmes work (have successful 'outcomes') only in so far as they introduce the appropriate ideas and opportunities ('mechanism') to groups in the appropriate social and cultural conditions ('contexts')".

In short, the difference between the three, *black box evaluation, theory-driven approach* and *realistic evaluation*, is that realistic evaluation seeks to understand the mechanisms of how a programme achieves its outcomes, while black box evaluation only examines the outcome of a programme without investigating how and why the intervention or policy worked or failed, and theory-driven evaluation is only revealing the causal effect to the outcomes.

4.4 Realistic Evaluation: The Concept from a Realist Perspective

Fifteen years ago, the initiators of realistic evaluation, Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley claimed that evaluation is still a young discipline but the practice of evaluation has expanded greatly in recent years and that includes realistic evaluation. The development of realistic evaluation was to fill the inadequacy of the existing programme evaluation approaches (Pedersen and Rieper, 2008). And in 2007, Blamey and Mackenzie (2007) claimed that realistic evaluation was progressing in the UK evaluation practice over the past years.

From the very beginning, realistic evaluation was introduced to evaluate crime reduction programme (see Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The initial application of the method was in fact employed for projects and programmes at a small or local level (Pedersen and Rieper, 2008). Pedersen and Rieper (2008:p273) mentioned that realistic evaluation is debatable since its first operation was only conducted for a "micro or community level" and "has been developed in an area characterised by a comparatively low level of complexity, in the sense that the interventions tend to operate at less aggregated levels, with little stakeholder involvement, little application of technology and problems of coordination and control which are at least to some extent limited to the same locality". However, the use of the realistic evaluation had then evolved and being utilised for larger scale of programmes (see Pedersen and Rieper, 2008). The work by Pedersen and Rieper on the study of the Danish electricity sector and by Kazi on health and social work demonstrated the application of the CMO configurations for a bigger programme scale (see Kazi, 2003; Pedersen and Rieper, 2008). In fact, in their work, Pedersen and Rieper (2008) suggested that the realist approach can be applied to a national scale programme.

The concept of realistic evaluation accentuates the central idea that the various contexts bring about a range of outcomes, in accordance with the form of context itself (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Sager and Andereggen, 2011). At its most general, a realist perceives the character of programmes as (see Pawson and Tilley, 2004; Pawson *et.al*, 2004, 2005):

(1) Programmes are based on theories

The stance that programmes are theories is because a programme starts with an understanding of certain issues, and an inkling of what gives rise to changes. It is here that initiatives are developed and implementation undergoes its process, and alternatively from there enhancements were imposed in order to improve. This notion of belief is considered as a programme theory. For instance, it is believed, based on experience, that an urban regeneration initiative can redevelop and improve a deprived area. It is this idea that drives an urban regeneration scheme to be initiated and delivered, in order to revitalise an area.

(2) Programmes are embedded

Programmes are rooted in the social paradigm. It is the social system and its surroundings that commonly influence the delivery of a programme. Additionally, it is often regarded that programmes are normally placed into the pre-existing social conditions, and because of this programmes differ from one to another. For example, in a welfare programme; say in terms of provision for allowance support may differ in relation to the employment status, or level of income and households, or state of health. Inevitably, programmes also rely very much on the institutions, individuals, plans etc.

(3) Programmes are active

When programmes are said to be active, it means that there are causes to its activation and operation. Intended outcomes are habitually provoked or affected by the reasoning and decision made for the programmes. For example, an installed lawn sprinkler will function at its best if properly fitted to the ground. However, if the water pressure is not correctly adjusted, it may not operate as required. Additionally, if the valve is broken, then the function of lawn sprinkler will fail unless the valve is replaced.

(4) Programmes are open system

Programmes cannot be judged as separate entities or unchanging. Programmes are inclined to be shaped or affected by unforeseen elements or factors. For example, a local authority was allocated £50,000 of public money to develop a waterfront area within a specific timeframe to complete the project. Unexpectedly, during its delivery, the government had changed and therefore transformed the political position. The new ruling then modified its local government budget, hence affecting the project. It is this influence that is categorised as "open system" which sees programmes as responsive to other unanticipated events or occurrence. In relation to this principle, Pawson and Tilley (2004:p5) stated, "Such externalities always impact on the delivery of a programme and this entails that they are never quite implemented in the same way".

Additionally, other important character of realistic evaluation is the inimitable element to unfold and distinguish the cause of certain acts and by what means the action is pursued and accomplished (Chen, 1990; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Hall and Hall, 2004; Hart, 2007). A very distinctive feature of the realist approach is that, instead of just asking and looking into the outcome of a programme, a more explicit query is imposed which asks "Why does a programme work, for whom and in what circumstances?" (Pawson and Tilley (1997:xvi). Pawson and Tilley (1997:p56) describe the realistic evaluation as "How things change?" Also, to Pawson and Tilley (1997), the realist approach is a useful tool as it helps local agencies to find out whether specific programmes worked for specific target groups, in its local contexts. Agreeing with Pawson and Tilley, Sayer (2000) claims that a realist approach sees the outcomes of a programme through the instigation of mechanisms which at all times rely on particular contexts. On top of that, he believed that:

> *"The policies always work through actors' perceptions and choices, and whether people respond appropriately depends on many possible circumstances which are likely to vary within and between cases, and which researchers should try to identify"* (Sayer, 2000:p23).

Furthermore, Sayer (2000) made the point that a realist approach differs from typical evaluation research as it does not only rely on the standard approach of assessment but rather focuses more to its connection with the subject and context and therefore elaborates on the importance of examining the mechanisms. He mentioned, *"No mechanism or set of mechanisms, especially not those of the programme, is to be taken as a black box"* (Sayer, 2000:p23). A realist therefore investigates the outcome of programme, its link with the mechanisms and the form of context that would activate the mechanisms. And, because of this, the Context-Mechanism-Outcome pattern was constructed. It is this *context-mechanism-outcome* framework (or model), also known as the CMO configurations that a realist approach employs to improve social programmes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pedersen and Rieper, 2008). Pedersen and Rieper (2008:p271) regarded the CMO configurations as applicable not just for a small scale programme, but also for "large-scale public sector reform characterised by high technical complexity and strong policy coalitions". In contrast to Pawson and Tilley, this remark suggests that realistic evaluation is not only fitting for local programmes but also programmes at a national level.

The way that the CMO configurations is applied is by envisaging and examining the programme for the purpose of understanding the underlying causal effects of what works for whom and in what situation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Ho, 1999; Van der Knaap et.al, 2008; Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007; Pedersen and Rieper, 2008; Sager and Andereggen, 2001). CMO configurations is commonly addressed as the *outcome=mechanism+context* (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). By assessing through the CMO configurations, an evaluator can translate the relationship between the three key elements (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pedersen and Rieper, 2008). A realist evaluator uses the supposition of the CMO configurations as the foundation when evaluating and the results from the evaluation shapes up and enhance the CMO configurations itself (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Accordingly, Pawson and Tilley (1997) also mentioned that the CMO configurations can differ from one programme to another even though replication may occur, as programme mechanisms are normally adjusted in accordance with its situation or condition.

This helps to explain why the realist approach is very much different from black box evaluation or theory-driven evaluation as it examines the causal factors known as 'mechanism' and not just the explanation (Hall and Hall, 2004). In this sense, 'mechanism' has an important character of having an interrelationship with the 'context' of the programme, meaning, it tends to "cause regularities or patterns of actions within particular contexts" (Hall and Hall, 2004:p56). Accordingly, Pawson (2002:p342) addresses this as a more critical investigation and considered the realist synthesis as more of understanding "*the resources they offer to enable their subjects to make them work*" rather than appraising whether the programme works.

4.4.1 What is the C*ontext* in Realistic Evaluation?

In a realistic evaluation, *context* refers to the subjects within social affairs, for example "norms, rules, regulations, facilitators and opportunities" (Connelly, 2000:p265). Pawson and Tilley (1997:p216) classify context as "spatial and institutional locations of social situations together, crucially, with the norms, values, and interrelationships found in them". To them, context is not restricted to just one context, but similar to mechanisms, there can be of multiple contexts addressed by a programme. It was agreed by Blamey and Mackenzie (2007:p441) that "context itself is multifaceted and operates at a variety of levels". In this sense, context can be of "political, social, organisational and individual dimensions" (Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007:p441). Nonetheless, Sullivan *et al.* (2002) suggest that *context* can be a form of "policy, geography, socio-economic, political and institutional" (Sullivan *et.al.* (2002:p208).

Understanding the context in a realist approach means looking at the contexts within which mechanisms are activated and successfully achieved. This connotes that realistic evaluation requires an understanding and explanation of "*for whom and in what circumstances* a programme works through the study of contextual conditioning" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997:p216). In this respect, Hall and Hall (2004) claimed that is imperative to indicate the context(s) when investigating why a certain group of people had gained positive effects and why others did not. Also, it is vital to assess and identify the context in which problems that would trigger the mechanisms, as well as knowing which context can influence the success of a programme (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). In addition to that, Pawson and Tilley (1997) also emphasised that in order to investigate the performance of a programme, there is a need for a realist evaluator to examine the contextual situation, and for whom it is meant and under what conditions it will be more effective.

4.4.2 What is the *Mechanism* in Realistic Evaluation?

A clear-cut definition of the element of *mechanisms* in realistic evaluation is to indicate "what is it about the programme which makes it work?" The way Wolf (2004:p74) puts it is "what is doing the work?" The term 'mechanism' is used as a rule to describe the causal factors which require an understanding of how the programme or intervention had achieved its outcome (Hall and Hall, 2004). It was claimed that the word *mechanism* was introduced by Chen and Rossi during the early 1990s (Astbury and Leeuw, 2010). However, it was the book by Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley in 1997 which thoroughly addressed the idea of mechanism and exposed the concept further (Astbury and Leeuw, 2010).

Astbury and Leeuw (2010) refer to the erroneous perception of the idea of mechanism. The use and meaning of *mechanism* had normally been misguided. To them, mechanism is not a subject of demonstrating programme activities and that it is sometimes not perceptible. Mechanism can be interpreted from the "causal relationship" (Astbury and Leeuw, 2010:p368). To further explain, Astbury and Leeuw (2010:p368) depict mechanisms as the "underlying entities, processes, or structures which operate in particular contexts to generate outcomes of interest". They too believed that mechanisms possess three elemental signs, as stated below:

1) "*Mechanisms are usually hidden;*
2) *Mechanisms are sensitive to variations in context; and*
3) *Mechanisms generate outcomes*"

   (Astbury and Leeuw, 2010:p368).

It is therefore understood that mechanism has a relationship between the cause and the outcome of a programme, and that the concept of mechanism alone does not actually signify the programme's activity. However, mechanism is not always directly identified. As Astbury and Leeuw (2010:p368) state, "Mechanisms are usually hidden". When mechanism is thought to be 'hidden', the impression is that the outcome of a programme has a plausible cause. This triggers the exploration and thus explains why certain things happened and what had led to the end-result of those certain actions. Mechanism is therefore not a direct activity which resulted in the outcome, but can rather be of an influence or effect on a programme. Similarly, Pawson and Tilley (1997:p216) describe mechanisms as referring "to the choices and capacities which lead to regular patterns of social behaviour which are deemed 'social problems' and which are the rationale for a programme". This is why mechanism is supposedly linked with the context when assessing the programme. Inevitably, a programme can be affected and be influenced by the context, hence it is important to assess this correlation as well as examining its link and impact (Van der Knapp *et.al*, 2008). And this conception relates very much to Pawson and Tilley's (1997:p216) idea which stressed that "realist evaluators seek to understand 'why' a programme works through an understanding of the action of mechanisms". To them, the preferences and abilities directing to the usual arrangements of public actions are the mechanisms. Additionally, causal mechanisms are influential to the social behaviour or social issues which without doubt end to induce the designation of a programme. According to Pawson and Tilley (1997:p66), there are three key identifiers of a 'mechanism', and 'program mechanisms', which are:

1) "*To reflect the embeddedness of the programme within the stratified nature of social reality;*
2) *To take the form of propositions which will provide an account of how both macro and micro processes constitute the programme;*
3) *To demonstrate how programme outputs follow from the stakeholders' choices (reasoning) and their capacity (resources) to put these into practice*".

It is therefore seen that Pawson and Tilley's proposals (1997) suggest that programmes should incorporate public's choices. Meanwhile, Van der Knapp *et.al* (2008) mentioned that the actions of mechanisms have an influential role in affecting the efficacy of a programme. Additionally, Astbury and Leeuw (2010) agree that mechanisms can produce the programme's end-result(s) whether intended or unintended, while Pawson and Tilley (2001) remind that the right mechanisms can result in best possible outcomes, provided they are within the right context. Further to this, Pawson and Tilley (1997) added that it is essential in a realistic approach strategy to foresee the various prospects of the mechanisms for a programme and it is also crucial to evaluate whether they had stopped or avoided the mechanisms for the initial issue. In short, the assessment is therefore performed by examining which actions (mechanisms) lead to the outcomes, and under which context these outcomes are produced. An example of the concept of mechanism is provided in Figure 4.1 below.

A local authority introduced a programme to transform and maintain a local public park. Additionally, it encouraged the local communities to be involved. This programme was therefore designed to create awareness among the public of the importance of looking after the park. In order to deliver the programme, the local authority planned several projects within the programme; a project to provide new facilities, another project to upgrade existing physical structures and a project to clean-up and maintain the park. In the clean-up and maintenance project, the main aim was to promote local communities' involvement in the project. The project therefore, is a measure to attract public involvement, thus may trigger different mechanisms, say "Mechanism 1 to 3". These mechanisms were identified as; the project may "transform the park" (Mechanism 1) through many involvements, which it might not otherwise. Or it may "tie the community together" through an activity (Mechanism 2), and it may act as "a platform to socialise" among neighbourhoods (Mechanism 3). And so, the project was the cause of those underlying mechanisms of "transforming the Park", "tying communities together" and "social bonding". These were seen as the causal effects to drive or trigger the efficiency or delivery of an intervention.

Figure 4.1: An example of the concept of *mechanisms*
Source: Author

4.4.3 What is the *Outcome* in Realistic Evaluation?

Outcome refers to the end-result of a programme whether intended or unintended (Chen and Rossi, 1983). In the realist approach, outcomes are the results from the mechanisms set in motion in different contexts. In addition, outcomes can either be regarded as short-term or long-term outcomes. According to Pawson and Tilley (1997) an evaluator must identify the outcomes as well as understand how it had resulted in such a way. The benefit of understanding the outcomes is that through this information, an evaluator can recommend further improvement, rectification, suggestions, or modification of a programme. An intended outcome can be produced by understanding the appropriate context and setting the right mechanisms for the programme. And, because the outcomes can be predicted through certain mechanisms, studying the outcomes does not only imply determining whether a programme has achieved its goal or success but also to test and confirm that the supposition of certain mechanisms were the right mechanisms as initially predicted (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This is why the CMO model is set in such a way: *outcome=mechanism+context*.

Figure 4.2 below demonstrates the link between the CMO configurations proposed by Pawson (2002:p22). The diagram conveys the idea that a programme is delivered through a specified context and within that programme are the mechanisms. The illustration suggested that certain context(s) can trigger(s) and activate(s) the mechanism(s), hence producing certain outcome(s). Pawson and Tilley (1997:p58) described this as a 'generative causation'.

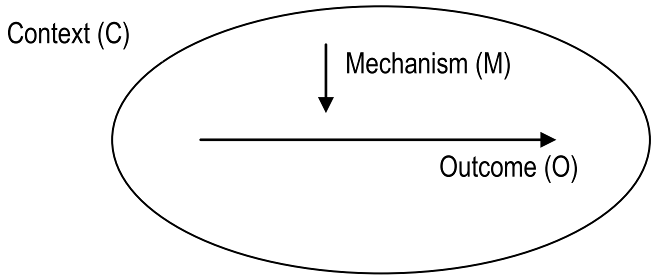

Figure 4.2: The realist causation explanation of the CMO configurations
Source: Extracted from Pawson (2002:p22)

An example of the categorisation of CMO configuration is demonstrated in Figure 4.3 below. Figure 4.3 therefore demonstrates the elements and idea that were categorised separately under context, mechanism and outcome. The example shows the various contexts that became the foundation of the programme. The programme had therefore being triggered by certain mechanisms. Additionally, in terms of outcome, several intended outcomes were also discovered.

Context (C)	Improvement and transformation of a local public park, which was in an appalling state. Fortunately, the responsible local authority was given an allocation of budget to upgrade the park. The park's current condition of physical structure and environment were degrading, and there was a demand for a functional public space and the need to promote healthy living. Additionally, the authority intended to encourage local communities into the development scheme.
	+
Mechanism (M)	A programme consisting of three separate projects; (1) Provision of new facilities; (2) Upgrading existing physical structures; and (3) Improving the image and environment of the park through public involvement.
	=
Outcome (O)	(1) Transformation of a park; (2) Provision of a functional public space; (3) Improved park image and environment; (4) Public involvement in development; (5) Promoting social bonding among neighbourhoods; (6) Uniting the communities through a project.

Figure 4.3: An example of realistic evaluation with the classification of CMO configurations.
Source: Author

In relation to the example provided in Figure 4.3 above, it was therefore identified, the correlation between contexts, mechanisms and outcomes. These relationships were then analysed interrelatedly as shown in Figure 4.4 below. From Figure 4.4, each element of *context*, *mechanism* and *outcome* was extracted. The way this analysis is conducted is by examining each context and its connection with the mechanism and how the programme had achieved its result. Additionally, any unintended outcomes were also assessed. From this analysis too, one should identify who benefited from the programme and in what circumstances that the programme is more effective.

Note: Context = C Mechanism= M Outcome=O

CONTEXT: A programme was initiated in relation to an issue of "an existing public park" (C1) "under a local authority" (C2), which is "degrading in terms of its physical and environment" condition (C3). There appeared to be "a demand to regenerate the park" (C4), and the "need to promote healthy living among the locals" (C5). Apparently, the authority also wanted to "encourage public involvement in development" (C6). The authority therefore "initiated a programme" (C7), with the "aim to transform and improve the park" (C8). The authority had then managed to "secure its funding" (C9).

MECHANISM: The programme was designed as the key measure to tackle the issue. It consisted of three projects in order to achieve the authority's intention. This measure was designated through separate projects, i.e. (1) Provision of new facilities; (2) Upgrading existing physical structures; and (3) Improving the image and environment of the park through public involvement. These projects were believed to have triggered different mechanisms (say M1-M7). For instance, part of the mechanisms that were activated were; "transformation of park" (M1), "drawing the communities together through project delivery" (M2) and "creating a platform for social interaction" (M3).

OUTCOME: Through these projects, the local authority had achieved its intended outcome, i.e., Transformation of park (O1); Provision of a functional public space (O2); Improved park image and environment (O3); Public involvement in development (O4); Promoting social bonding among neighbourhoods (O5); Uniting the communities through a project (O6). Additionally, the authority also realised that it had achieved several unanticipated outcome, i.e., the park was commended in terms of community involvement (O7), the park attracts people from outside of the locality (O8), and other organisations were starting to organise events in the park (O9).

From the distinctions of the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes above, it was discovered that a local initiative conducted by a local authority can turn a degrading park into a functional park. But this is only possible with a strategic arrangement (C1, C2, C3, C4, C5), encompassing of goals and projects (C6, C7, C8). And with a secured funding, this was also made possible (C9). Within these contexts (C1-C9), different mechanisms were triggered (M1-M7). Under the right contexts, and certain mechanisms, the intended outcomes were achieved (O1-O6). However, unexpectedly, along with those intended outcomes, there were also unintended outcomes (O7-O9). To conclude this analysis; the result of this achievement had therefore reveals that a programme intended to regenerate a local public park can be achieved through a strategic approach by an organisation (in this case, the local authority). However, this achievement can only be obtained with the right resources and programme delivery. This scheme not only benefits the local community directly but on the whole had transformed the park, and indirectly benefits the authority and other public user.

Figure 4.4: An example of realistic evaluation analysis using the CMO configuration.
Source: Author

4.5 A Previous Study on the Realist Approach in Urban Regeneration Programme Assessment

In 1999, Suet Ying Ho conducted research investigating the potential of the Realist Approach in evaluating urban regeneration programmes in the UK. Ho (1999) had therefore, addressed the lack of data revealing the enhancement of the current urban regeneration programmes yet admitted that from the mid-1980s, there has been increasing attention paid by the UK government in terms of monitoring and evaluation of those initiatives. In relation to her work, a realistic evaluation was conducted for a previous urban regeneration evaluation study, which she adapted the CMO configurations suggested by Pawson and Tilley (1997). Her case study was the City Challenge evaluation study undertaken earlier on by Russell *et.al* (1996). This urban regeneration initiative was assessed by looking at its local context and mechanisms and this exercise was made possible from the available documents.

The findings from her study suggest that the CMO configurations would be appropriate if the evaluation was to be done by only one evaluator. But she argued whether the application of realistic evaluation is less problematic for social or economic objectives of urban regeneration programmes. The other important proposal was to advise that there should be a hierarchy of contexts for evaluation, enabling evaluators to look at a wider scope of programme and not just at a local level. It was also then questioned by Ho whether the realist approach is suitable for a macro scale or national type of programme. To her, the CMO configurations are easily utilised for problems embedded within local context and not for a wider context like the national level. This was mentioned based on existing evaluation study City Challenge initiative which only looked at a specific area of study within a local context (see Ho, 1999 citing Russell *et al.*, 1996). The assessments were carried out by looking at approaches in tackling local problems. Studies had therefore focused on separate localities. However, Ho's idea contradicts the findings of Pedersen and Rieper (2008). Unlike Pedersen and Rieper (2008), Ho believed that there can be further refinement to the approach in order to meet the multiple-objective and multiple-programme of policy interventions. Nevertheless, since realistic evaluation studies the reasons why a programme works, therefore, she suggested that realistic evaluation has the potential to evaluate urban regeneration initiatives.

In brief, the basic difference between her work and this study is that the benchmarking method was not engaged and therefore no comparative exercise was carried out. Ho only looked into the City Challenge Initiative. Also, the realist approach was performed by looking at previous research, therefore requiring only documents for analysis. This meant that there was no fieldwork. Other than that, the way the assessment was carried out was by examining the mechanisms at the local contexts whereas this examines a regional scale programme.

4.6 Linking Realistic Evaluation into the Research

In this research, the theory of realistic evaluation will be incorporated into the analysis process based on the belief that programme evaluation should be based on a theory. Realistic evaluation is therefore chosen in relation to its principle of understanding the facts and reality of an intervention. Since this research is intended to examine the causal effects behind the achievement and failure of programme delivery, this method of evaluation which, in theory analyses the “how, what, and who” questions is therefore believed to be a probable method. The CMO configurations framework, therefore offers a tactical features in evaluating case studies. Additionally, it will also facilitate the analysis in finding the correlation between the context, mechanism and outcome. Another important feature of the CMO configurations is that it enables the investigation to identify the right mechanism within the appropriate context, as well as permitting the research to uncover; to whom the process of delivery suits best and to whom the programme would benefit. Nevertheless, the foremost important aspect to be considered here is to test the applicability of realistic evaluation in assessing programmes of regional scales when others argue about its potential for larger programme scale. Finally, the call to test the use of benchmarking and realistic evaluation simultaneously was also part of the main aim.

4.7 Conclusions

Evaluation of programmes should incorporate a theory, as most scholars believe, programme evaluation can be conducted through theory-based evaluation. Inevitably, some evaluation methods appeared to be inconclusive, therefore, new approaches were developed and these include *realistic evaluation,* also designed to evaluate programmes. However, there appeared to be many terminologies used to signify the concept of realistic evaluation. This could possibly create confusion.

A realist sees things from the notion of ‘truth’ or ‘reality’. Realistic evaluation emerged from this principle. It was created as an improvement of an existing theory known as the theory-driven evaluation which is part of the theory-based evaluation. Theory-driven evaluation, otherwise identified as the white box evaluation, was created in the early 1980s to counter the limitations of the traditional black box evaluation that had been a dominant type of evaluation in the 1960s and the 1970s. As an opposing approach to the conventional method, theory-driven evaluation is rather more advanced in terms of assessing programmes. Black box evaluation only measures the outcome of a programme whereas theory-driven evaluation does a little bit more by examining the cause of those outcomes.

Nonetheless, even though the reasons behind a programme’s outcome are examined, it is soon discovered that information could be more enriched by conducting further investigation. Thus, a further exploration and explanation is required in order to fully understand the failure and success of a programme and the extent of influence of certain circumstances that would activate the mechanisms. The purpose of this enhanced approach enables the provision of more informative end-results. Therefore, realistic evaluation was created. At its simplest, realistic evaluation was derived to fill the shortfall of theory-driven evaluation for programme evaluation. The additional benefit from the realistic approach as compared to theory-driven evaluation is that the evaluation research looks into the detail of the subject by investigating the outcomes of a programme from the context and mechanism perspectives. It is for this purpose that the CMO configurations were constructed.

So far, there has been an attempt to evaluate urban regeneration programme at a national level using the CMO configurations. However, the study was only looking at the existing information obtained from existing evaluation research and was done through an investigation of the local contexts and mechanisms. This in turn offers further scope for future research within the same paradigm.

CHAPTER FIVE:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters (Chapters Two, Three and Four) provided an extensive literature review. This comprehensive review thus provided an important groundwork for the research and supports the establishment of the research design and strategy. Following the literature review and desk study, this chapter now continues with the research methodology and formulates its conceptual framework. For that reason, this chapter will present the following topics:

(1) Justification of the research design and strategy;
(2) Criteria for UK case study selection;
(3) Selected UK case studies;
(4) Research method (data collection method);
(5) Justification of the programme phase for evaluation;
(6) An outline of research questions;
(9) Establishment of a conceptual framework; and
(10) Conclusions.

5.2 Research Design and Strategies

To begin with, the research adopts the idea that a programme or project should be evaluated so that it can offer recommendations for decision-makers (see Cronbach, 1982; Robson, 1993; Walliman, 2005). In tandem with that view, this researcher then digested the aim and objectives of the research and consequently justifies its research design. It is therefore claimed that even though this thesis was pursued as basic research, this researcher believes that this piece of work represents a sample of evaluation research; the nub of this research employs an evaluation procedure, and with the distinctive characteristics of evaluation methods, process and expectations, thus delivers the work of an evaluation research.

According to Cresswell (2009), there are three types of research design, namely quantitative design, qualitative design and mixed-methods. Additionally, he suggested that, in general, the choice of research design depends very much on the research strategies employed for the research. He clarifies this by stating, “Often the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is framed in terms of using words (qualitative) rather than numbers (quantitative), or using close-ended questions (quantitative hypotheses) rather than open-ended questions (qualitative interview questions)" (Cresswell, 2009:p3). Pointing towards his idea, as well as reflecting on the research's aim, objectives and approaches, it is therefore proposed that this research is of a qualitative design. For this reason, in order to achieve the aim and objectives of this research, this research therefore employs four strategies, which are:

1) Case Study Method;
2) Comparative Method;
3) Realistic Evaluation; and
4) Document Analysis.

5.2.1 Case Study Method

There are several types of qualitative research strategies, for examples, ethnography, grounded theory, case study, phenomenological research and narrative research (see Creswell, 2009:p12-13). This research however adopts the case study method. There are many reasons for this decision; (1) taking into consideration the literature review; and (2) based on the research aim and objectives.

The first reason for a case study strategy was based on the idea proposed by Stufflebeam (2000) which suggested that a fundamental approach to programme assessment is through a case study method. Additionally, Ho's (1999) work demonstrates that benchmarking of a programme can be carried out through a case study method, while Patton (1990) indicates that a case study may be required when the subject involves a programme. In addition to that, it was also suggested that, a case study strategy can be applied in "city and regional planning" research (Yin, 1994:p1). Secondly, reflecting on the aim and objectives which intend to examine regional park programmes means that this research requires a case study approach. Additionally, it is also believed that the case study method can provide a more compelling result to programme evaluation (Fellows and Liu, 1997; Groat and Wang, 2002; Yin, 2003; Berg, 2007).

Apart from that, in order to study the delivery and performance of a programme, the study requires an in-depth study of the programme. As Yin (2009:p4) puts it, "there is no formula, but your choice depends in large part of your research question(s)". He added, "the more that questions seek to explain some present circumstances (e.g., "how" or "why" some social phenomenon works), the more that the case study method will be relevant" (Yin, 2009:p4). According to Burns (2000:p460) "the case study is the preferred strategy when 'how', 'who', 'why' or what' questions are being asked". These questions reflect the key principle to realistic evaluation applied in this research [we will see these type of questions for this research in this chapter, under Section 5.7]. He then added that "case study is used to gain in-depth understanding replete with meaning for the subject, focusing on process rather than outcome, on discovering rather than confirmation" (Burns, 2000:p460).

In relation to the numbers of case studies, the researcher decided on two case studies. Sesnan (2006:p11) points out, "whilst comparative studies can be a very effective way of understanding the public [social aspect] there was evidence that the regeneration landscape in England was already so complex as to make understanding it a major task". In relation to Sesnan's (2006) idea, it is therefore believed that studying two urban regeneration programmes is already challenging. Moreover, this relates to a belief by Fellows and Liu (1997:p15-16) mentioning that "the nature of in-depth data collection may limit the number of studies, when research is subject to resource constraints". They then added, "case studies may be selected on the basis of their being representative with similar conditions to those used in statistical sampling to achieve a representative sample, to demonstrate particular facets of the topic, or to show the spectrum of alternatives". Based on these ideas, this researcher felt that having just two case studies would be adequate in meeting the research's goal. However, a brief review of an international practice is provided in Appendix 11.

5.2.2 Comparative Method

As mentioned earlier, besides employing the multiple-case study design, the research will also conduct comparative investigations. The comparative approach is undertaken because the principle of benchmarking itself is to compare. According to Grix (2004), by definition, comparative studies require more than one case study, whether it is the same subject or a number of separate subjects. David and Sutton (2004) explained that the focus of comparative research is to identify differences and similarities between groups, for example, among nation-states. According to May (1993), there are several advantages of undertaking comparative research and one of the aims is to understand and explain the ways in which different societies and cultures experience and act upon social programmes.

5.2.3 Realistic Evaluation

Based on the lessons acquired from the literature review and the envisaged conceptual framework, realistic evaluation will be part of the major operation when assessing both UK case studies. The use of the CMO configurations will be as a framework to examine the outcomes of programmes, its contexts and mechanisms. In this research, regional park programmes are investigated through the benchmarking method. Results from the comparison will be extracted and re-analysed in accordance with the CMO configurations.

5.2.4 Document Analysis

Apart from the multiple-case study design, the comparative and realistic analysis, the research will also adopt a Document Analysis approach. This is done for both case studies. The documentary material used for this purpose includes books, reports, websites, electronic documents, policy statements, guidelines and strategies. In relation to this exercise, the approach involves a detailed review of all the related documents obtained.

5.3 Criteria for the UK Case Study Selection

Going back to the aim and objectives of this research, the scope of research has been directed towards examining regional park programmes of urban regeneration origin. Based on previous discussion on the differences between a project and a programme, as well as detail discussion on programme evaluation (in Chapter Two), it was argued that the core evaluation of the case studies will be focused around assessing the programme as a whole and not concentrating on a specific urban regeneration project. This was pointed out due to the fact that project evaluation is not a rare procedure but programme evaluation especially for a regional park is seldom performed whilst benchmarking those programmes has not yet become a standard pursuit. In addition to that, realistic evaluation of a regional park programme has never been undertaken before.

As indicated in previous discussion, the research itself will include two major UK case studies. The decision about the numbers of case studies depends to a large extent on the research objectives and questions as well as the research context. With regard to the selection of the UK case studies, it was proposed that the selection of appropriate cases will be based upon a set of characteristics. The case study selection therefore is made in accordance with the specific needs of this research. However, the benchmarking partner has an extra criterion that needs to meet the key principle to the benchmarking concept: portraying itself as an exemplar. Below are the basic criteria for both; the prime subject and its benchmarking partner (Criteria 1-4 for both cases, while Criterion 5 is targeted for the comparative case study):

1) Programme with urban regeneration initiative as the initial foundation;
2) Feasibility;
3) Long term perspective;
4) Suitability; and
5) The benchmarking partner depicts the characteristics as an exemplar.

(1) Programme with urban regeneration initiative as the initial foundation

As pointed out in Chapter One and during the second part of the thesis (in Chapter Two), the choice of subject for the purpose of testing the benchmarking procedure and realistic evaluation would be of an initiative called the regional park programme. In relation to the issue of the current practice of evaluation for urban regeneration intervention, the case study selection therefore chose regional park programmes which feature urban regeneration efforts as their basis of establishment.

(2) Feasibility

The 'feasibility' criterion is also regarded as a fundamental aspect. It essentially indicates that both UK case studies are credible to be examined and evaluated. And by that, feasible simply means accessible, enabling the investigation to be carried out and viable. For that reason, the study requires the existence and access of those involved during the delivery of the programme. It would be impractical if the source of information is no longer available due to unavoidable reasons, for example, changes in management, retired personnel, or potential participants can no longer be contacted. In addition to that, it is crucial that case study selection considers the availability of an adequate amount of information and references of both case studies. Likewise, if cases are best practice but information is scarce due to restricted access or changes in management, or even worse, because an organisation no longer exists, then these would create a major stumbling block for investigation. For this reason, both programmes must have significant number of sources and references. Additionally, the main subject and the benchmarking partner should be accessible in providing the research with a substantial amount of information and documentation with regards to the case study.

(3) Long Term Perspective

The long term perspective criterion signifies the end result of the research and its contribution for future reference. This suggests that the choice of case studies will provide a long term perspective, in the sense that it has the expectation of a lasting lesson for future reference plus realistic enough in terms of producing compelling results applicable to future practice. The outcome of research should be capable of assisting the current scenario yet applicable to a long term vision. It is expected that the outcome of the case study investigations will facilitate the improvement and guidance of current or future urban regeneration programme evaluation. The long term perspective anticipates lasting impact during the process of regional park development but it is not suggested throughout its life-cycle as programmes are influenced by current trends. Also, a regional park tends to take longer to become fully mature. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that the framework produced can be applied for a reasonably long time unless another new method in evaluating regional park programmes is designed, to suit the more complex situation in the future.

(4) Suitability

Another important criterion of the case study selection is that the case studies correspond to the main idea of this research which is to evaluate the potential of benchmarking and realistic evaluation in urban regeneration in terms of programme evaluation. The major UK case studies must indicate the validity of the foundation and principles of the benchmarking concept which allow it to be compared. This in turn will enable the application of the benchmarking procedure and also the assessment of the applicability of the benchmarking procedure as a tool for measuring performance in urban regeneration. Needless to say, both case studies are required to be appropriate in terms of suitability for evaluation and assessment. Case studies should represent logical exploration and match for comparison. Therefore, if a case study chosen is embedded within the local context, then a comparison would be practical with another local context. A similar application to this is that, if the case study is of a regional urban regeneration programme, than another regional programme would best match the comparison and evaluation. Conversely, both case studies must demonstrate consistency of type of intervention or category of programme. A good justification for this is to avoid any inconsistency in terms of the level of subject for assessment.

(5) The Benchmarking Partner Depicts the Characteristics of An Exemplar

In this instance, it is worth referring to the basic principle of benchmarking. The essential purpose of benchmarking is to compare a subject/case to another similar subject/case of a better performance. The benchmarking partner should have external recognition and be highly recognised. This is important in the practice of benchmarking which is to look for best practice. It would not be an effective exercise if the comparison is of the same level or acquired the same achievement or results. It is for this motive that the case study for comparison (the benchmarking partner) must portray some elements or prove of a much better accomplishment. And, because this thesis targets to share its outcomes for the betterment and efficacy of future intervention, therefore, the benchmarking partner must demonstrate better performance and merits than other regional parks.

5.4 Selected UK Case Studies

Based on the criteria outlined for case study selection, the research therefore chose to use the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MW) as the main subject, while the Lee Valley Regional Park (LV) was selected as the benchmarking partner. The motive to use the MW as the main subject was the fact that, upon justifying the research's rationale and case study selection in summer 2009, the MW was already in the second phase or final phase of its delivery and had barely one and a half years before it ended. This provides an opportunity for the study as the MW was originally designed as part of the Northwest economic strategy to regenerate the economy of the region through its physical transformation (The Mersey Partnership, 2002). It was then discovered that the MW was the first regional park in the

Northwest that had actually materialised and therefore became a subject to performance measurement. Moreover, it was also established that the MW had not been assessed in terms of its delivery and performance through comparison with any other regional parks in the UK before. In brief, the research proposed to study the performance of urban regeneration programme and to investigate the potential of the benchmarking technique and given the nature and background of the MW was in turn an advantage to the research. Given the fact that, the MW offers an area of case study, the research subsequently searched for its *benchmarking partner* (comparator). It was then discovered that LV meets the criteria for case study selection. Additionally, it embraces the right characteristics of an exemplar and matches the nature of intervention of the MW (see Table 5.1 below). This in turn opens up a platform to conduct and test the benchmarking procedure as well as testing the Realistic Evaluation in assessing the programmes.

Table 5.1 below outlines the characteristics of both case studies. It reveals the similarities and disparities between the two cases and informs the general features of both regional parks as well as demonstrating the reasons as to why the Lee Valley earns the title and position as the benchmarking partner. It is apparent that both have a similar foundation to their establishment and emphasis on the physical and environmental aspects. Nevertheless, the LV has an outstanding reputation based on its significant achievement and its future prospect. The next Chapter (Chapter Six) informs this impression, as it discloses the Park's experience and achievements through the benchmarking process. The subsequent description therefore informs the MW and the LV in brief (see Chapter Six which describes both case studies' background in detail).

Table 5.1: Why Benchmark the MW Against the LV?

FEATURE	MERSEY WATERFRONT REGIONAL PARK (MW) (The Main Subject)	LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK (LV) (The Benchmarking Partner)
Initial Vision	To address the deterioration of area (a)	To overcome dereliction issue (c)
Original Main Approach	Urban regeneration (a)	Urban regeneration (c)
Type of Programme	Regional Park (a)	Regional Park (c)
Level of Programme	Regional (a)	Regional (c)
Size / Area	84miles along the coastline; across the districts of Sefton, Wirral, Liverpool, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester (a)	26miles along river banks (with an area of 10,000 acres); covering from River Lee from Ware in Hertfordshire, down through Essex, North and East London, past the Olympic Park to East India Dock Basin on the River Thames (f)
Program Start Year (Duration)	Set-up in 2003. Emerged from Action Plan for the City Region 2002-2005 (a) 2003 – 2007 (Phase 1) and 2007-2010 (Phase2) (b)	LVRPA was created in 1966. The regional park programme has been continuously in practice ever since its establishment (f)
Investment	Worth £69m of capital investment (2003-2011); (b)	£15million (2004-2007) (h) £250million (2012) (i)
Original Aim	"to transform, energise and connect the Mersey Waterfront assets to create a unique sense of place for people who live, work, visit and invest in the Liverpool City Region" (framework by Gillespies) (a) 1) Economic regeneration of the waterfront; 2) Promotion of leisure and recreation activities; and 3) Preservation of the environment.	To provide prospects for recreational and leisure activities for the public (e)(g)
Resources	Natural Resources (waterfront, river, coastline environments), Aesthetic Values, Cultural Resources, Community Resources.(a)(b)	Natural Resources (river, open space, wildlife habitat), Aesthetic Values, Community Resources (parks, trails), Cultural Resources (heritage sites) (e)
Type of Development (Note: In no particular order)	1) Water sports facilities; 2) Recreational and Leisure facilities; 3) Residential; 4) Commercial; 5) Infrastructure; 6) Conference and Exhibition venue; and 7) Industrial regeneration projects (b)	1) Recreational Facilities and Activities; 2) Nature Reserves; 3) Lake and riverside trails; 4) Heritage Sites; 5) Athletics Centres for Olympic and Paralympic Games; 6) Sports Facilities of world standard (Olympic Park); 7) Residential; 8) Camping Sites; and 9) Water sports Facilities (d)(f)
Key Features (Note: In no particular order)	1) Major developments; 2) Estuary development and management; 3) Tourism, sport and leisure; and 4) Mersey Maritime (a)	London's biggest open space which focuses on recreational and leisure activities (d)(f)(g) Facilities for walking, cycling, running, visiting farms or historic gardens, ice skating, horse riding and canoeing (f)
Achievements (Note: In no particular order)	1) A materialised regional park in the North West; 2) Serious impact on the economic, ecological, cultural and aesthetic value; and 3) Completion of over 50 regeneration projects (b)	1) Attracts more than 4million visitors a year; 2) Award-winning sport and leisure facilities; 3) 8 Green Flag winning open spaces; 4) 1 Green Flag Heritage Site; and 5) 4 Highly Commended QUEST Awards (h)
Future Opportunities (Note: In no particular order)	1) Improved region's international profile; 2) Attracting investors to the North West. (b)	1) London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (LVRPA owns 35% of Olympic Parklands and four Olympic venues); and 2) Regional and national regeneration programs- (the Upper Lee Valley is a growth area within the Government's Sustainable Communities) (f)(h)

Source: [a] *The Mersey Partnership, 2002;*
[b] *The Mersey Partnership, 2007;*
[c] *Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969;*
[d] *Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010a;*
[e] *Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010b;*
[f] *Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a;*
[g] *Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011e;*
[h] *Lee Valley Regional Park Authority 2012i;*
[i] Interview with the LVRPA Chief Executive (26th September 2011).

5.4.1 Mersey Waterfront Regional Park Programme

Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MW) is the main subject for the benchmarking task. The park is located in the Northwest of England (in Merseyside). The Merseyside region is a blend of various characters and interesting natural environment elements. The vast natural aesthetic values and environmental aspects alongside the stretch of 135km of the coastline are key assets of the Liverpool City Region. These wide-ranging and unique elements are essential in facilitating the transformation and development of the region. MW comprises coastline and estuaries within the Liverpool City Council and across-the local authorities of the Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (Wirral MBC), Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (Sefton MBC), Halton Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester, and Knowsley Borough Council. Figure 5.1 below shows the location of MW and the local authorities involved in the programme while Figure 5.2 demonstrates MW's area.

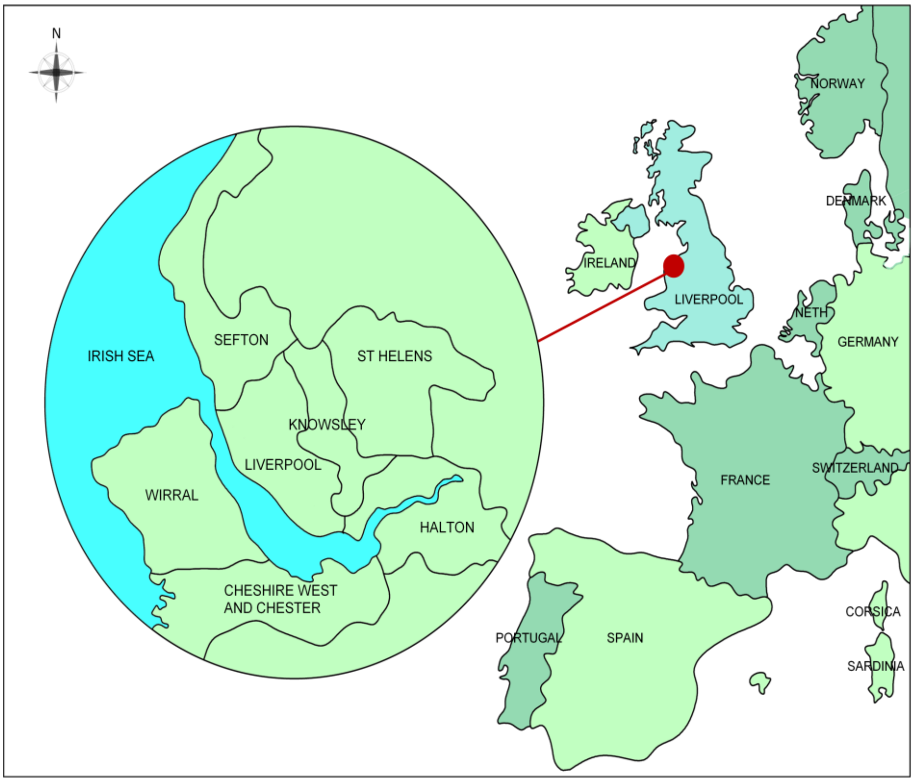

Figure 5.1: The location of MW and related local authorities
Source: Author

In the past, the MW faced a challenging issue of the neglected natural and built environment assets. The MW was therefore initiated by the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA), and was mentioned in the Action Plan for the Merseyside City Region 2002-2005 (The Mersey Partnership, 2002). The plan for the regional park was introduced in 1999 by NWDA through its Regional Spatial Strategy for the purpose of accelerating the region's economic growth. The idea was to stimulate the economy through urban regeneration and redevelopment of the waterfront. The Mersey Basin Campaign (MBC) had laid the foundation by upgrading the water quality of the rivers within the region and thus resulting good water quality as a precondition to the regeneration initiative.

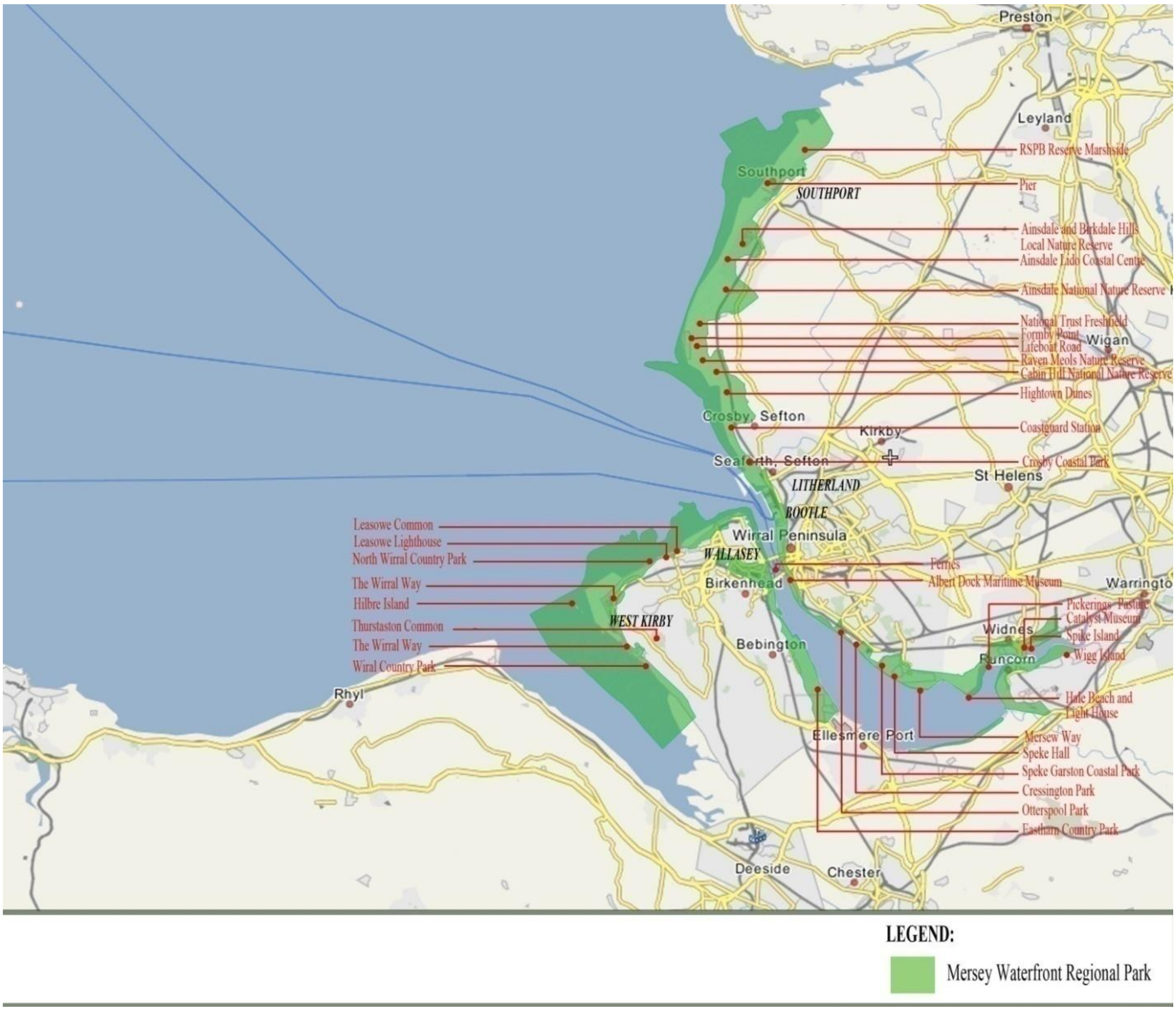

Figure 5.2: MW's area.
Source: Abdullah and Batey (2011:p9)

The MW came into existence in 2002 and was delivered through partnerships which consisted of several local authorities and other stakeholders. MW officially ran from April 2003 to March 2011. The programme was carried out through two major phases: the Commencement Phase (from April 2003 till March 2007) and the Succession Phase (from April 2007 to March 2011). Within that short period, the MW helped transform the waterfront and had accomplished much of its intended outcomes. In spite of the need to tease out the benchmarking procedure and realistic evaluation through case studies, the choice of

MW as the main subject was also to examine its performance since it was delivered with a start and end date.

Nevertheless, in its final year of completion, a detailed assessment of the outcome and experience was initiated by the Vice Chair of the MW and carried out by this author as part of this PhD research. The idea was to evaluate the programme through an approach that would fit the work of this PhD research. This procedure therefore avoids the standard format of the RDAs evaluation method, the Impact Evaluation Framework (see BIS, 2009). The outcome of this self-evaluation project was presented and accepted by the MW Board of Members (on the 17 May 2011) as well as being presented in a public forum called the Mersey Estuary Forum (on the 24 June 2011) (see Figure 5.3 which demonstrate the outcome of this self-evaluation study). The researcher found this effort as a very useful exercise as it helped her to establish contacts with the MW partners and to understand the delivery of MW Programme.

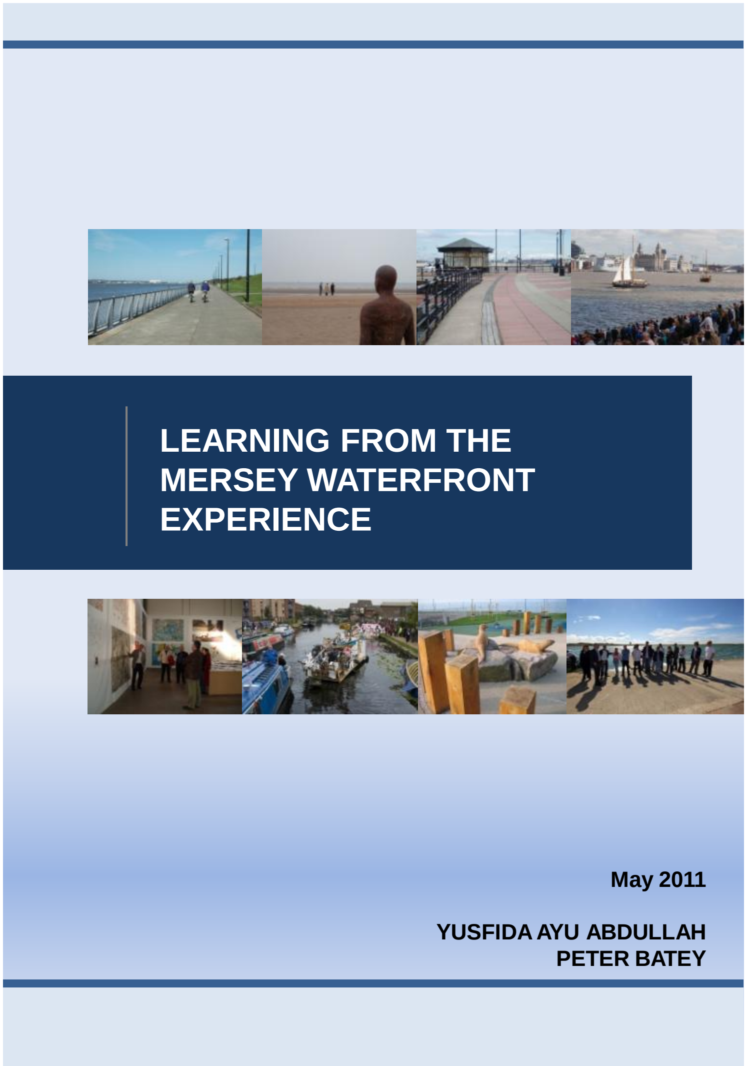

Figure 5.3: Report of self-evaluation project for MW
Source: Abdullah and Batey (2011)

5.4.2 Lee Valley Regional Park Programme

The Lee Valley Regional Park (LV) was selected as the comparator. The park is situated in the Southeast of England (in the Northeast of London) and is measured as approximately 42km along the River Lee (otherwise known as the River Lea). LV was the first regional park in the UK and has its own Park Authority, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA). It also has its own LV Park Act of 1966 (see Great Britain Law Statutes Etc., 1967). Due to past industrial activities, Lee Valley had experienced the same issues as the MW and was confronting environmental and dereliction problems. The state of the environment was declining before the LVRPA was established. Since its location is within the high density area and urban population (nine-million population), the main purpose was to exploit its natural resources to the public. Another main concern was the capacity and extent of leisure and recreational provision; whether they were adequate or not? LV was therefore created after a Bill was put to Parliament which then established the LVRPA as the Park Authority. The LVRPA was therefore constituted on 1 January 1967, making it the longest standing Regional Park Authority in the UK.

The park stretches 26 miles (41.6km) along the banks of the River Lee, from Ware in Hertfordshire, through Essex, to the Thames at East India Dock Basin (see Figure 5.4 below which shows the location of LV and Figure 5.5 which illustrates the authorities within the area). It consists of regional sports centres, urban green spaces, heritage sites, country parks, farms and nature reserves. The early focus of development was to provide leisure and recreational facilities within the Park and to offer opportunities for recreational activities for Londoners and its wider region. Over the years the emphasis had shifted and currently the LV is focusing on developing its sports facilities of world class standard. In fact, the LV is one of the Olympic venues in 2012. Additionally, the LV is also now moving towards its present vision as a world class leisure destination. Whereas the MW ended, the LV is continuously in practice and making progress in terms of development. This in turn demonstrates its status as a potential comparator to the MW. In the subsequent chapter, the thesis testifies the experience of this regional park.

Figure 5.4: Location plan of LV
Source: Author

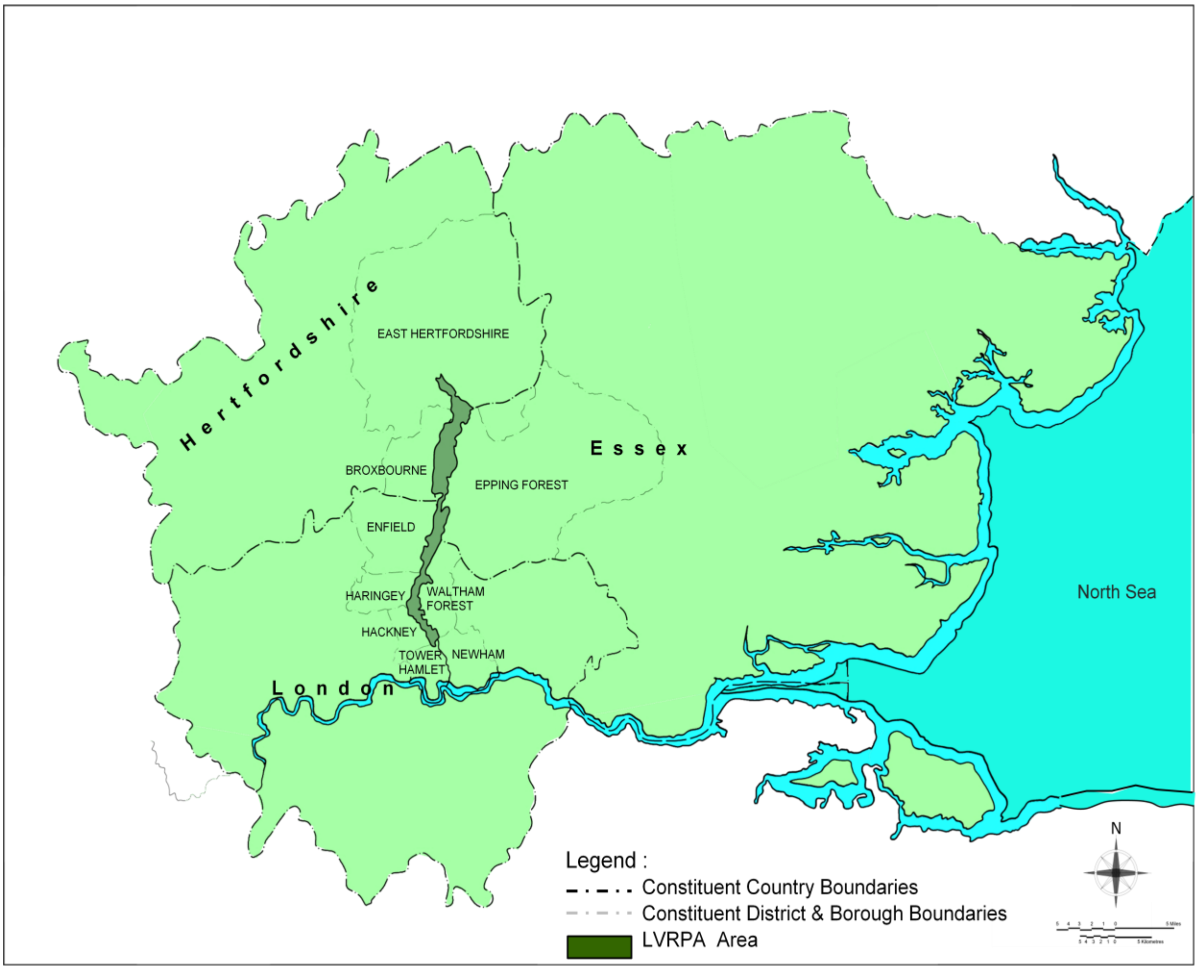

Figure 5.5: LV's area and its related local authorities
Source: Adapted from Lee Valley Regional Park (1986:p6)

5.5 Research Method

Having described the research design and strategy, this section now continues with a detailed explanation of the research method. Bryman (2008:p31) described *research method* as, "A research method is simply a technique for collecting data. It can involve a specific instrument, such as a self-completion questionnaire or a structured interview schedule, or participant observation whereby the researcher listens to and watches others". Additionally, Creswell (2009:p15) mentioned that in research, "the third major element [besides research design and strategy] in the framework is the specific research methods that involve the forms of data collection". According to Patton (1990), there are no strict rules in collecting data and evaluation.

5.5.1 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data collection involves reviewing all the related documents. Secondary data are reviewed for the formulation of the research's conceptual framework and operation of the research, as well as facilitating the progression throughout the research process. In brief, the secondary data is used by means of document analysis. The process will therefore be exploratory and the sources of this data include:

(a) Books, articles, journals, working papers, presented papers, frameworks, reports and any other related printed sources related to the research;
b) Archival records;
c) Any form of information from the related websites;
d) Previous reports on surveys or study related to the study; and
e) Photographs, maps and etc.

5.5.2 Formal and Informal Individual/Group Discussions

The study performed several informal group discussions before proceeding to further investigations. This first stage of primary data collection aided the researcher to gather constructive ideas and advice from the members of the group discussions. The sessions were more of a brainstorming session and critical review of the research strategy. These group discussions comprised of members of the Civic Design Department and research students within the department, as well from representatives from the primary case studies.

5.5.3 Interviews

The most influential information for the research was acquired from interviews. In fact, the primary data largely depends on the interviewees. As mentioned earlier, the approach was used in both case studies. The process involved two different stages: pilot interviews and primary interviews. For this matter, the researcher opted for 'purposive or judgmental sampling' which happens to be a form of the 'non-probability sample' (Neuman, 2007). This type of sampling is best used for qualitative research that seeks to understand cases in detail and is often used in exploratory and in-depth investigation, related to perceptions and experience (Neuman, 2007). O'Leary (2010:p169) suggested the use of this approach if the research is "working with key informants" and "attempting to gather some insider or expert knowledge". In relation to this, O'Leary (2010:p172) suggests that 'key informants' can include "experts, or insiders, or the highly experienced, or a leader, or former staff, or even the observant [individual's in an organisation or community who have a reputation for knowing who's who and what's what]".

The pilot interviews were conducted at an early stage of primary data collection in September 2010, while the primary interviews for MW were completed from December 2010 to February 2011, while interviews for LV took place in September 2011. The pilot interviews were designed as a preparation for the primary interviews and surveys. The purpose was to aid this researcher with key information in order to construct the interview questions and questionnaires in the next level. The benefit of going through this process was that it had enabled the researcher to further develop the questions and modify any deficiencies within the research (O'Leary, 2010). This factor was very much influenced by Yin's (2009:p92) work which suggested that a pilot case study enables the researcher to improve the process of data collection.

The research applied a semi-structured interview questions, allowing a permissive interview process, especially in terms of getting the information from the interviewees. The semi-structured interview method promotes flexibility in terms of response, perception and attitude, as compared to restricted close-ended questions (Patton, 1990; Burns, 2000; Bennett, 2003; Walliman, 2005). The practice was more of an e*xploratory* discussion. The idea of exploratory interviews was to acquire information on the interviewee's experiences, beliefs and perceptions. To Burns (2000:p425), the list of questions for an in-depth interview does not have to be regulated and the idea is to initiate "a free-flowing conversation". Additionally, a report by the Central Course Team (1979) mentioned that the initial design of the research can be modified as exploratory interviews can result in profound information and ideas. In fact it could also provide new perspectives about the research.

The researcher classified the area of investigation into several key topics. These topics tended to differ from one interviewee to another, reflecting on the background of the interviewees within the organisation. The set of questions has a basic format and structure, with similar subjects of inquiry as a guide. The element of flexibility was imposed here and questions tend to be added or excluded based on the role and responsibility of the interviewee, as well as their experience within the programme. There were questions that needed to be instantly added if discussion was seen as encouraging thereby fostering more information. It is the nature of conversation that some intended plan was not possible and it is the character of an exploratory investigation that enables an interviewee to be probed to elaborate more. However, taken as a whole, the broad main subjects that guided the interview process were:

a) Experience with the programme;
b) The preliminary stage of programme delivery;
c) The process of programme implementation;
d) The mechanism applied throughout its delivery;
e) The organisation and management;
f) The knowledge in benchmarking;
g) The key success factors affecting programme delivery;
h) Issues and problems related to programme delivery;

i) The outcome of the programme; and
j) Expectations and recommendations from interviewees.

In the case of the number of interviewees, the researcher adopted the idea by Stake (1995:p4) which mentioned, “case study research is not sampling research”. To him, “case studies are undertaken to make the case understandable” (Stake, 1995:p85). Additionally, Burns (2000:p465) also addressed the same issue and said “non-probability sampling is more often applied in case study”. It is therefore apparent that, sampling strategy is not an issue here. In another account, Dixon, Bouma and Atkinson (1988) state that research which seeks to examine a small group does not require a sampling method as the subject can represent the whole group. For this reason, the research targets to interview no less than fifteen interviewees from each major case study. This number is believed to be adequate as this researcher plans to interview those with experience in relation to programme delivery and can respond to specific interview questions (see Appendix 2 for Sample of MW Interview Questions and Appendix 3 for Sample of LV Interview Questions). Additionally, these interviewees were expected to supplement the information from secondary data. In short, it was also the idea that it is not the huge number of interviewees that matters, instead, it is the information needed from the right person. Because of this, this researcher believed that certain position, role and involvement within the regional park organisation may provide the required information. It was then decided that interviewees should be among the Board Members, the Executive Team and Project Managers. In reaching this target, the interview plan had included every potential participant in the assignment.

Meanwhile, in relation to the interview process, interviews were mostly conducted through the face-to-face method and a few were carried out via telephone calls. Nonetheless, for both techniques, interview conversations were recorded. Each interview lasted about one to one and a half hours while the face-to-face interviews took place at the interviewee’s office.

For MW, even though the research required 15 interviewees, a total of 31 possible participants were contacted. These potential interviewees included the Chief Executive, Board Members, the Executive Team and Project Managers. Of these targeted participants, 21 interviewees were conducted (see Appendix 4 for the list of MW interviewees). The range of interviewees included seven individuals from the current Board, four former Board Members, five from the current Management Group, four individuals from the former Executive Team and an interviewee with the MW / The Mersey Partnership (TMP) Representative. This meant that the research had gained access to 67% of its total potential participants.

In the case of LV, the first effort was to contact the Chief Executive of LVRPA, in order to seek permission and gain access to information. A positive response was received, and this researcher was referred to a senior officer who was assigned to coordinate the process. Originally, the research aimed to interview 15 personnel, including the Chief Executive, Board Members, Head of Departments and Project Managers. For this reason too, several names were proposed for interviews. It was then realised that during the time when this research was planning to conduct the interviews (in June 2011), the LVRPA was facing a huge task in delivering Olympic facilities. And, because of this, access to interview was partially granted to certain individuals. Access was therefore gained to interview four key actors of LVRPA; the Chief Executive, the Head of Planning & Strategic Partnerships, the Assistant Director Resources & Business and the Head of Performance & Information (see Appendix 5 for list of LV interviewees). Nevertheless, it was evident that the four key officers had provided sufficient information, along with the secondary data available. These individuals holding important posts and role within the Lee Valley Authority Park Authority had offered the necessary data needed and therefore it can be determined that having four key players with absolute information are adequate and satisfactory for the research purposes. As O'Leary (2010:p171) believes, "key informants can be instrumental in giving you access to a world you might have otherwise tried to understand while being locked on the outside".

In terms of the interview arrangements, the approach was different for each case study. For MW, every potential interviewee was contacted through e-mail and telephone calls. Along with the e-mails, the permission of each possible participant was sought and was given a copy of the research background and the interview questions. This was mainly done for the purpose of ethical obligations (further explanation on this matter is discussed in Section 5.11 of this chapter). Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, for LV, authorisation was requested from the Chief Executive of the LVRPA.

5.5.4 Online Surveys

The online surveys were only performed for MW. The purpose was to understand the MW in greater detail given that: (1) MW was chosen as the main subject for investigation; (2) the principle of the benchmarking method requires the main subject to be studied in detail in order to determine the focus of benchmarking. This is aligned with the benchmarking idea which had suggested that the main subject is to be analysed thoroughly in order to comprehend and address its strong points, weaknesses, potentials and issues. Additionally, the original intention was to use the information in the evaluation task for MW. This actual evaluation work by this researcher had therefore provides this thesis with additional information.

The MW involved two separate electronic surveys which were mostly based on semi-structured questionnaires. The purpose of conducting these surveys was to gain in-depth information in relation to programme implementation. The respondents involved were the Project Managers and individuals of the

Community Engagement Initiative (known as the People's Panels) from the MW programme. Both surveys were carried out using the University of Liverpool's web server. The surveys were therefore shaped into the *Project Manager Survey* (see Appendix 6 for Sample of Project Manager Questionnaire) and the *People's Panels Survey* (see Appendix 7 for Sample of the People's Panels Questionnaire). Questionnaires were sent electronically for a number of reasons: (1) the method was faster and easier; (2) data was automatically transferred to electronic files and converted to different format for analysis; and (3) response rate was automatically calculated upon receiving back the questionnaires. It is from this process that this researcher is able to see the result of responses in a summary format.

The Project Manager Survey was sent to the MW Project Managers. 36 potential respondents were contacted, but only 24 respondents participated in the research (see Appendix 8 for list of respondents). This 66.7% of response rate was, however, considered as encouraging, taken into consideration of the period of survey which was very tight. However, despite the high level of returned questionnaires, the research had to eliminate eight respondents as their questionnaires were not filled in except for their names and basic information. The survey began on the 15th December 2010 and lasted almost a month. This short duration was due to the fact that the researcher was targeting to assess the performance of the MW upon finishing its delivery period by the end of March 2011. The aim was to understand the programme in detail for the purpose of forming the focus for the benchmarking exercise.

The People's Panels Survey, on the other hand, was targeted at the people that experienced the MW through the Community Engagement Initiative. It lasted from 9th December 2010 to 10th January 2011. This took place for almost a week longer than the Project Manager Survey. A total of 56 possible individuals were approached through e-mail. Unfortunately, out of the total, only 37 questionnaires were able to be delivered, as 19 persons were unable to be contacted. It was discovered that the e-mails did not go through. This could possibly be the case of full mailboxes or inactive accounts or other faults. From 37 delivered questionnaires, the research received only 11 questionnaires in return (see Appendix 9 for list of respondents). Even though further efforts were made to gain their participation, the research had to settle for the 29.7% response rate. Nevertheless, from the returned questionnaires, most questions were answered.

5.5.5 Site Observations

Site observations were conducted for both primary case studies. The approach was to see evidence of the development and assess its programme outcomes. There was no specific framework to conduct this investigation as both case studies are very large in terms of area coverage. The examination had therefore involved several visits to some areas within the regional parks which were known to be influential and major visitor attractions. Photographs were taken and interesting features were noted. Evidence of success was observed and recorded. The intention was to re-examine the interviewees' and respondents' views and perception, as well as information obtained from the secondary data. This is turn provides confirmation to the research. The findings were essential in order to demonstrate the achievements or failures of the UK regional park programmes.

5.6 Justification of the Programme Phase for Evaluation

In any programme evaluation, an evaluator or researcher should decide on the focus of evaluation, whether it is a summative or a formative evaluation (see King *et al*., 1987). At this point, this researcher feels that it is crucial to substantiate that MW being the main subject will undergo a summative evaluation. The reason for this is because MW has finished its termed programme. This section is therefore intended to describe the differentiation of evaluation approach and its benefits. In relation to Silvestrini's (2011) idea, in pursuing any evaluation, the question of which phase of evaluation is to be performed is very much associated with the purpose of evaluation. As many authors mentioned, there are generally three stages for programme evaluation, namely, ex ante, ongoing or ex post (Stockmann, 2011b; Silvestrini, 2011; Hall and Hall, 2004; Stormer and Schubert, 2007). The 'ex ante evaluation' is also known as the *formative evaluation*, while the 'ongoing evaluation' is often referred to as *mid-term evaluation*, and the 'ex post evaluation' is commonly addressed as the *summative evaluation*.

The formative or ex ante evaluation is often referred to as an evaluation carried out before any programme starts (Weiss, 1998; Hall and Hall, 2004). This form of evaluation is performed for the purpose of understanding the targets of a programme and its intended outcomes (Weiss, 1998; Bennett, 2003). The advantages of conducting this form of exercise are because it can foresee the advantages or the negative impact of the programme as well as suggesting room for further improvement (Hall and Hall, 2004; Stormer and Schubert, 2007). Other than that, the practice can offer an early recommendation for upcoming monitoring or evaluation (Stormer and Schubert, 2007; Brandt, 2011). According to Hall and Hall (2004:p30), "summative evaluation offers a judgment on a programme at the end of a period of evaluation research". They added, unlike summative evaluation, the formative assessment "uses interim feedback from the evaluator to redirect and improve the programme, so the aim is more on understanding and refining the processes of programme delivery" (Hall and Hall, 2004:p30).

Summative evaluation is carried out to measure the "impact and effectiveness of a programme" (Hall and Hall, 2004:p30). As addressed by Bennett (2003), the formative evaluation is normally carried out to examine the process of delivery and the relationship between the outcomes and the process. Other than that, formative evaluation is conducted to enhance or improve existing or new interventions. The summative or the ex post evaluation is therefore, conducted to summarise the overall programme from the experience for the purpose of improvement. Additionally, Stormer and Schubert (1997:p17) elaborated on the process as, "*Ex post* evaluation recapitulates and judges the entire programme, particularly its impacts. The effectiveness and efficiency of interventions are analysed comparing with expected effects from the beginning of the intervention". Similarly, Moore and Spires (2000:p226) described formative evaluation as "The process of checking (after implementation) to see how far objectives have been achieved, what resources have been used and what outputs have been produced; it is also helpful to identify good and poor practice and to isolate what lessons can be learnt for the future (also called ex post evaluation or ex post review)". Meanwhile, mid-term evaluation is normally carried out by formal evaluators. This is not the case for basic research. The reason for the mid-term evaluation or the 'on-going assessment' is done to constantly evaluate the programme for the purpose of programme improvement (Stormer and Schubert, 1997). In relation to the MW case, the focus of summative evaluation is believed to be useful in providing other regional parks or future interventions with lessons. In this research, an idea by Fitz-Gibbon and Morris (1987) is adopted. They mentioned that, in a summative evaluation, a programme should be judged based on its outcomes.

5.7 Outline of Research Questions

Having discussed the research aim and objectives, reviewed the literature and justified the research design, strategies and methods, this section now addresses the research questions. For this reason, the research revisits the objectives and formulates the research questions:

Objective One*: To appraise the concept of evaluation, its application to programme performance and the background of UK urban regeneration initiatives.*

- What defines evaluation and when did formal evaluation start?
- What approaches to evaluation are available?
- What is programme evaluation and to what extent is evaluation is important in measuring the performance of a programme?

Objective Two*: To review the concept of the Benchmarking Method and examine its modes of application.*

- What defines benchmarking and to what extent is benchmarking useful for evaluation?
- What are the types of benchmarking and how has it been conducted?
- How has benchmarking being performed in the UK public services and in the context of urban regeneration?

Objective Three*: To review the theory of Realistic Evaluation.*

- What is the theory of realistic evaluation and how did it evolve?
- What are the salient characteristics of realistic evaluation and how has it been applied?
- To what extent realistic evaluation is used in examining urban regeneration programmes?

Objective Four*: To apply the benchmarking procedure and examine comparatively the delivery of regional park programmes in the UK. In conjunction with this, to consider the applicability of employing the Realistic Evaluation for programme evaluation, i.e., the Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations, when analysing the UK regional park programmes.*

- How have case studies been selected?
- To what extent does LV differ from MW?
- What are the key lessons and challenges of a regional park programme delivery from the investigation?

Objective Five*: To assess the reliability and potential of the Benchmarking Method and the suitability of the Realistic Evaluation method in assessing urban regeneration interventions through regional parks as well as developing a practical approach to regional park delivery and evaluation.*

- To what extent is benchmarking useful in examining regional park programmes?
- What is the benefit of performing the Context-Mechanism-Outcomes Configurations approach in evaluating regional park programmes?
- To what extent is the combination of benchmarking and realistic evaluation suitable in assessing regional park programmes?

5.8 Establishment of a Conceptual Framework

Drawing from the justification of the research design, strategy and methods, as well as digesting, adapting and transferring the knowledge gained from the literature review, this section now formulates a conceptual framework. For this motive too, the research rejects the notion of programme evaluation which determines that programme evaluation should be based upon a theory. This was mentioned several times in Chapter Four, whereby scholars (Chen and Rossi, 1983; Chen, 1989, 1990; Pawson and Tilley, 1997, 2004; Pawson *et.al*, 2004, 2005) affirmed the use of theory in programme evaluation. To start with, the conceptual framework is a mixture of the various ideas delivered by the scholars whose work was discussed in the earlier chapters or else introduced in this chapter. The conceptual framework was therefore derived and arranged through the adaptation and combination of the various ideas gained from the literature review. To further explain this, the research revisits some of the key principles and thoughts that were placed as priority conceptions into the construction of this conceptual framework.

The statement by Shadish *et al.* (1991) generally encouraged this proposed framework. They claimed that "We can evaluate anything- including evaluation itself" (Shadish *et al.*, 1991:p19), therefore indicating that the benchmarking exercise has a prospect for assessing regional park programmes. In addition to that, the research also evokes the idea set in Chapter One (Section 1.2) which informed that evaluation is an essential approach in examining programme performance (Pollitt, 2003; Hall and Hall, 2004; Stockmann, 2011b).

At this point too, the thesis recollects the research context elaborated in the first chapter which justified the rationalisation of this topic. It was the call for a robust evaluation approach in measuring regeneration initiatives that had activated this inquiry (see Evans, 2005 in Chapter One, Section 1.2). It was also the dearth of literature in the practice of benchmarking for regional park programmes that had strengthened the motivation to proceed with this topic. Also, another important drive was the absence of literature and the study on Realistic Evaluation for regional park programme assessment. In relation to this, it is also crucial to consider the perception of Policy Action Team 16 (2000:p21) which argued that there is "no reliable system for learning what works (and what doesn't) and ensuing this knowledge inform the development of future programmes".

In the case where 'evaluation' was thought to be a separate practice from 'basic research', this thesis and its conceptual framework reflects both characteristics. This research therefore operates with the purpose of carrying out fundamental research but also engages with some of the evaluation's elements. This mixture of ingredients forms this thesis as an *evaluation research*; an embodiment of the two. Table 5.2 below had marked down the differentiation between an evaluation and research outlined by Shaw (1999:p8). The descriptions (components) shaded show the work in this research therefore validates this work as part of an *evaluation research*. From Table 5.2, it is obvious that the act carried out for this research will include some aspects of evaluation practice; the research intends to tackle the practical problems of the case studies; it will make judgments of the programmes' worth/merit; it will also look upon the short-term issues; and it does follow the benchmarking approaches.

Table 5.2: The difference between a research and an evaluation

Evaluation	Research
Addresses practical problems	Addresses theoretical problems
Culminates in action	Culminates in description
Makes judgments of merit/worth	Describes
Addresses short-term issues	Addresses long-term issues
Evaluation methods	Research methods
Is non-disciplinary	Is disciplinary
Includes insider evaluation	Is always conducted by outsiders

Sources: Adapted from Shaw (1999:p8)

Apart from that, this research was also influenced by Spendolini's benchmarking definition (see Chapter Three, Section 3.2.1). Even though there were many definitions provided which reflected the definition provided by the first author of the benchmarking book (Camp, 1989), this thesis nevertheless finds Spendolini's definition as a practical guiding framework to steer the benchmarking procedure for the case studies. It is worth, therefore recalling his definition of benchmarking:

> "*A continuous (1), systematic (2) process (3) for evaluating (4) the products (5), services (5), and work processes (5) of organisations (6) that are recognised (7) as representing best practices (8) for the purpose of organisational improvement (9)*" (Spendolini, 1992:p9).

Through Spendolini's idea, the delineation of the each key element to benchmarking is marked and these separate components establish the operation of conducting the exercise for this research. In this instance, his idea shapes this conceptual framework to a (1) *methodical* (2) *approach* by (3) *assessing* the (4) *delivery* of (5) *programmes* which are (6) *widely recognised* and (7) *and demonstrating good model*, in order to (8) *evoke for future improvement*. To briefly conclude, the conceptual framework adopts his idea.

Further to that, the research addresses the types of benchmarking for the purpose of conducting the assessment. For this matter, the research opted to choose *process benchmarking* for evaluation. This subject of benchmarking (benchmarking of *what*?) is parallel with the research's purpose as it looks into examining the methods and practices of a programme. In relation to this, this research selects the *generic benchmarking* as the comparative measure (benchmarking against *whom?*). This in turn will tease out Andersen and Pettersen's (1996) belief that process benchmarking best suits generic benchmarking (see Chapter Three, Section 3.3.2, Table 3.1).

In this research too, the benchmarking process was built upon the standard procedure outlined by the scholars and practitioners. Figure 5.6 below illustrates the flow of this research process in performing a benchmarking exercise for primary case studies. Figure 5.6 therefore demonstrates strategic steps conducted for a standard benchmarking process. This replication of benchmarking phases were derived and adapted from the various procedures recommended (see Chapter Three, Section 3.4.1, Table 3.2-

Variations on Camp's original idea). In general, the process had not changed but has a slight alteration to it. This was done to arrange the work process systematically. The only difference in this design is that the cyclical process was not drawn into the exercise as this research is only a PhD thesis, therefore the process applied for the procedure ends after the last stage of evaluation (proposal). Needless to say, the research supports the cyclical process as the key principle to an effective exercise.

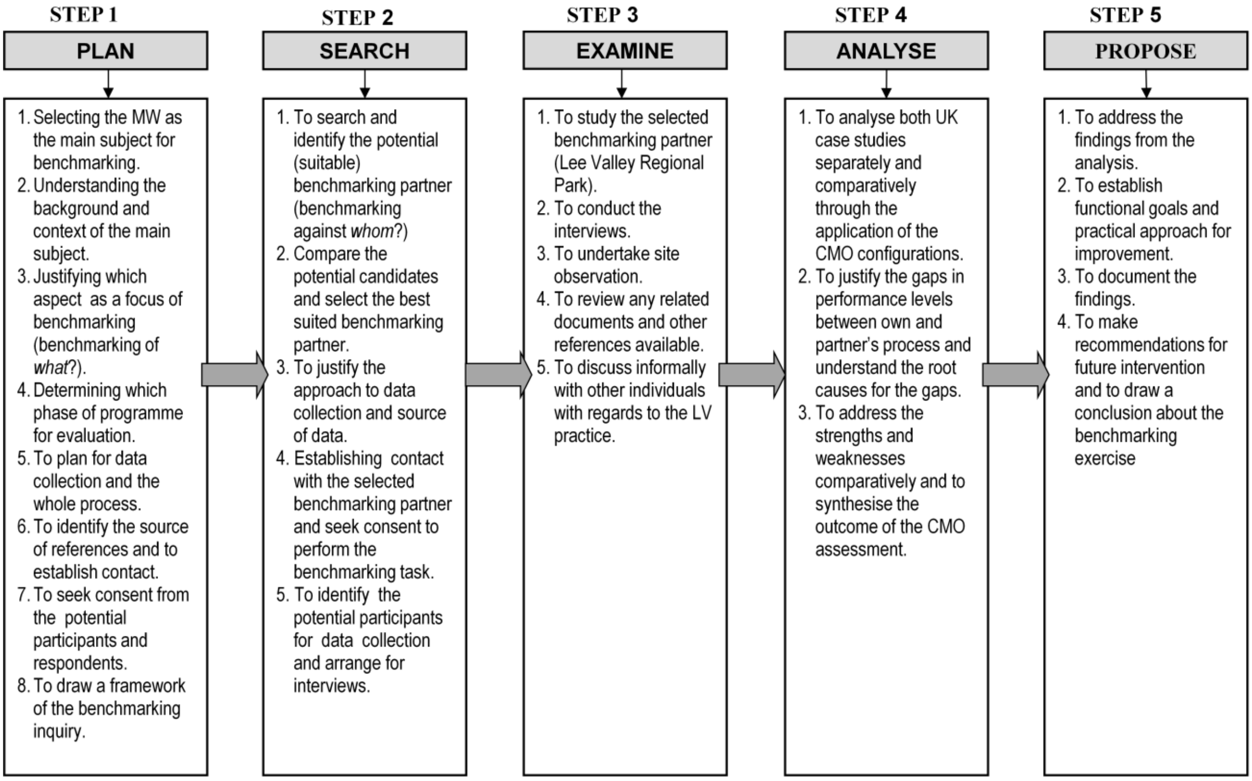

Figure 5.6: The benchmarking procedure for case studies.
Source: Author

Consequently, at this point, the conceptual framework also informs the intended outcome of the whole process. In relation to this, the research adopts the idea by Eaton (see Chapter Three, Section 3.4.1, Table 3.3) which suggests that the appropriate purpose of performing a "generic benchmarking" is to outline recommendations for the delivery process. This notion of belief inevitably relates very much to the cause of the case study examination. In the later work (the empirical work), the research will prove this. The conceptual framework also justifies that this evaluation research indicates a summative evaluation as MW has been completed. For that reason, it evaluates the outcomes of MW in order to assess its performance and success or failure.

Further discussion focuses on the correlation between the benchmarking method and case studies. This research therefore justifies that there are two main phases for this purpose (see Figure 5.7 below). The first level (Stage 1) is designed to examine and compare the performance and practice of both case studies as this is the research's central scheme. The second phase of benchmarking (Stage 2) comes upon gaining the findings from the first level. However, besides conducting the benchmarking examination, the realistic evaluation is scheduled to take place simultaneously. A strategic approach has been adopted here: the first step is to analyse both case studies separately, then comparatively and this is when the CMO configurations are incorporated. By performing the benchmarking and the realistic evaluation concomitantly, the research is expected to produce an overall result of the investigation in terms of regional park programme delivery and the use of the benchmarking method and realistic evaluation as a combined method for assessment.

Accordingly, the conceptual framework (Figure 5.7) demonstrates the use of the CMO configurations in assessing regional park programmes. This is merely to check and counteract the issue addressed by Ho (1999) which suggested that the CMO framework is appropriate for a local scale programme but debateable for a bigger scale programme like regional and national programmes. Similarly, this research goes beyond the original idea put forward by Pawson and Tilley (1997) who had applied the method for local initiatives. Additionally, results from case study investigations formulate recommendations for urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional park programmes. And the combination of both methods will provide recommendations in terms of regional park evaluation method.

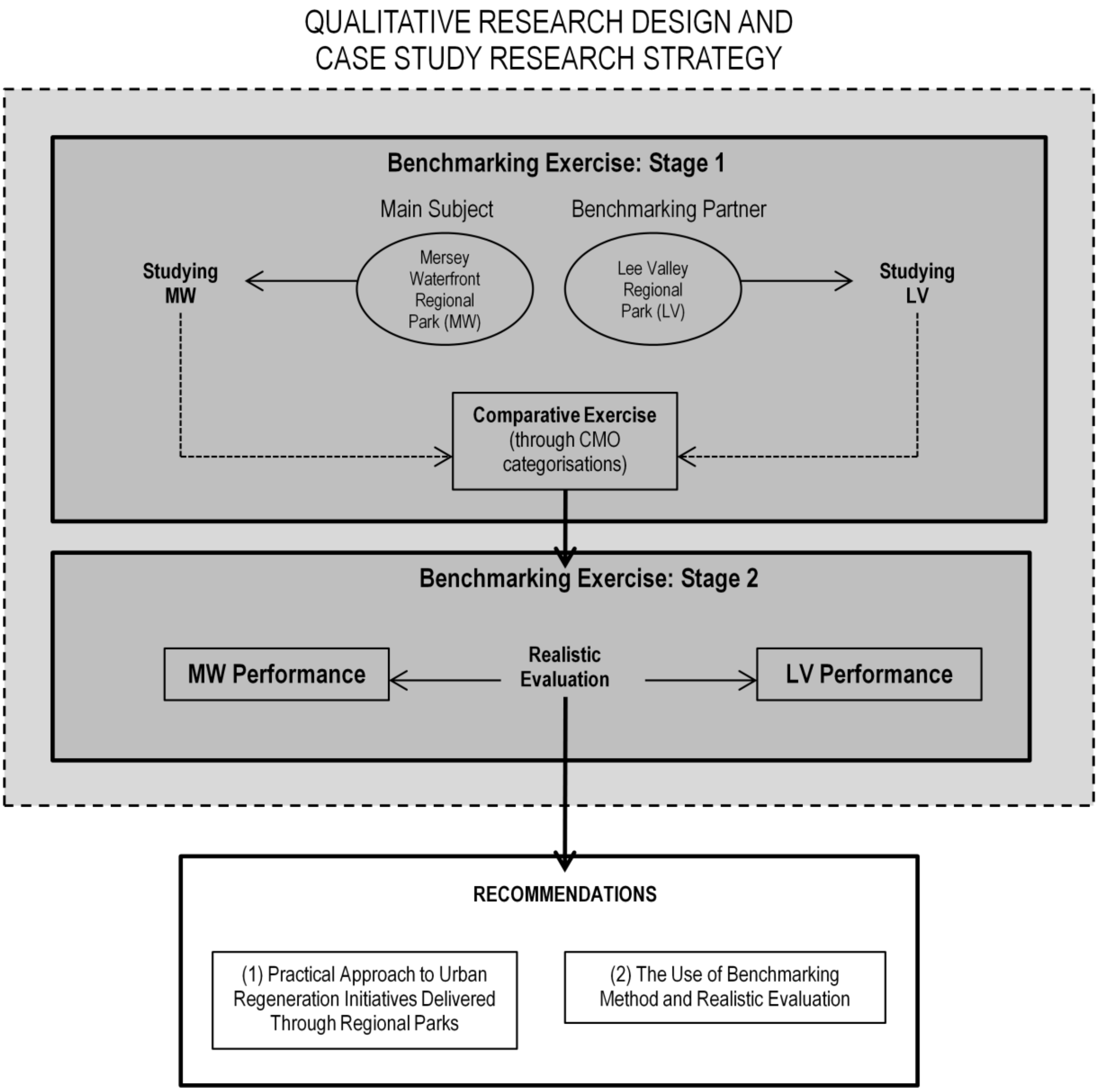

Figure 5.7: Conceptual Framework
Source: Author

A hypothetical example of this procedure is provided in Figure 5.8 below. Overall, the conceptual framework and the phases of actions throughout the whole research process, depict the work of an inductive direction. The course had begun with empirical data, followed by theoretical ideas, and synthesising the findings and theory, and finally ending with a creation of new ideas.

In a qualitative design research, case study method was chosen as a research strategy. The research intends to benchmark the performance of programmes. Using the conceptual framework outlined in Figure 5.7 above, two UK case studies were selected, for examples, National Park A and National Park B. Both parks are equivalent in terms of national scale. Park A is the main subject, while Park B becomes the comparative measure (or benchmarking partner). Additionally, Park B must be of an exemplar or demonstrates best practice in terms of programme delivery, in order to ensure that Park A can gain lessons from its practice. The evaluation process is divided into two parts; Stage 1 is designed to benchmark case studies in terms of its performance and practice, while Stage 2 is designed to benchmark both case studies using the realistic evaluation

In Stage 1: The first process is to study both parks separately and classify the information of both case studies according to the CMO configurations, so as to enable the efficiency of realistic evaluation to be performed during the assessment. The second step is to benchmark the performance of Park A against Park B. The outcome of this process is then used in Stage 2.

In Stage 2: Results from the benchmarking exercise in Stage 1 are then re-analysed using the CMO configurations (Realistic Evaluation). Findings from Stage 1 are compared between Park A and Park B.

Recommendations for this evaluation process are separated into two; (1) Specific recommendations in terms of programme delivery for urban regeneration initiatives delivered through national parks; and (2) Recommendations on the application of benchmarking and realistic evaluation as a combined tool in assessing the performance of national parks.

Figure 5.8: A hypothetical example of the application of conceptual framework
Source: Author

5.9 Data Analysis

In this research, data analysis is categorised into separate techniques; secondary data analysis, multiple-case study analysis and realistic evaluation analysis.

5.9.1 Secondary Data Analysis

The information gathered from the secondary data collection will be the subject of *document analysis.* Therefore, information from the secondary sources will be conceptualised, coded and categorised accordingly. Following Pole & Lampard (2002:p15), the literature will be assessed by going through a process of indexing and coding, and from there be categorised under separate grouping; the *essential literature* which is likely to be the central point of the research; the *important literature* which includes the references that might not be the central theme of study; the *relevant literature* that is expected to be utilised during the process of study; the *supporting literature* which may be related to the study; and the *irrelevant literature* which may not be relevant to the research. In this approach, the document analysis approach is not only conducted for the literature review, but also throughout the empirical work.

5.9.2 The Multiple-Case Study Analysis

In the case of multiple-case study, since the study involves in-depth interviews, therefore it is proposed that the analysis of data will use the technique of transcribing the interviews (see McQueen and Knussen (2002). Since there were surveys involving questionnaires, therefore, the use of computer software to analyse the data is seen as an important tool. In general, the information is coded, and categorised according to topics, then analysed.

For comparative examination, this research applies the *comparative method* as a methodology of comparative analysis. Adhering to Warwick and Osherson (1973:p51) "the *comparative method* is a substitute for experimentation, and is employed in the analysis of historical data, the number of cases of which is too small to permit statistical manipulation". This method is most often required in the comparative analysis of national units, which are few, but it may also be used in comparing regions, cities, communities, and other sub-national units. Because of the restricted number of cases, the investigator relies on systematic comparative illustration.

In response to that, the study therefore formulated rationalisations by having logical control of parameters and operative variables. The approach was to analyse the data through positive and negative, whereby *positive* comparative method will be in the form of "identifying the similarities in independent variables associated with a common outcome, while negative comparative method will include the identification of variables associated with divergent outcomes" (Warwick & Osherson, 1973: 52).

In relation to data analysis for the interviews, the research adopts the suggestion provided by Cresswell (2009:p185) which the researcher finds practical and pragmatic (see Figure 5.9 below). From the illustration (Figure 5.9), it is observed that the primary data are organised accordingly and placed under the coding system. The structure suggested that any forms of primary data including transcripts, or notes and images can be analysed through the same process. The procedures are carried out in sequence which starts by arranging the raw data and reviewing all the information acquired. The following task is to classify the data into a coding system, either by separate topics or subjects. From there, the groups are combined and assessed according to their correlation, and finally, to translate the results by means of specific themes or descriptions. However, during the process, Creswell also advocated the process of confirming the precision of the information. This was highlighted in the course of assembling the raw data and at the end of the analysing upon obtaining the findings. It was then decided that this systematic approach be adopted for the research.

Since the research also involved interviews, the research utilised the NVivo Software to manage and analyse the data. The function of this software enables the qualitative data to be categorised into separate themes and patterns. This is also known as coding as it abbreviates the immensity of data into manageable sets of data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). To Burns (2000:p432), "the first stage in analysing the interview data is coding". An advantage of coding is that it reduces the data into more focused data in accordance with the research purpose. Coffey and Atkinson (1996:p35) claim this as "data-reduction task" and elaborated that "Segmenting and coding the data in that particular way would at least allow us to characterise what each stretch of the interview was about in terms of general thematic content, in this instance relating directly to the topics of the interview elicitations and responses". Interestingly, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argued and stresses the technique of coding for social science field is as important as other disciplines even when many thought that that coding is meant for quantitative data:

> *"It would be as much a mistake to think that coding is an activity that is universally understood across the qualitative (or indeed quantitative) research spectrum. Rather, the term coding encompasses a variety of approaches to and ways of organizing qualitative data"* (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:p26-27).

Additionally, Coffey and Atkinson (1996:p29) added:

> *"Coding qualitative data differs from quantitative analysis, for we are not merely counting. Rather, we are attacking codes as a way of identifying and reordering data, allowing the data to be thought about in new and different ways. Coding is the mechanics of a more subtle process of having ideas and using concepts about the data".*

It is therefore determined that, the interviews' transcriptions were classified into different themes and common ideas, as well as similarities and differences. This researcher felt that the coding tool provided by NVivo is very useful and the approach itself is essential as the process facilitates the research with main ideas and their interpretation, as well as aiding the concluding part.

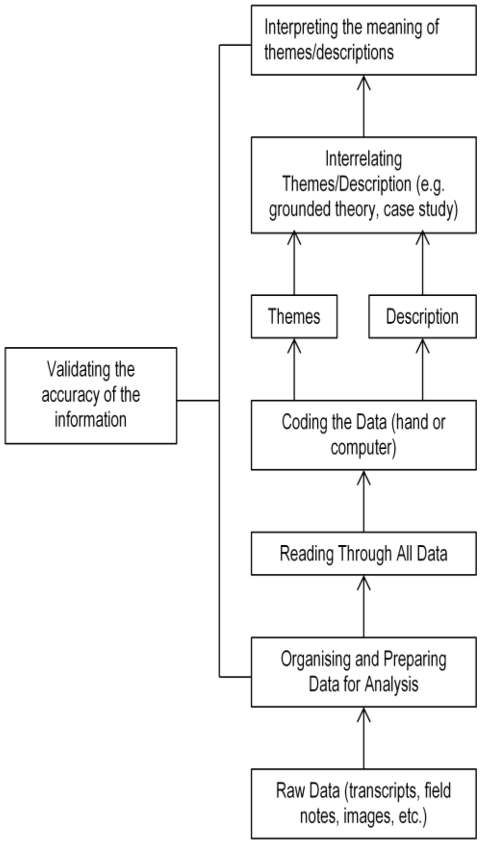

Figure 5.9: Data Analysis in Qualitative Research
Source: Extracted from Creswell (2009:p185)

5.9.3 The Realistic Evaluation Analysis

As elaborated in Chapter Four, the realistic evaluation uses the CMO configurations to assess a programme. This framework justifies the context, mechanisms and outcomes of a programme through its exploration of relationships and causal effects. The way it is analysed is through descriptive and explanatory technique. The ‘CMO configurations’ in this sense is already a tool of analysis.

5.10 Ethical Obligations

There are many ethical dilemmas to be considered in this research. Needless to say, this research engages with many individuals and organisations. It also exploits the materials and references accessed from the related institutions. According to Neuman (2007), it is quite difficult when dealing with ethical issues in research as they tend to occur when trying to conduct a research in a correct manner. For the purpose of moral and ethical obligation, therefore, this research therefore confronts its ethical issues by carefully approaching each task with cautious and considerate arrangement.

In relation to this, the research took on board Neuman's (2007) stance which mentioned that any person that needs to be included into the research should be notified and asked for their approval. Neuman (2007:p53-54) accentuates, "Never force anyone to participate in research, and do not lie to anyone unless it is necessary and the only way to accomplish a legitimate research purpose". He then added, "participation *must* be voluntary at all times. Permission alone is not enough; people need to know what they are being asked to participate in so that they can make an informed decision" (Neuman, 2007:p54). Based on this belief and the obligations towards people's privacy and honour, as well as the organisation's legitimacy, the research drew on the approach of informed consent, the concept of confidentiality, legality and anonymity unless were allowed by the participants.

As mentioned earlier, respondent and participants were contacted beforehand. Approvals to carry out the research were sought. Individuals and institutions were notified and their consent sought. The contacted individuals were given a brief introduction to the research and interview questions, and questionnaires were provided in advance, before the actual process was conducted. The potential respondents and participants were also assured that their information would be for the research purpose only. Only those who were willing to participate were approached whereas those who refused access were excluded from the empirical work. As a result of this, the researcher had to maintain her right of entry to those who have agreed to cooperate, which meant that the researcher had to cope with what was available, especially with the LV which turned out differently as anticipated.

It was also realised that some answers and feedback from the interviewees and respondents were controversial. In order to protect the privacy of those individuals, the researcher therefore did not disclosed the participant's identity. However their post or position within the organisations was mentioned as there were participants that held the same position or job title, for example the Board Member of an organisation. This was considered important as their response represented ideas from various posts within the organisation. This links to Neuman's (2007:p58) suggestion that mentioned "A researcher can provide anonymity without confidentiality, or vice versa, although they usually go together. Anonymity without confidentiality occurs if all details about a specific individual are made public, but the individual's name is withheld". Apart from that, some personal comments were not brought into the research as requested by the participants. It was experienced that some participants had voluntarily expressed their personal perceptions but did not want the response to be shared. The researcher respects this request.

5.11 Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the research methodology. It has justified its qualitative design and its strategies through the case study method, the comparative exercise (benchmarking examination), the realistic evaluation (using the Context-Mechanism-Outcome configurations), and document analysis. It has also clarified the research process which portrays some elements of an evaluation work which entitles it to become part of an evaluation research exercise. In relation to the research methods, this chapter elaborated on the various approaches to carry out the investigation which involves using secondary data, performing formal and informal individual/group discussions, conducting pilot and primary interviews, conducting internet-based surveys, as well as site observations.

Whilst cases were selected in accordance with the criteria of case study selection, the study must also consider the principles and foundation of benchmarking which require the subject of benchmarking to be competence for a comparative task; the comparator must be an exemplar. By having more than one case study, the research enables the procedure of benchmarking to be performed. For this reason, UK regional park programmes were chosen for case studies. These cases were selected due to the fact that they were designed and established with the aim of transforming the area through regeneration projects.

The research methodology also provided the conceptual framework. The framework implies the process of evaluation which is divided into two separate process of benchmarking: the first being the central focus of the evaluation process which deals with benchmarking the performance of both case studies; and the second phase conducts the realistic evaluation for case studies. Results from both phases are expected to formulate a practical approach for the benefit of regional parks in the UK in general and to suggest the practicality of both evaluation methods.

The chapter also discussed the issue of ethical considerations for the research. In relation to this, the research carefully addressed this concern and paid attention to the subject matter of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. In a nutshell, Chapter Five is the basis of the whole research process.

CHAPTER SIX

BENCHMARKING MERSEY WATERFRONT REGIONAL PARK (MW) AGAINST LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK (LV)

6.1 Introduction

> "*From the perspective of regional policy-making, benchmarking forms part of processes concerned with learning by comparing, whereby regions seek to measure the performance, activities and policies of their competitors*" (Huggins, 2010:p641, citing Rose 1993 and Malecki, 2007).

Chapter Five provided a comprehensive treatment of the research design and approaches. The discussion mainly focused on the research strategy and the process of commissioning the case study evaluations. In order to facilitate the requirements of this research, the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MW) was identified as the main subject while the Lee Valley Regional Park (LV) was chosen as a comparator. The same chapter also justified the approach and process of conducting the assessments for both case studies by means of benchmarking and realistic evaluation through its conceptual framework. Following Chapter Five, this chapter now delivers the outcome of the benchmarking task for both UK case studies.

The focus of this chapter is therefore, to present the results of the "Stage One Benchmarking Exercise"[11] and to uncover the MW's experience and compare its delivery against the LV. Here, the use of benchmarking is tested for regional park programmes as well as evaluating the performance of MW. The results from this benchmarking exercise should demonstrate evidence of MW's attainment, whether a successful programme or a failure relative to LV. This chapter is therefore concerned with the fourth research objective[12]. However, this chapter will only address the findings from the benchmarking task for case studies. Results from the realistic evaluation will only be displayed in the next chapter (Chapter Seven). For now, the chapter will only discuss the variations and similarities of the two programmes and what makes MW different from, or similar to, the LV.

[11] See 'Contextual Framework' in Chapter Five, Section 5.8, Figure 5.7

[12] The fourth objective intends "to apply the benchmarking procedure and examine comparatively the delivery of regional park programmes in the UK. In conjunction with this, to consider the applicability of employing the Realistic Evaluation for programme evaluation, i.e., the Context-Mechanism-Outcome, when analysing the regional park programme".

6.2 The Approach to Benchmarking

It was made clear in the Conceptual Framework that the fourth step to a benchmarking exercise is to analyse the comparison between the *main subject* against the *benchmarking partner*. At this point the thesis revisits the first three steps to benchmarking for this research, i.e. (1) Planning for the benchmarking mission (i.e. choosing the MW as the subject matter); (2) Searching for the suitable benchmarking partner (in order to compare MW); and (3) Examining the selected benchmarking partner (to examine the features of the benchmarking partner in order to justify its credibility as a comparator).

Besides testing the use of benchmarking method in evaluation, the purpose of this investigation is to examine the effectiveness and outcomes programmes. This was considered by Carmona and Sieh (2004) as part of performance measurement attributes. In this respect, this research is now moving on to the next level; presenting the outcomes of the fourth step of the benchmarking process, therefore exposing the results from the analysis of the comparative assessment. The comparative task was carried out through detailed analysis bringing together information from the interviewees, participants and related documents. To bring about the *Stage One Benchmarking Exercise*, each case study was examined individually beforehand, in order to understand each programme on its own merits. The results were then re-analysed again but this time through a comparative exercise. This is where benchmarking takes place. In doing this, the investigation was conducted through a specific categorisation; (1) Benchmarking the Background of programme; (2) Benchmarking the Delivery of programme; and (3) Benchmarking the Outcomes of programme. This routine simultaneously draws a parallel notion of the Realistic Evaluation which classifies and correlates data into three entities: the Context, Mechanism and Outcome of a programme. However, to avoid confusion, the thesis (in this Chapter particularly) will only map out the results of the comparisons between the MW and the LV in relation to programme performance. The *Context-Mechanism-Outcome* (CMO) configurations analysis will be deferred until Chapter Seven.

6.2.1 The Attributes for Comparison

In this benchmarking exercise, the attributes for analysis were not just identified upon performing the analysis but were detected earlier during the literature review and pilot interviews, and consequently were tailored to suit the primary data collection, especially when conducting the interviews. These attributes were justified for the purpose of studying the delivery of MW and LV, and their realisation and performance through main themes. Beside the key ideas or themes for investigation, the assessment was also intensified through more detailed subjects under the main themes. In this respect, each main subject was divided into several sub-themes and each case study was observed in relation to the subjects accordingly. A more detailed dissection for each domain topic is provided as an appendix (see Appendix

10). The case studies were therefore scrutinised through various sub-topics of investigation, which were subsets from the main attributes listed above. Other than those features, this chapter had also delved further into appraising, amongst others, the delivery issues, the key success factors and the strengths and weaknesses of both programmes. This approach therefore enabled the research to compare the two cases studies across a wide front. The subsequent discussion therefore conveys the results of the benchmarking task illuminating the comparisons between the MW and the LV. These results will therefore be presented as separate key topics accordingly as highlighted in Figure 6.1 below:

DIVISIONS OF BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS:

1. **Benchmarking the background of MW and LV (*Context*);**
2. **Benchmarking the delivery of programme (*Mechanism*);**
3. **Benchmarking the outcomes of programme (*Outcome*);**
4. **Benchmarking the knowledge about benchmarking method;**
5. **Benchmarking the strengths and weaknesses of both regional parks; and**
6. **Comparing expectations and suggestions.**

Figure 6.1: Divisions of benchmarking analysis.
Source: Author

6.3 Benchmarking the Background of MW and LV

> *"In the UK, central government advice has consistently emphasised the need to evaluate development proposals by reference to their surroundings [i.e., Contextual Analysis]"* (Carmona and Sieh, 2004:p329)

Benchmarking the background for both case studies focuses on the comparative features of the milieu of both programmes. This subject matter ('context') was placed as the first topic of exploration as it is important to understand the setting of each regional park. The comparative measures included the origin and history of their establishment, the character of each regional park, the nature of their development, their aims and objectives, the partners engaged, and their organisation and management. In the course of examination, some additional topics for investigation were also addressed for LV. This is because there appeared to be some elements encompassed by LV but not for MW. The comparison should therefore offer a complete background of the MW and LV's setting, together with an analysis of the contextual structure. In relation to this, this section will present the analysis of the following topics:

(1) Benchmarking the setting of the programme;
   - (a) Comparing the establishment of each regional park;
   - (b) Comparing regional park area and boundary

(c) Comparing the nature of development; and

(d) Comparing programme duration.

(2) Benchmarking the aims and objectives;

(3) Benchmarking the partners and stakeholders; and

(4) Benchmarking the organisation and management.

6.3.1 Benchmarking the Setting of Programme

The research discovered that both case studies have an interesting background to them. Despite meeting the requirement for case study selection, and fulfilling the prerequisite of the benchmarking procedure, the investigation had discovered the various differences between the two, which confirmed the LV as the 'right' benchmarking partner (further discussion enlightens this statement). And because of this, this researcher sees this as a practical benchmarking exercise. The tendency to generate debate over the choice of benchmarking partner is far from logical, as the research had already justified the rationale in the Chapter Five. Additionally, regardless of the differences, both case studies also have similarities in character (see further analysis).

a. Comparing the Establishment of Each Regional Park

First and foremost, as affirmed before, both programmes are identified as regional park programmes. And both programmes were established with regeneration as their primary purpose. At this point, the analysis would also reveal the correlation with the previous discussion[13] covering the initial purpose of establishment when first being set-up as a regional park. The following discussion confirms that both programmes were established under the same vision; to regenerate the area and become a regional park for the region.

[13] See Chapter 5, Section 5.3 which discusses the criteria for case study selection.

The MW was a famous port in Northwest England due to its strategic location at the River Mersey. It has been an industrial area since the 19th century. In the past, the River Mersey and Port of Liverpool served as an important way or place for industrial transportation and commercial trade. Sadly, with the growth of the city and its population, as well as the commercial expansion, inevitably the "environmental assets were neglected and allowed to deteriorate" (Abdullah and Batey, 2011:p5). It was reported that, the "River Mersey had experienced environmental issues especially pollution of water due to its industrial past" (University of Liverpool, 2003:p1). For this reason, the Mersey Basin Campaign (MBC) laid the foundation and initiated the clean-up in 1985 and upgraded the water quality of the rivers within the region thus resulting in good water quality as a precondition to the regeneration initiative. The goal was to further continue the effort till 2010 (University of Liverpool, 2003). This effective initiative had therefore provided a good basis for the creation of a regional park.

In relation to the decision to establish a regional park in the Northwest, the idea was mentioned as part of an economic strategy for the purpose of accelerating the region's economic growth (The Mersey Partnership, 2002). The plan for a regional park in the Northwest was therefore initiated in 1999 by the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) (The Mersey Partnership, 2002). Additionally, in 2000, a report produced by the Countryside Exchange Programme[14] also suggested the need to create a regional park "to strengthen the character of areas around the Estuary and to promote the Mersey as the thread uniting everything and everybody" (Davis *et al*., 2000:p4-5). It was anticipated that the formation of a regional park could "act as a tool for natural regeneration and creative conservation, provide a sustainable re-use for derelict and contaminated land; help refocus demand for recreational facilities; improve the quality of urban life and image of the North West; and complement and support existing initiatives such as Community Forests" (North West Regional Assembly, 2004:p1). The idea for MW was then addressed in an Action Plan[15] for the Merseyside City Region 2002-2005, known as the "*Mersey Waterfront: Commencement Business Plan April 2002*" (The Mersey Partnership, 2002) (see Figure 6.2 below). The main plan was therefore to stimulate the economy through *urban regeneration and redevelopment* of the waterfront. MW had therefore come into existence in 2002. The MW is notable as the first regional park to successively materialise in the Northwest.

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[14] The Countryside Exchange Programme was a team consisting of four members from the North American and four members from the UK countryside management. The programme was established to study the future use of the Mersey Estuary, including its recreational, amenity, cultural and wildlife resources.

[15] The Action Plan was compiled by The Mersey Partnership (TMP) which helped to report to NWDA Corporate Plan (or Action Plan) for 2002-2005. The Mersey Partnership (TMP) was the host for the administration and management of the MW. During the initial work of preparing the Action Plan, TMP was assisted by Amion Consulting and Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (Wirral MBC). From there, a wide range of partners were consulted. The groundwork for the Commencement Programme was then assisted by several working groups; the Estuary Development and Management (EDM), the Mersey Maritime, the Tourism, Sport and Leisure, and Major Flagships. These working groups were consequently established as the four major themes for the MW. The idea was "to facilitate a step change in the sub-region's economic, social and environmental performance" (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p18). The importance of MW regeneration was also addressed in the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park Strategic Framework: Final Draft 2007 (MW Strategic Framework) (see Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007), which stresses regeneration as part of the MW function.

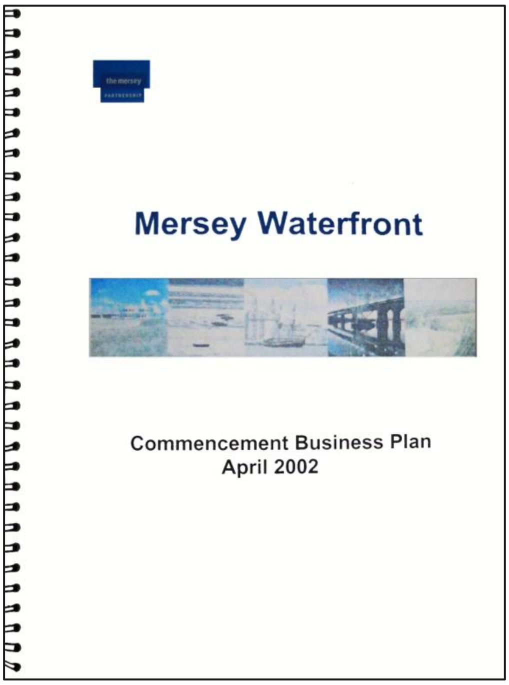


Figure 6.2: The 2002 Action Plan for MW (left)
Source: The Mersey Partnership (2002)

The LV on the other hand was the "first regional park in the UK" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969:p14). Like the MW, the LV was also founded on regeneration grounds. During the 19th century, the area was one of the important and "heavily used waterways in England" (Travis and Towner, 1985:p23), since the Lea River[16] running along the LV was an important way to transport industrial goods. In the early of the 20th century, the Lee Valley became increasingly abandoned and soon became an eye-sore to the London landscape (Travis and Towner, 1985). This was due to the declining industry and extensive gravel-winning operations. The idea of rescuing the Lee Valley was first suggested in 1944 by Sir Patrick Abercrombie in the Greater London Plan with the aim of promoting improved future city of London and was published in 1945 (Travis and Towner, 1985).

Apparently, there appeared to be plenty of discussion during the first phase around 1944-1945 as it was realised that the suburbs had expanded rapidly since the 1930s, and it was also obvious that the areas around Enfield and Chingford were increasingly being developed with semi-detached houses (Elks, 2008). Consequently, a taskforce was therefore formed and chaired by Sir Patrick Abercrombie which then had shaped the Greater London Plan (Elks, 2008). As a result, a Green Belt in the area was proposed, with the hope of limiting the growth as well as maintaining the link between the local people and the area outside of London.

[16] "There are two ways of spelling the name of the River – Lea or Lee. The Authority has adopted the latter" (Civic Trust, 1964:p3).

Through the Greater London Plan, the focus included the clearing of slum areas, promoting the development of new towns, communications and open space (Elks, 2008). The plan placed greater attention towards the importance of the Green Belt[17] and the need for effective planning powers to protect the growth of suburbs. The principal aim was mentioned by Abercrombie as being to promote linkages between the countryside of Essex and Hertfordshire to the East End slum area. It was believed that the LV proposal was likely to enhance and regenerate the area and become a "pioneer" in such regional park planning (Civic Trust, 1964:p16). As much as Abercrombie and the others wanted this to happen, the LV suggestion however remained latent in the 1950s. Also, inevitably, during this process, the area had been intruded upon by other people especially for industrial activities.

Later on, in the early 1960s, identified by Elks (2008) as the second phase of the LV development, it appeared that Alderman Lou Sherman, the mayor of Hackney during that time made an attempt to present the Greater London Plan's proposals to the politicians. In 1961, Sherman, with support from a group of representatives from other local authorities, took up the challenge to regenerate the Lee Valley. A boat trip was made along the River Lee in early August 1961 by the civic representatives to observe the situation and condition, and it was then recognised that the river was in bad shape and declining. As a result of this effort, a letter was written by the Town Clerk L.G.Huddy in November 1961 expressing the "possibility of a scheme of improvement for the Hackney Mashes and the preparation of a long term scheme for the whole of the area which remains available for use as open space" (Elks, 2008:p2). Soon after, in April 1963, the Civic Trust (which was comprised of representatives from the Middlesex, Essex, Enfield and Edmonton) was invited to make an appraisal of the Lee Valley's resources report showed the potential of the area for regeneration. They then met to consider a proposal of a 12 mile scheme from Hackney to Waltham Abbey.

Following this, the Civic Trust carried out an appraisal of the Lee Valley in terms of its recreational and leisure opportunities as well as the potential of its surrounding area. Following this, a report called the "*A Lea Valley Regional Park: An Essay in the Use of Neglected Land for Recreation and Leisure*" was produced in July 1964 (see Civic Trust, 1964 and Figure 6.3). The Civic Trust's proposals were mainly concentrated on promoting the recreational and leisure facilities which included sports, playing areas and gardens. Even though the proposals were considered as broad, the report itself contained maps, images of the current scenario of the Lee Valley and some proposed perspective views for the Park (see Figure 6.4 and Figure 6.5 below which show examples of the Civic Trust report's contents).

[17] The Civic Trust, in their 1964 report quotes Abercrombie's regeneration idea mentioning "The Green Belt and surrounding countryside need bringing more into the centre through Green wedges formed by the existing undeveloped and public land. The Lea Valley gives an opportunity for a great piece of constructive, preservative and regenerative planning" (Civic Trust, 1964:p13).

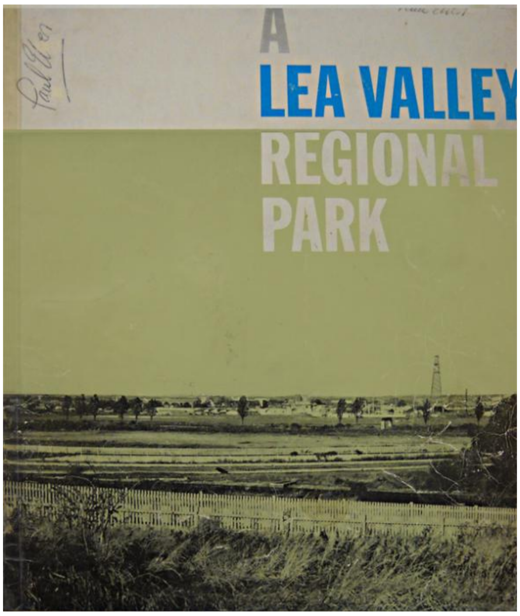


Figure 6.3: The Civic Trust Report of 1964 (left)
Source: Civic Trust (1964)

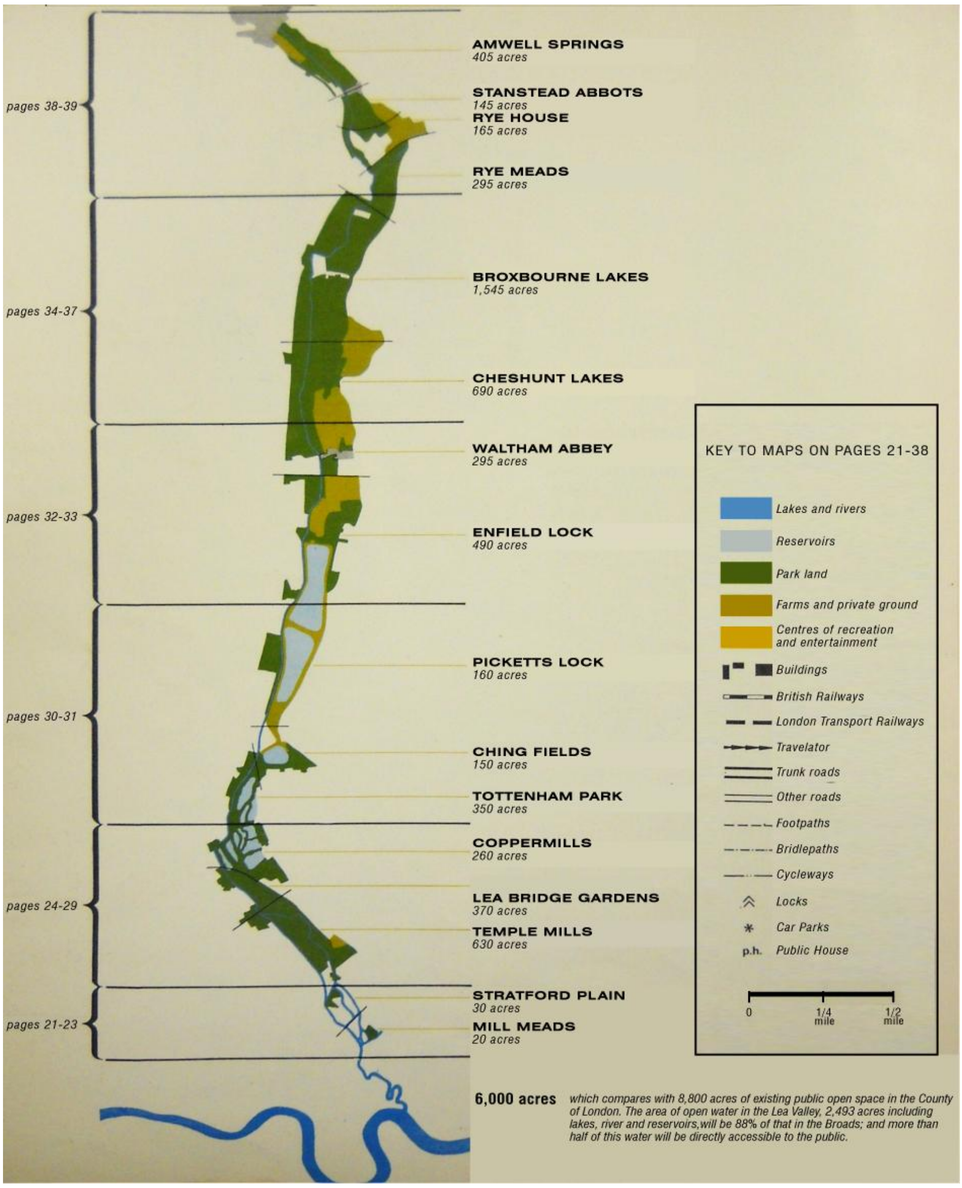
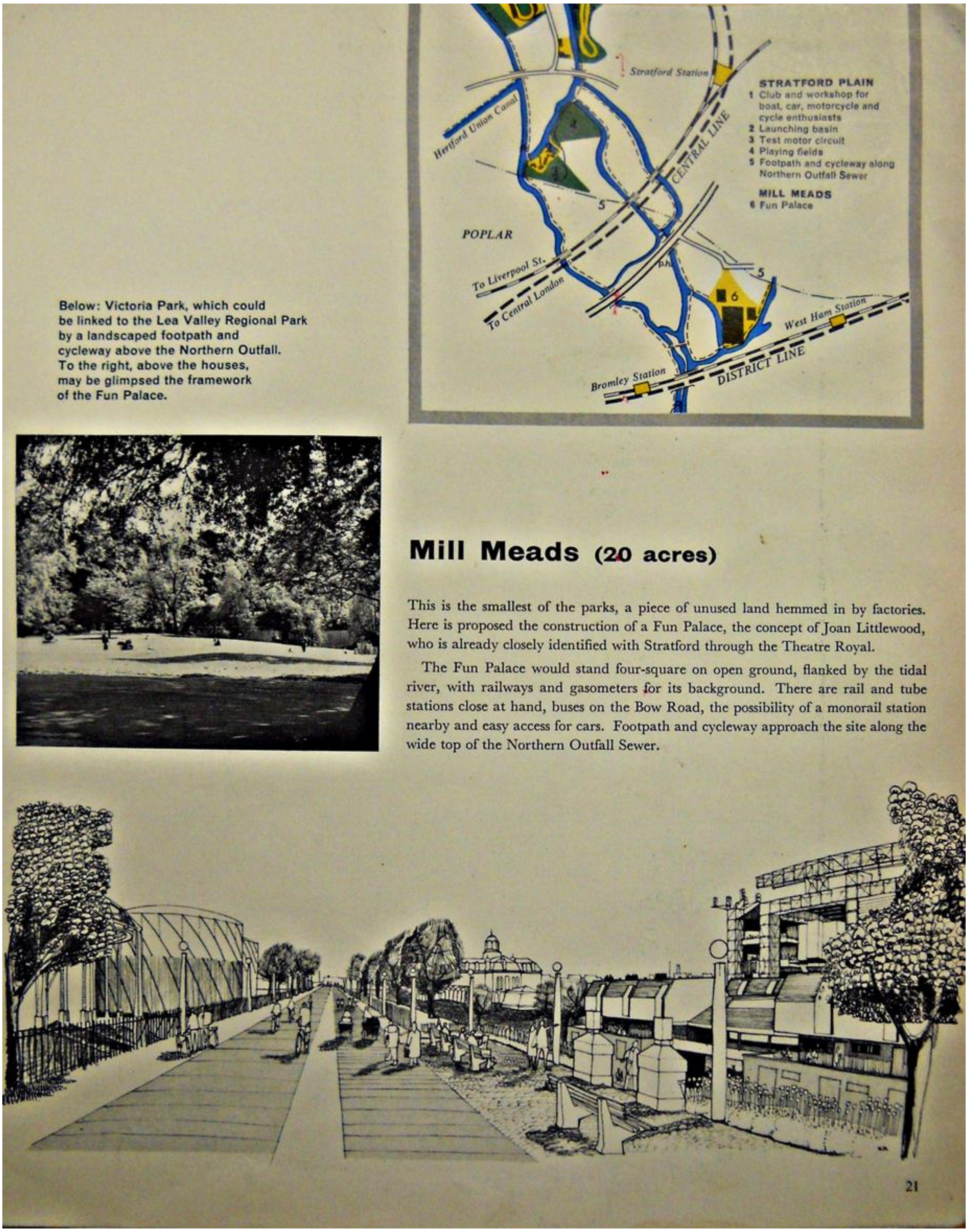


Figure 6.4: An example of a map provided in the Civic Trust report (right)
Source: Civic Trust (1964:p20)



Below: Victoria Park, which could be linked to the Lea Valley Regional Park by a landscaped footpath and cycleway above the Northern Outfall. To the right, above the houses, may be glimpsed the framework of the Fun Palace.

Mill Meads (20 acres)

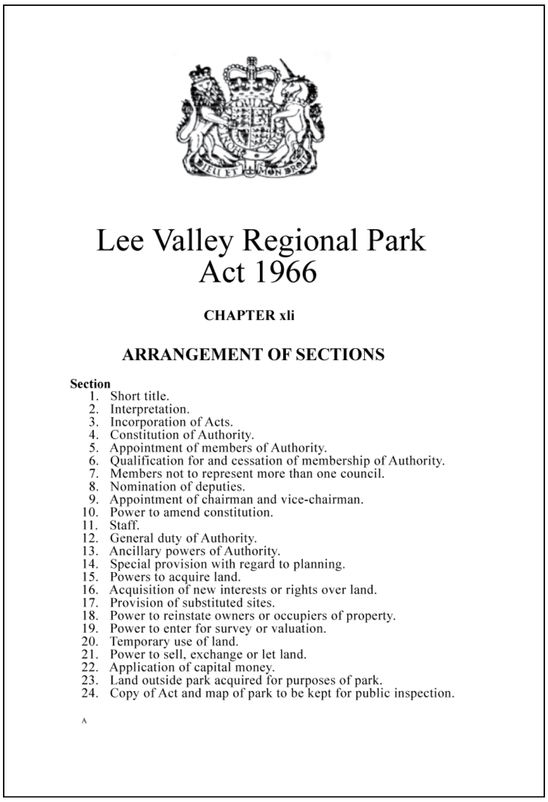
This is the smallest of the parks, a piece of unused land hemmed in by factories. Here is proposed the construction of a Fun Palace, the concept of Joan Littlewood, who is already closely identified with Stratford through the Theatre Royal.

The Fun Palace would stand four-square on open ground, flanked by the tidal river, with railways and gasometers for its background. There are rail and tube stations close at hand, buses on the Bow Road, the possibility of a monorail station nearby and easy access for cars. Footpath and cycleway approach the site along the wide top of the Northern Outfall Sewer.

21

Figure 6.5: An example of a proposal in the Civic Trust report which contained a map of an area, a picture of the current scenario and the proposed future view (above).
Source: Civic Trust (1964:p21)

It was also suggested in the report that a group effort would be necessary in order to bring forward the plan. In spite of this, Lou Sherman accepted the proposals and it was from there that the Civic Trust proposed a Bill to the Parliament for the purpose of establishing the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011c). The *Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966*[18] (LV Park Act 1966) and the LVRPA was therefore created in 1966 (see Figure 6.6 which shows the image of the Act). The LVRPA became the first statutory body[19] to be established for a regional park. The LV Park Act 1966 requires the LVRPA to prepare a plan showing proposals for the future use and development which requires being reviewed from time to time, thus delivering regeneration schemes[20]. From 1966 until now, LV has been operating for 46 years, and the programme is still continuing. And for that reason, the LV is as the longest practicing regional park programme in the UK.



Lee Valley Regional Park
Act 1966

CHAPTER xli

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Section
1. Short title.
2. Interpretation.
3. Incorporation of Acts.
4. Constitution of Authority.
5. Appointment of members of Authority.
6. Qualification for and cessation of membership of Authority.
7. Members not to represent more than one council.
8. Nomination of deputies.
9. Appointment of chairman and vice-chairman.
10. Power to amend constitution.
11. Staff.
12. General duty of Authority.
13. Ancillary powers of Authority.
14. Special provision with regard to planning.
15. Powers to acquire land.
16. Acquisition of new interests or rights over land.
17. Provision of substituted sites.
18. Power to reinstate owners or occupiers of property.
19. Power to enter for survey or valuation.
20. Temporary use of land.
21. Power to sell, exchange or let land.
22. Application of capital money.
23. Land outside park acquired for purposes of park.
24. Copy of Act and map of park to be kept for public inspection.

A

Figure 6.6: Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 (left)
Source: Great Britain Law Statutes Etc. (1967)

[18] The Lee Valley Regional Park Act of December 1966, was formally constituted on the 1st January 1967 (three years in after the Civic Trust Report).The purpose of the Act was described as, "An Act to establish the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority for the development, preservation and management for recreation, sport, entertainment and the enjoyment of leisure of an area adjoining the river Lee as a Regional Park; to confer powers upon the said authority and certain other authorities, bodies and persons; to enact provisions in connection with the matters aforesaid; and for other purposes" (Great Britain Law Statutes Etc., 1967:p1).

[19] LVRPA was established as an independent body to develop, preserve and manage the Park for sports, entertainment and the enjoyment of leisure of the area. The Park Authority is therefore responsible of certain duties: Powers and organisation; Physical development; and Finance. However, the Park Authority is not responsible for planning permission or other public services such as housing or education which remain as the districts', boroughs' or county councils' responsibility (Elks, 2008; Travis and Towner, 1985). Consequently, the provision of new housing is still under the responsibility of the public sector. Clear duties for the Park Authority were in terms of authorisation and administration, physical development and financial matters of the Park. Nevertheless, the Park Authority was granted with specific duties which are to: (1) Reclaim, remediate and transform a contaminated and despoiled valley within its boundary; (2) Create leisure and recreation opportunities for the region; (3) Protect and enhance the 10,000 acre 'green lung' of the Park; and (4) Develop sport and recreational facilities of regional standing.

[20] The current Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) Chief Executive explained the formation of the LV in detail, "The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority was set up to clean up the Lee Valley. The Lee Valley like most rivers in the east of an industrialised city, whether you go to Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield, was the river which had to bear the ravages and impacts of the industrial revolution and all the other uses of post industrial revolution. So the Lee Valley that would have been the birth of gunpowder was used in the initial testing. It was the extraction of gravel. It was the electronics industry, post war glass houses in the north of the Lee Valley and so much more. So the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority's job was to clean up and transform these 10,000 acres into a regional park, a Green Land. That was our job".

From the discussion above, in short, we can see that the initial purpose of both regional park programmes was influenced by the state of environment of the area when it was founded. Urban regeneration was therefore the basis of both regional parks' creation. Additionally, a crucial facet was also evident. The creation of the specific LV Park Act 1966[21] and the formation of a Statutory Body for a regional park have a direct impact on the park. And because of this, MW did not have any mandatory compulsion to meet the obligatory requirement of the specific law which requires it to continuously serve as a regional park in the Northwest. Unlike the LV, the MW was a period-planned programme. It had restricted delivery duration and regional park administration. The programme had a start and end date and therefore went on for only eight years because it depended mainly on funding and the temporary organisation to run the programme.

The LV, in contrast, has the responsibility to fulfil the legislation's requirements. The existence of LV Park Act 1966 is influential in ensuring the continuation of practice since its first commencement in 1966. The survival of LV is very much dependent upon the existing legislation and the obligations it has for the Act. This helps to explain why by having a specific authority in charge and a statute for the Park can be a stimulus to a regional park practice. It may occur to the reader that the period of the LV is inconsistent and incongruous to the MW as the MW was delivered within a short term when LV has been serving a much longer period and in fact still continuing. However, it is this experience and practice that we want to explore and the benefits that it has from this continuing effort.

[21] As stipulated by the LV Park Act 1966, the Park Authority has a wide range of powers which include responsibility for setting out the park's development and plan. The LVRPA is therefore commissioned to produce a master plan within two years of its creation, addressing the development proposals for future development which also comprises of local authorities' plans. For that reason, in 1969, two years after the founding of the LVRPA, a master plan containing detail proposals of the park was published (Great Britain Law Statutes Etc., 1967). This time the plan was more specific as compared to the broad proposals prepared by the Civic Trust in 1964. However, the early proposals from the report called "A Lea Valley Regional Park" were also included but this time with details of financial aspects and legal powers. However, it was made clear that the Authority is not a planning authority but may act as a planning advisor. In relation to this, other 'Riparian planning authorities' are strictly obliged to incorporate their proposals if the plan affects their area. The role of the LVRPA was constantly highlighted in its Park Plan and the latest being the Park Development Framework (LV-PDF) published in January 2011 which described, "The Act confers on the Authority the role of a statutory planning consultee. This means that we must be consulted on any planning applications within, or which impact on, the Park", and "We will seek to ensure that all planning approvals relating to land within the Park will lead to a positive contribution to our vision, aims and objectives" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2007:p3).
(Note: In the LV Park Act 1966, "riparian" council means a council specified in Section 4(2) of the Act, which include, County Council of Essex, County Council of Hertfordshire, London Borough Council of Enfield, London Borough Council of Hackney, London Borough Council of Haringey, London Borough Council of Newham, London Borough Council of Tower Hamlets, London Borough Council of Waltham Forests, Borough Council of Broxbourne, District Council of East Hertfordshire and District council of Epping Forest).

b. Comparing Regional Park Area and Boundary

MW and LV are both linear in outward appearance; the MW is linear to the coastline while the LV runs linear with the riverbank. However, the MW did not have exact area coverage. MW area was a vague impression of spatial coverage since the regional park size was not formally outlined and established. The borderline was not identified as the original conceptual idea was to include the entire coastline within those localities. Apparently, in the beginning, MW area was defined as a coastal area which includes local attractions[22]. MW was delineated only to outline the conceptual boundary which is comprised of the coastline and estuaries, which include parts of the local authorities' area of Liverpool, Wirral, Sefton, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester. The MW area also comprised of the Mersey Estuary Zone which addressed the Nature Conservation Sites (Figure 6.7 shows the first documented boundary and area for MW in 2002 which included the Mersey Estuary Zone). In relation to this indefinite calculation of area at the very beginning, the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park Strategic Framework 2007 (MW Strategic Framework) had also proposed MW's boundary by only showing the coastline along its related local authorities' area (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p7). In an ambiguous description, the area was drawn as "The Park zone that has emerged ties closely with the fundamental progenitor of the river and coast whilst reflecting the opportunities that exist along its shore" (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p35) (see Figure 6.8 which demonstrates the proposed boundary and Figure 6.9 which shows the proposed regional park zone for MW illustrated in the MW Strategic Framework).

[22] In the early stage of the MW work, the area for the MW was defined in the Mersey Waterfront Commencement Business Plan 2002 as:
"*Along River Mersey, its estuary and parts of its adjoining smaller estuaries – the Dee and the Ribble. This includes some 70 miles of coastline from Southport to beyond Runcorn and around the whole of the Wirral coastal area and the following elements: (1) Liverpool's waterfront and commercial centre which has been nominated to UNESCO for World Heritage site status; (2) Six championship golf courses including Royal Liverpool and Birkdale; (3) A major resort – Southport – and smaller ones in New Brighton, Hoylake and West Kirby;(4) A major port from and to which a major proportion of the North West region's output is handled; (5) Major tourist venues and attractions in Liverpool and Wirral; (6) A mass of natural resources including beaches, long river views, internationally recognised wildlife resources; and (7) Significant coastal heritage building.*" (The Mersey Partnership, 2002:p4)

Figure 6.7: MW conceptual boundary (Note: The MW area overlaps with the Mersey Estuary Zone-the Nature Conservation Sites)

Source: The Mersey Partnership (2002:p6)

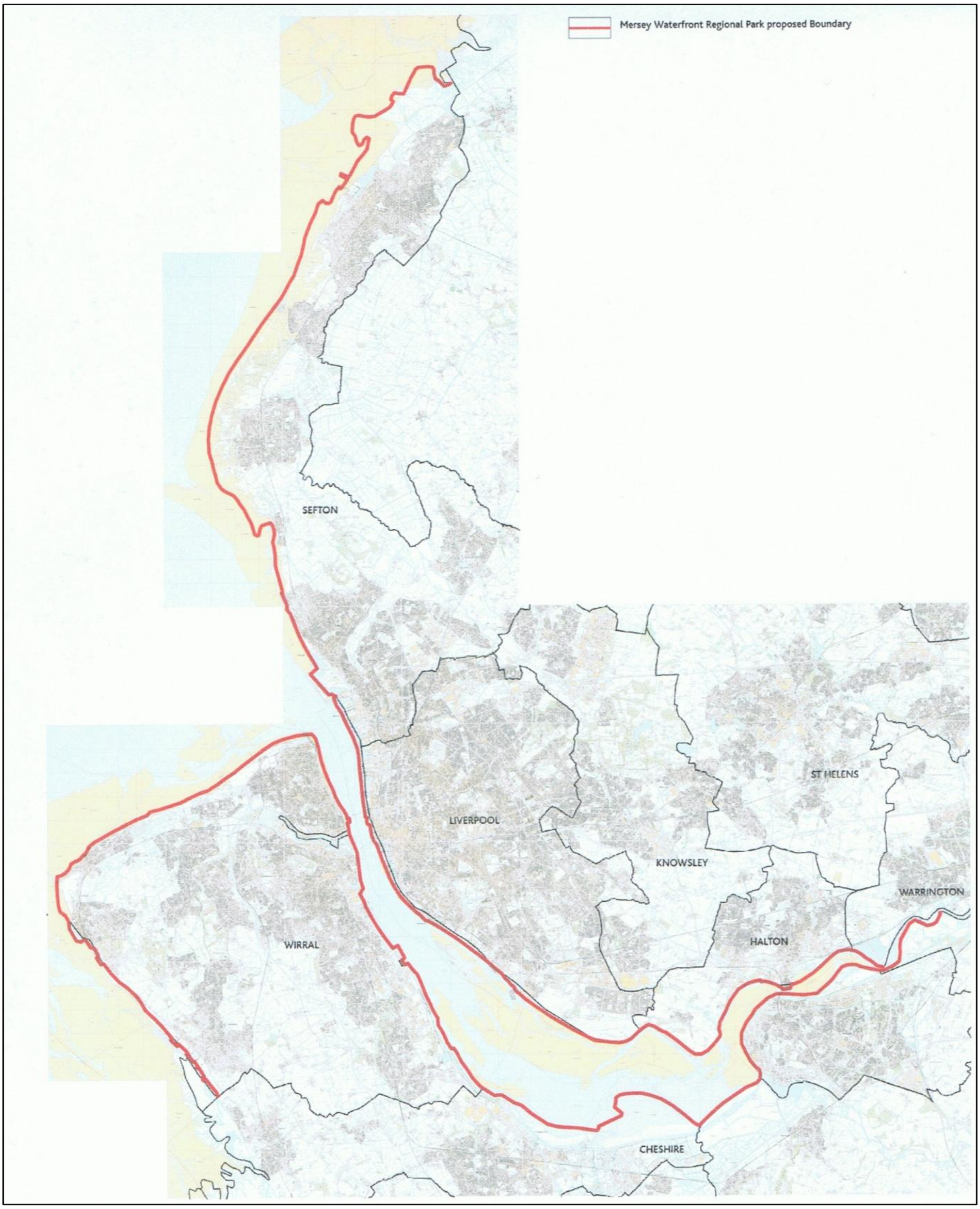


Figure 6.8: MW proposed boundary outlined in the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park Strategic Framework 2007.
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007:p120)

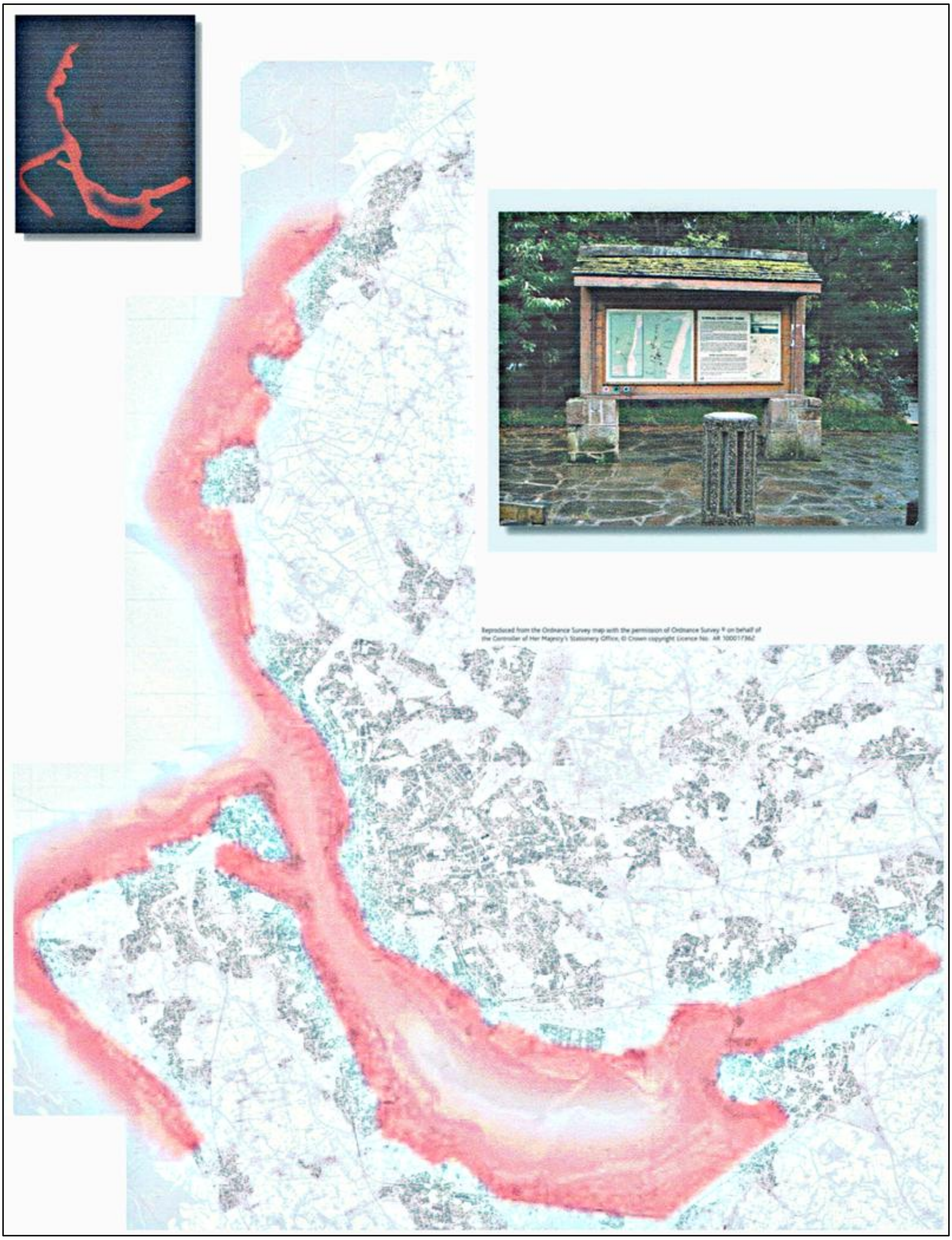


Figure 6.9: MW proposed regional park zone provided in the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park Strategic Framework 2007.
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007:p37)

In contrast, the LV is precise in terms of area boundary. Inevitably, the LV Park Act 1966 enables the LVRPA to establish its boundary, whereas the MW did not have its own legislation to justify and establish its permanent boundary. The LVRPA therefore justified and substantiated its periphery. Currently, the whole LV covers 10,000 acres of land, but the LVRPA itself owns and manages 3,800 acres (38%) of the total land area (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a). The LV has a clear-cut perimeter and interestingly, its boundary has not changed much over the years since its beginning. The area in 1969 was justified as "just under 10,000 acres", in its first plan of proposals (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969:p8) (see Figure 6.10 which illustrates an aerial view of LV in 1969 and Figure 6.11 which demonstrates LV area in 1969). However, in LV's Park Plan 1986, the area owned by the LVRPA was 30% of the total area (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986) (see Figure 6.12 below which shows LV area in 1986), and increased to 33% of the total land in 1997 (Lee Valley Regional Park Plan, 1998) which puts in the picture that land ownership increased over the year. Its geographical extent includes northeast London, Essex and Hertfordshire. The park stretches along the River Lee from Ware (in Hertfordshire), through Essex, North London reaching the Thames at East India Dock Basin. The local areas included are Hackney, Tottenham, Enfield, Stratford, Tower Hamlets, Walthamstow, Cheshunt, Broxbourne and Hoddesdon (see Figure 6.13 below which shows LV and its surrounding area in 2011). Referring to LV boundaries and area from 1969 to present (see Figures 6.11, 6.12 and 6.13 below), it is apparent that the size of area has not changed much.

Figure 6.10: Aerial view of LV in 1969 (right)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (1969:p7)

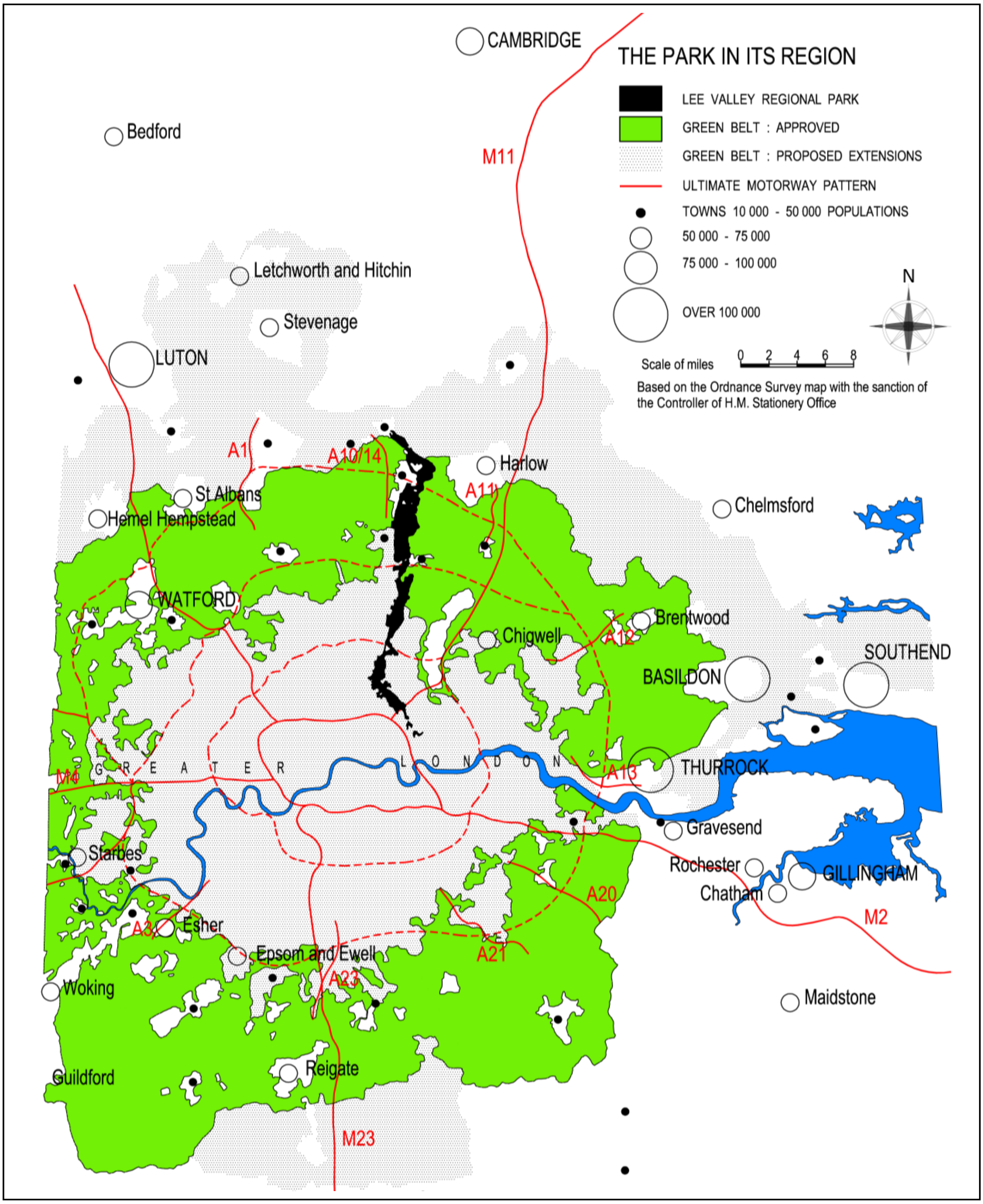


Figure 6.11: LV area in 1969
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (1969:p11)

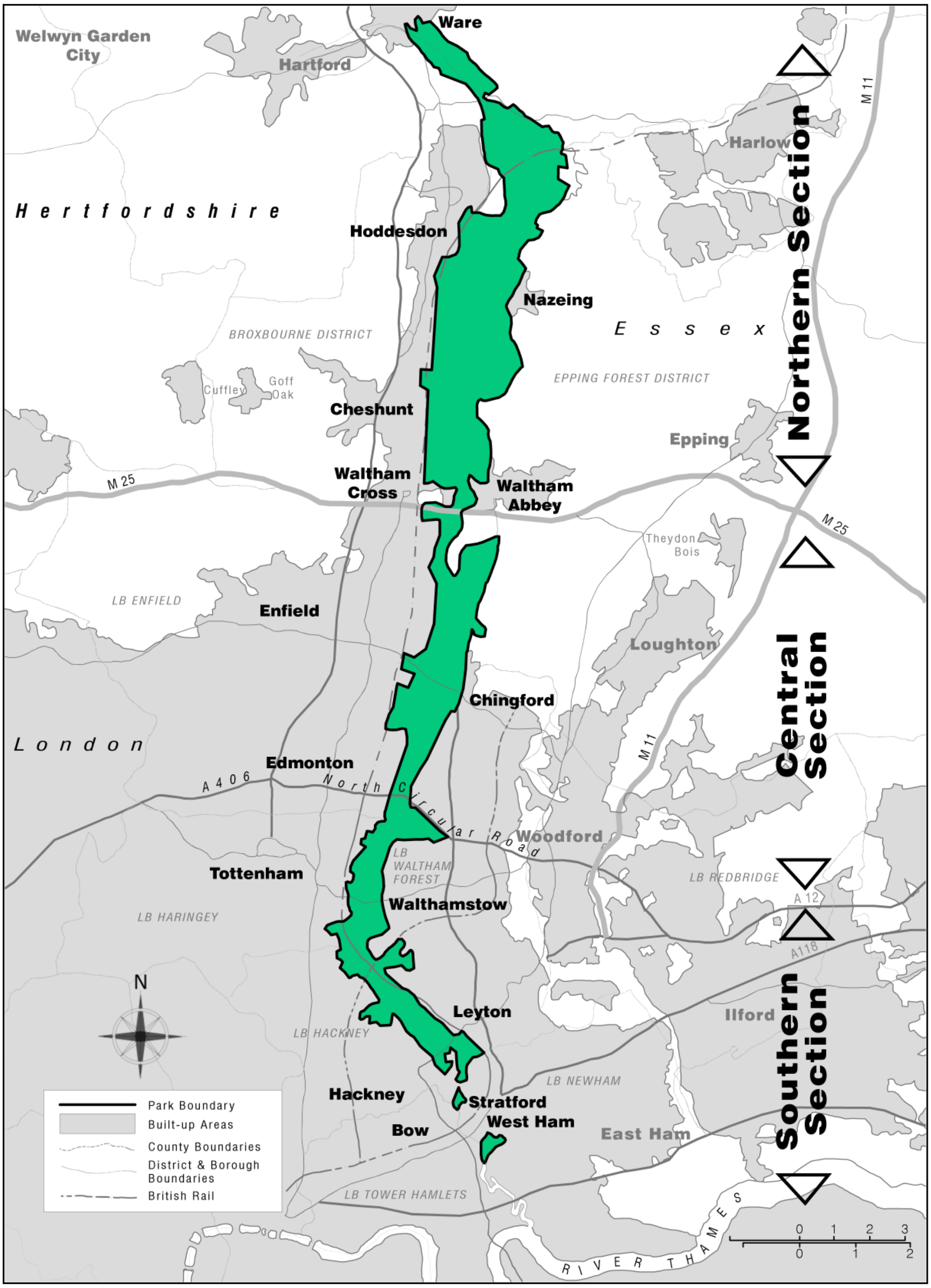
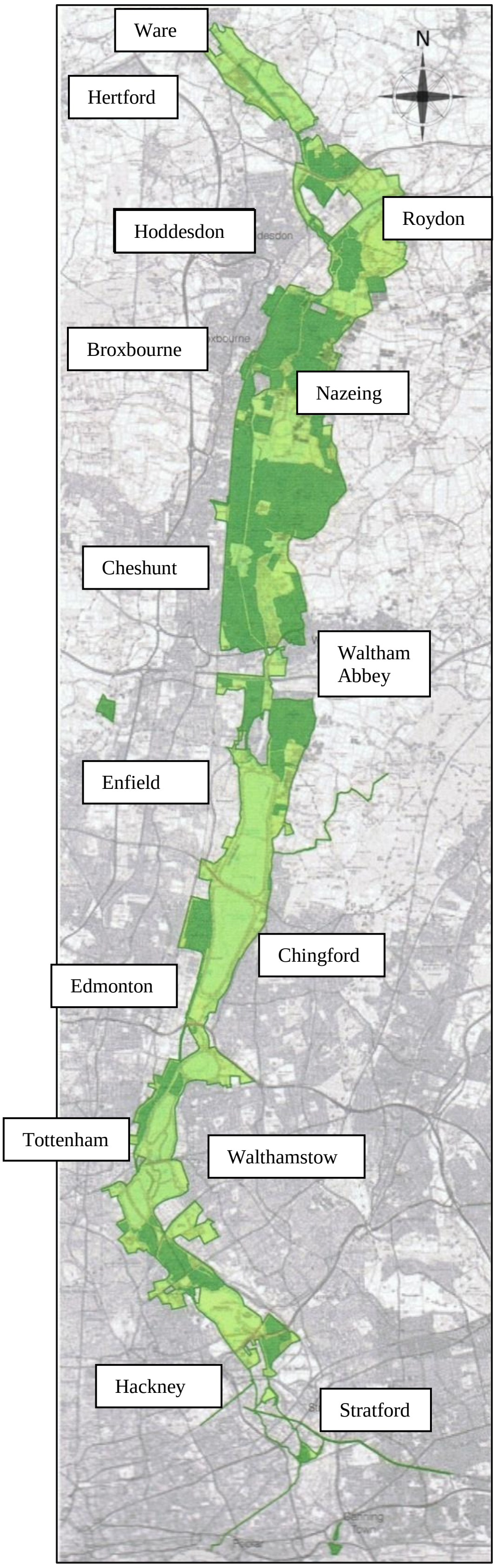


Figure 6.12: LV area in 1986
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (1986:p17)



Legend:

Land within the LV boundary owned by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Land within the LV boundary in the ownership of others

Figure 6.13: LV in 2011 and its surrounding area (left)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2011a:p8)

c. Comparing the Nature of Development

Further to this, the researcher also assessed the existing elements in both parks. The MW and LV is made up of an assortment of entities including the natural and the built environment. The MW has beaches, dunes, estuaries, river (the Mersey River), forest reserve, mudflats, waterfront, woodlands, riverbanks, promenades, marina, nature reserves, heritage buildings, museums, cruise/ferry terminal, the Three Graces (UNESCO World Heritage Site), sports centre (see Figure 6.14), golf courses, operational ports, canals, industrial development, promenades for recreational activities (see Figures 6.15 and 6.16), commercial building and dwellings and many more (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007) (see Figure 6.17 which illustrates MW landuse and attractions and Figure 6.18 for LV's local attractions). Meanwhile, the LV has the River Lee, riverbanks (see Figure 6.19), forest reserve (see Figure 6.20), farm, golf courses, nature reserves (see Figure 6.21), heritage buildings, museums, Olympic Park, reservoirs, visitors accommodation, leisure complex, dwellers, camping sites (see Figure 6.22), riverside trails (see Figure 6.23), gardens, equestrian, water-based recreational facilities, recreational facilities (see Figure 6.24), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), woodland and others (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a).

Figure 6.14: One of the sports centres in MW.
Source: Author

Figure 6.15: One of the benefits of the promenades in MW which offers a place for recreational activities.
Source: Author

Figure 6.16: A view from the Otterspool's Promenade in MW
Source: Author

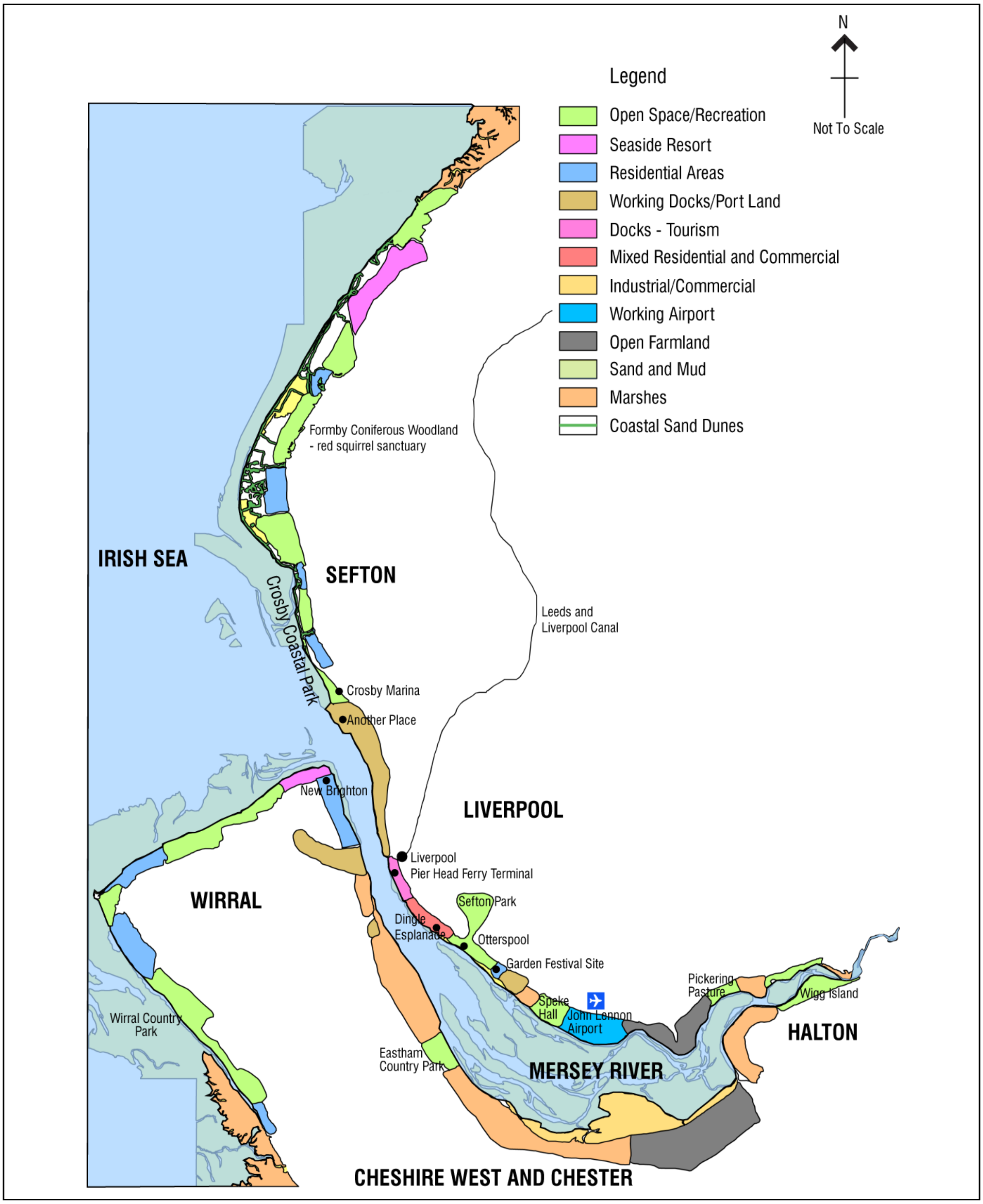


Figure 6.17: MW landuse in 2007 and its local attractions
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007:p136)

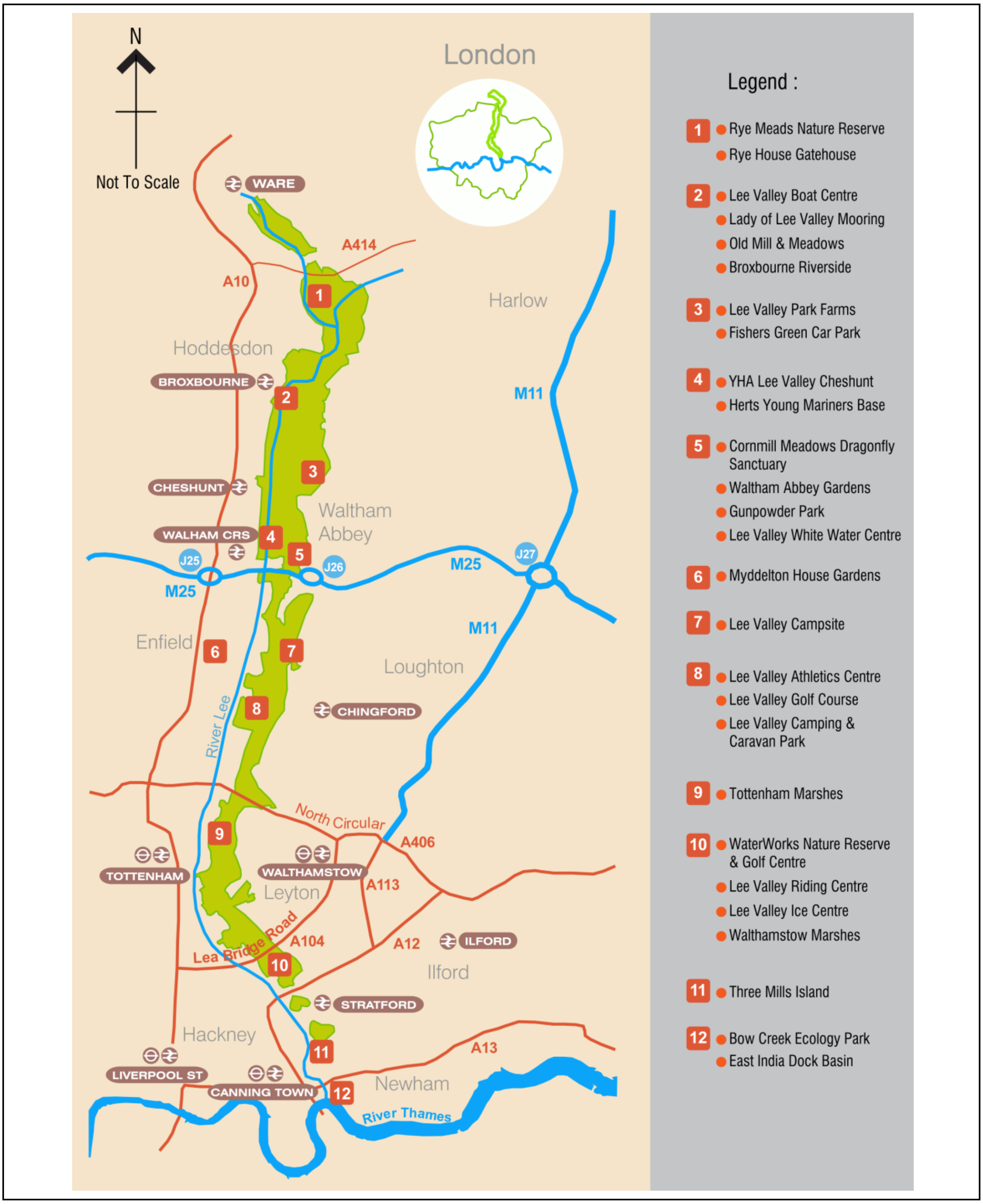


Figure 6.18: LV local attractions
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2011f)

Figure 6.19: Part of the Lee Valley riverbank and the built pathway for pedestrians, joggers and cyclists.
Source: Author

Figure 6.20: One of the many forest reserve sites in the Lee Valley Regional Park.
Source: Author

Figure 6.21: An example of a nature reserve in LV.
Source: Author

Figure 6.22: An example of a camping site in LV.
Source: Author

Figure 6.23: A riverside trail along the canal in LV.
Source: Author

Figure 6.24: An example of recreational facility in LV.
Source: Author

The early focus of development was mentioned in its objectives as providing "opportunities for recreation, sports, entertainment and the enjoyment of leisure" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969:p14) (see Figure 6.25 which shows the image of the first Park Plan for LV in 1969). In general, development was proposed along the spine road called the 'Park Road' (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969). From the beginning it was observed that development focuses more on recreational activities and sports, and most importantly, redevelopment of the regional park. Attention was seen as more focused towards sports like riding, athletic tracks, water sports, golf and stadium and rinks. Other than that, development was also concentrated on entertainment, youth clubs, camping and caravan sites (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969). Thus, in order to fulfil its targets, early development was very much dependent upon the provision of improved infrastructure and facilities for the public, for example, the Park Road as the main access within the park, car parking, recreational facilities, chalets and caravan sites.

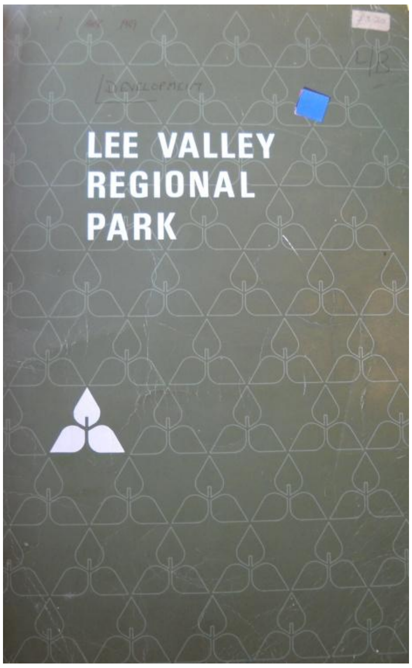


Figure 6.25: LV Park Plan 1969 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (1969)

Also, amongst LV's earliest agendas was the consideration of enhancing the park's landscape. The plan was to determine the division of land use, and to justify its parkland, key water catchment area, woodland, recreation centre and accessibility, as well as its focal points within the park. The first park plan document also comprehensively provided the results of surveys (containing maps and diagrams) for the whole area (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969). This was seen as an important effort and a handy footing in order to support the development of the park as it justifies and clarifies the park's current condition. The survey was thorough covering recreational facilities and activities (existing and potential), geographical factors (geology and drainage), population, land use, historic buildings and others. This initial effort by the LV, in terms of improving the current situation of its park, matches the early exertion of the MW which was also enhancing and upgrading its existing physical aspects. The focus of the first park plan in 1969 was continued in the second LV Park Plan of 1986. Not only that, attention was paid more to promoting linkages among park elements, and promoting the park to the public as well as creating public awareness of the Park's attractions and benefits. However, the Park was to remain as a "regional reservation of open space" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 1986:p29). The LVRPA therefore, targeted the new development since 1986 as a regional park for "a day outing or short holiday for Londoners and people living in the home counties as well as for those visiting London and its surrounds from further afield, or even abroad" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986:p29).

According to Park Plan 1986, future development would also be focused on continuing to deliver the provision of recreational centres and be concentrated on providing a wide range of recreational opportunities, especially outdoor activities. It was also apparent that the spotlight of development after the 1986 Park Plan was an all-inclusive approach as it comprised many aspects of development in the plan including major recreational centres, farmlands, play areas and open space. The key areas of development were therefore divided into seven major subjects: landscaping, accessibility, land and water recreational facilities, conservation of the nature, protecting heritage within the park, management and development control. LV continued to develop its recreational facilities and provision of outdoor and indoor recreational activities within the park (see Figure 6.26 which illustrates the sports and recreational opportunities within the Park). Nevertheless, development after the 1998 Park Plan (Lee Valley Regional Park Plan, 1998) was then more focused towards protecting its natural assets hence paying more attention to sustainability issues. However, towards the late 2000s, the span of development was seen as largely centred around facilitating the international level besides catering for the local and the regional scale. The extent of development within the LV has repositioned itself as a regional park with world class sports facilities (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010b; Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a).

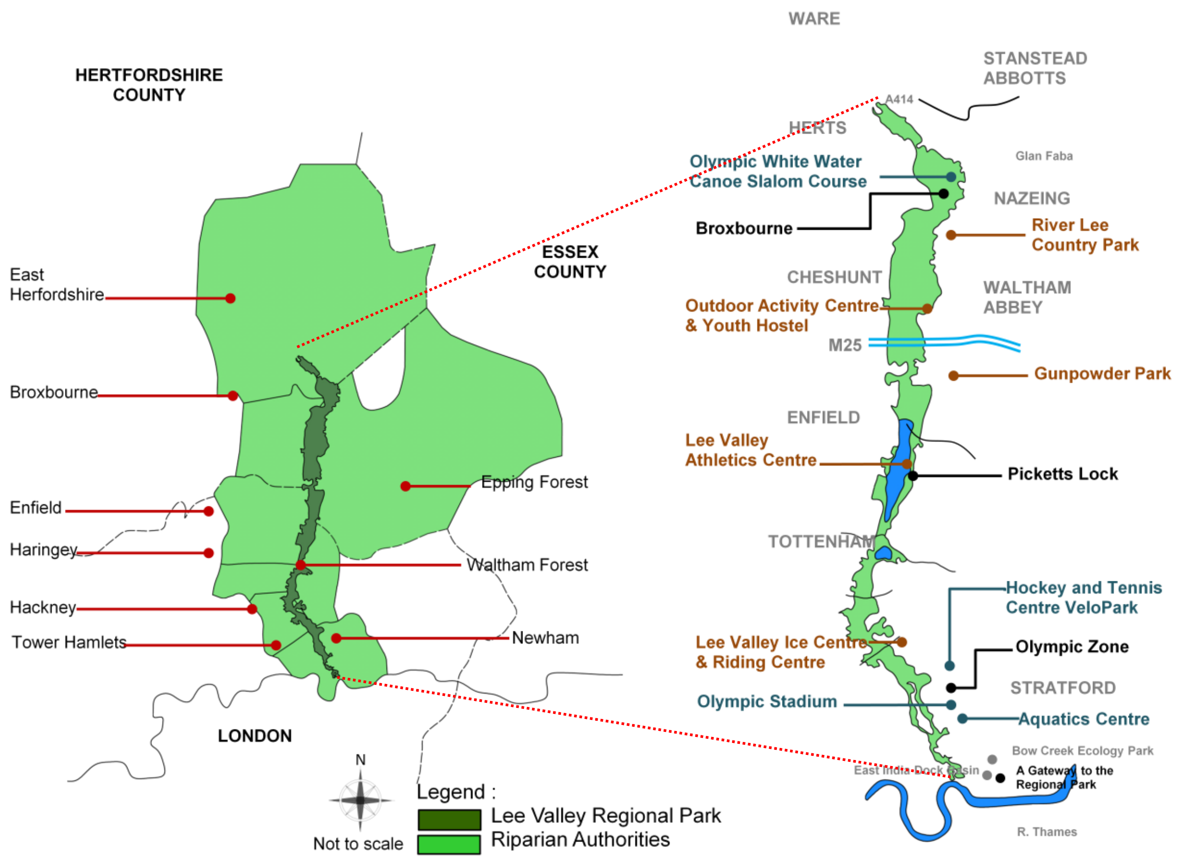


Figure 6.26: Lee Valley's sports and recreational opportunities
Source: Author

In addition to that, the park also contains other areas identified as regional and national priorities for regeneration – the Upper Lee Valley is a growth area within the Government's Sustainable Communities[23] strategy and parts of the park are within the Thames Gateway. Additionally, the park too contains four Opportunity Areas within the Mayor's London Plan (The Lower Lee Valley, Leyton, Blackhorse Road and Tottenham Hale). Currently, LV is focusing on key projects like the Olympic Park, and other Olympic development like the Athletics Centre. This includes partnership working with *UK Athletics* (UKA) in the effort of building the whole facilities for the Performance Site, as well as working with *Team Great Britain* (TGB). Work is also in progress for the LV Ice Centre[24] and the development of the *Electronic Leisure Money*[25] (ELM).

Additionally, it is also obvious that the current focus of LV has been on the provision of sports facilities. This was highlighted in the LV's website which named many sports as their "priority sport including athletics, cycling, equestrian, golf, hockey, ice sports, paddle sports and tennis" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012b). And for that reason, when most parts of the LV remained as its early aspiration back in 1966 till 2000 as a regional open space, some area of the park have now turned into venues for London 2012, complete with world class sports facilities, particularly the Olympic Park at the south of the LV. Among its well known sports centres are the Lee Valley Athletics Centre, the Lee Valley Riding Centre, the Lee Valley Ice Centre and the White Water Centre.

It is indeed interesting to see the transformation of the LV, as well as the MW from where they had begun. The aspirations set for the MW transformed its physical environment enormously, along with the economic and social aspects, and the evolution of priorities of the LV certainly placed the LV from a regional park to a globally known visitor destination. The following section testifies the shift of aims and objectives of both case studies, and indicates reasons for these changes.

Additionally, it is not surprising, the MW and the LV have similar features and activities. The two regional parks have good infrastructure and transportation, commercial buildings, open spaces, green urban spaces, camping sites, heritage sites, nature reserves, sailing clubs, sports facilities, recreational area, and inhabitants. Moreover, both are located within the urban population of high density (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007; Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a).

[23] "Sustainable Communities in London" Initiative is a national programme and was launched in 2003 as part of the region's effort in promoting sustainable communities. In relation to this, part of its purposes is to "safeguard green and open space" (The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003:p3). This initiative is parallel to the Mayor of London's draft London Plan projects from 2002 to 2016.

[24] The LV Ice Centre is an ice sports and ice skating facility designed to accommodate 800 skaters at one time (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012l).

[25] Electronic Leisure Money is an E-Commerce System which enables an organisation to sell their products or services through internet. Additionally, through this internet marketing strategy, the public can buy any products or services via online.

In benchmarking the characteristics and qualities of both case studies, MW does share some similar characteristics to the LV. Since both contain the natural and the built environment therefore providing similar activities within the park. Visitors and the locals are provided with golfing activity, sports, sailing, bird watching, camping, jogging tracks, cycling trails, playgrounds, and much else. It is difficult to say which park provides more recreational activities since the two have a considerable amount of opportunities within their natural settings.

Nonetheless, it is apparent that from the latest Olympic Games[26] held in LV, the area has attracted more public attention, whether from the local or region, and international. In fact, the Paralympic Games[27] has also brought attention to the LV. The Olympic Park itself was said to have a value of £250m investment (as mentioned by the LV Chief Executive), surpasses the investment for MW sports facilities. The decision to designate the LV as one of the Olympics venues in the UK seven years ago inevitably raised the profile of the regional park. This development was a catalyst to the LV. It elevated LV image and brought the regional park to a wider potential audience. In the following discussion, the thesis will describe the efforts of the LVRPA in aiding the delivery of Olympic Games. In this respect, the research believed that the LV portrays a better future in terms of its facilities in the future as compared to the MW.

The research discerned the nature of development involved in the two case studies. Both regional parks were established for the purpose of regeneration but LV was founded with the creation of LV Park Act 1966. This enabled the LV to continue its programme and currently has reached its 46th year. The LV Park Act 1966 inevitably sustains the existence of LV and its Park Authority.

d. Comparing Programme Duration

The MW was initiated in 2002 and formally approved by the NWDA in early 2003. The programme officially ran from April 2003 until March 2011. The LV conversely is still implementing its programme since its founding in 1966. The main different between the two is that the current and future development for the MW is no longer under the coordination of the MW management. Instead, any progressive development or future maintenance is now fully managed by the local authorities of the area. The LV's development has been and will continue to be under the full force of the LVRPA, therefore promising better integration of management and development within the Park.

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[26] The 2012 Summer Olympics, also known as London 2012 was held from 27 July 2012 to 12 August 2012. The Olympic Park situated in LV was the main focus.

[27] The 2012 Summer Paralympic Games took place from 29 August 2012 to 9 September 2012. Major events also took place at the Olympic Park in LV.

6.3.2 Benchmarking the Aims and Objectives

So far, we have seen the differences and similarities of the settings for both programmes. The following discussion will describe more variations as the analysis reveals the evolution of the MW and the LV's aims and objectives since their establishment.

The initial aim of the MW was "to harness, manage and develop the heritage assets (particularly the nominated World Heritage Site[28]), recreational assets, tourism potential, industrial and natural environments to drive the Merseyside economy" (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p18).The original vision of the MW set out in the Mersey Waterfront: Commencement Business Plan April 2002 was:

> "*To transform, energise and connect Mersey Waterfront – and all its assets – in producing a unique sense of place which acts as a key attractor of people to live, work, visit and invest in Merseyside*" (The Mersey Partnership, 2002:p15).

And, in relation to this core vision, the MW supplemented its goal with several other propositions including:

- *"that MW is the "crown jewel" of Merseyside and the North West Region in terms of its sense of place;*
- *that this "sense of place" benefits local people in all boroughs;*
- *that MW elevates and distinguishes Merseyside against competing international locations;*
- *that partners are committed to a focus on quality in all aspects of MW; and*
- *that MW provides a channel for Merseyside-wide collaboration*".
  (The Mersey Partnership, 2002:p15)

To accomplish the vision, the MW therefore addressed their direction through six strategic objectives, as follows:

(a) "to promote MW as a coherent product – in a manner that raises awareness for residents as well as others considering Merseyside as a destination to visit, or invest in;
(b) to improve the coastal environment, its sustainable tourism product, its access, its interpretation and education role for residents and visitors;
(c) to increase the number of visitors and tourists to MW, extend the length of their stay and maximise their spending;
(d) to promote and support major flagship projects that support objectives (a), (b) and (c);
(e) to increase commercial investment and economic activity associated with the Mersey particularly through the development of collaborative working through Mersey Maritime as the port and maritime industries cluster development agency; and
(f) to sponsor and support investment by partners in MW that do not oblige direct funding but that add to its attractiveness."

(The Mersey Partnership, 2002:p15-16)

[28] The Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2004. The site includes the Albert Dock, through the Pier Head and the Stanley Dock. Additionally, the Three Graces lie within the area. [Source: Liverpool World Heritage (2012)]

However, throughout the whole implementation period of the MW, there was relatively little modification to the original aims and objectives. In fact, it is almost certain that the vision was altered and further enhanced in its sole Strategic Framework document, the MW Strategic Framework published in 2007 (see Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007) to suit the framework and its future vision. To prove this, it was articulated in the framework that the vision was established in response to several related aspects like the "policy context, learning from experience, differentiating and unifying the place, relationship to other activity, lessons from experience to date, catering for audiences" (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p13). For that reason, the vision of the MW was first altered in 2007 (during the start of the second phase of the programme, i.e. the Succession Programme) and remained as the MW foundation right to the completion of programme in March 2011. The researcher sees the MW Strategic Framework as a complete and useful framework. However, unfortunately, some of its proposals were not delivered. Further discussion on this topic will suggest this observation[29].

Going back to the modification of vision in 2007, the MW Strategic Framework outlined its vision as:

> "*The Leading Edge of the City Region- The Mersey is the defining feature of the Liverpool City Region. The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park will therefore develop its role in providing a global outlook and profile, facilitating change, regeneration and investment. To this end, the Park will act as the unifying, binding force on the Waterfront. It will create a series of 'Windows on the Waterfront' delivering access to a diversity of quality experiences and promoting animation, activity and investment*"
> (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p20).

The MW Strategic Framework therefore represented a shift to the MW's original emphasis. During the first phase of programme (Commencement Programme), the focus has been on enhancement, improvement, promoting the waterfront amongst a wider spectrum, providing opportunities for formal and informal recreational activities, as well as creating public awareness of the coastal benefits. Although these objectives were carried though the second phase of the programme (Succession Programme), the focus changed and concentration was on the newly proposed design concepts in the MW Strategic Framework. A significant characteristic of the new vision was seen as the spotlight of the geographical development and its role in becoming a tourist destination in the region. The direction was then centred on a structured approach to a combination of thematic area proposals which was anticipated to link visitor attractions from one place to another.

[29] See Section 6.6.2 which describes the issues of delivering key idea of the MW Strategic Framework 2007.

MW also aspired itself to rank as one of the global waterfronts in the world, in other words becoming of world class repute (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2009). This was supported with the idea that the MW has "more Grade II listed buildings than any UK city other than London" and that the status it won in 2004 as World Heritage Site (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2009:p7). This impression of depicting world class standard was repeated on several occasions in the same document. Part of it was because the MW is judged as top-notch level in terms of business, natural environment, a place of international events, as well its character and the effect it has towards the community, commercial and industries (see Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2009). The researcher sees this as a way of exposing and promoting the Park to the public, hence attempting to draw more visitors to the area.

The LV, conversely, has had many transformations of aims and objectives since its establishment[30.] Since the beginning, the LV has undergone many changes in priorities and now portrays itself as a place for leisure, recreation, sport and nature. Over the past 40 years, the park's vision has evidently grown.

In its latest statement, the Park Authority sets its future ambition through its *Park Development Framework: Vision, Aims and Principles* (PDF-VAP) (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2010b:p7) as "to become a truly world-class destination and an exemplar of the many benefits that large-scale parklands can deliver" (see Figure 6.27 which shows the image of PDF-VAP). In fact, currently, the priority of the LV is very much affected by the London Olympics 2012 and the Paralympic Games 2012. The major sport events are shaping the priorities of the Park. Looking back at its initial stage of practice, the objectives were a lot different. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, in the beginning, the LV's objectives were to provide prospects for recreational and leisure activities for the public (Lee Valley Regional Park, 1969). For that reason, the first Park Plan addressed twelve objectives, mostly bringing together physical development and social aspects.

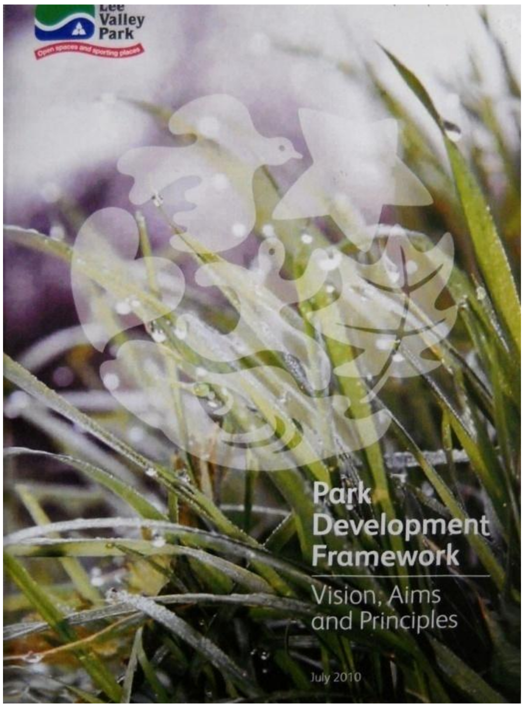

Figure 6.27: Lee Valley Park Development Framework: Vision, Aims and Principles (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2010b)

[30] These shifts of emphasis or priorities for the Park evolved each time the LVRPA has introduced its new Park Plan or Framework. The Park Plans are mentioned briefly here to describe the nature of development in accordance with its Park Plan. However, in the later discussion (see Section 6.4.5 on Development Plan and Framework) the thesis provides a more descriptive explanation of those Park Plans and Frameworks).

However, unexpectedly, the Park Plan 1969 did not specify the duration of delivery. And because of this, seventeen years later, some issues were discovered and exposed in its second Park Plan of 1986. It was then claimed that there were conflicts between the LV Act and the planning practice in local authorities. The issue was that local planning authorities were required to show development plans for delivery within ten years but the Park Plan 1969 did not specify the duration of implementation, either within ten years or over a longer period (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986). Additionally, the Park Plan 1986 also argued that the Park Plan 1969 was vague in terms of its park concept (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986).

The researcher then realised that it was clear in the Foreword statement given by LVRPA Chief Executive in March 1986 as to why the park needed "a new direction and an impetus" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986: Foreword). Based on the issue revealed, the Park Plan 1986 had therefore targeted its vision for a period of ten to fifteen years in accordance with its requirements and potentials (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986) (see Figure 6.28 for the image of Park Plan 1986). In this framework, the Park Authority placed itself as "a developer, a catalyst and coordinator" for the Park (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986:p9). 17 years since its first Park Plan, LVRPA became aware that some of the proposals from Park Plan 1969 were inappropriate for the current and future development of the park therefore changes were needed for the new objectives and priorities (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986).

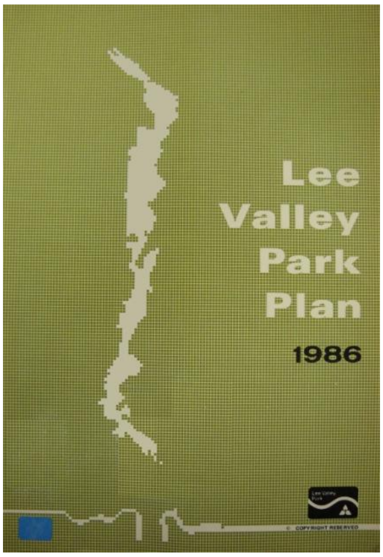

Figure 6.28: Lee Valley Park Plan 1986 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (1986)

The MW on the other hand, did not criticise its achievement from its founding to the formulation of the MW Strategic Framework in 2007. This is however is not surprising as by the time the MW Strategic Framework was being prepared, the MW had positively demonstrated its capability in delivering most of its intended projects in its first phase of delivery. In fact, it was pointed out that the MW had successfully delivered 56 projects within the first phase of programme implementation (the Commencement Programme).

Going back to Park Plan 1986, it was then decided that the Park should remain as a green space and the concept would still be focused on regeneration and enhancement of the Park. It was stated that the initial vision of regenerating the park was still "far from complete" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986:p29) therefore suggesting and expecting that the regeneration process would continue into the future. The park development was not consistent with the existing Park Plan 1969 since some of the facilities were only partially completed. Park Plan 1986 therefore targets to promote a consistent identity through its landscape proposals which will connect the facilities, accessibility and elements within the Park. In fact, landscape was considered as a major topic of development for the park. Landscape was therefore largely concentrated on restoring existing structures, for example, "attractive buildings, farmland, woodland, and grassland" as well as giving landscape treatment alongside the roads, and planting trees and shrubs (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986:p35).

Additionally, it aimed at creating awareness aiming the public and providing major recreational centres. Park Plan 1986 therefore saw the park as "a regional reservation of open spaces" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986:p29). In its concept, the LVRPA envisaged that its open space could cater for the regional, national and international purposes. The Park Plan of 1986 brought together the priorities for physical and social aspects of development within the park. And, through this Plan, it was evident that one of the objectives included a recommendation that the LV Park Plan 1986 would be incorporated into the local authorities' development plans provided that it could pragmatically be delivered within ten to fifteen years (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986). This effort was deliberately to avoid the conflict it faced with local authorities from the first Park Plan of 1969.

Following the LV Park Plan of 1986, another framework was also produced in 1998. Almost 30 years since its first Park Plan, the priorities then shifted and the focus also changed. The emphasis then moved to the operation of the park as a regional open space, building up its visitor attractions and sustaining the park[31]. This changed from the first Park Plan in 1969 which aimed to provide recreational and leisure opportunities for the park. Also, it was different from Park Plan 1986 which continued to deliver schemes that had not been completed previously, and therefore concentrated more on provision of landscape. Through its aspiration, Park Plan 1998 supplemented by Park Proposals 2000 visibly promoted the ethos of protecting its natural assets and imposing the intention of sustaining the Park besides continuing to compose the Park as a visitor destination (see Figure 6.29 for image of Park Plan 1999 and Figure 6.30 for image of Park Proposals 2000). And this progression somewhat strengthened its image and secured its position as a potential place to execute the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Following the proposition in the year 2005 to turn part of the Lower LV into an Olympic venue, LVRPA therefore prepared its fourth framework hence accommodating the Park Authority's to meet its Olympic venue aspiration.

[31] "*To be a cohesive, sustainable and valued regional green lung; to be an area of enhanced and protected natural bio-diversity for the enjoyment of all; to achieve full utilisation of the unique land and water assets of the regional park for specialist leisure and recreational facilities developed in accordance with principles of sustainability and design excellence; and to be accessible and permeable, integrated visitor attraction to serve the region which will include local communities*" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1998:p3)


The following organisations all formally endorse the policies contained in this Part One of the Park Plan

Supported by English Sports Council
British Waterways
English Nature
Environment Agency
London

The Regional Park Authority also acknowledges the involvement and support of the many other organisations who have taken part in preparing the Park Plan.

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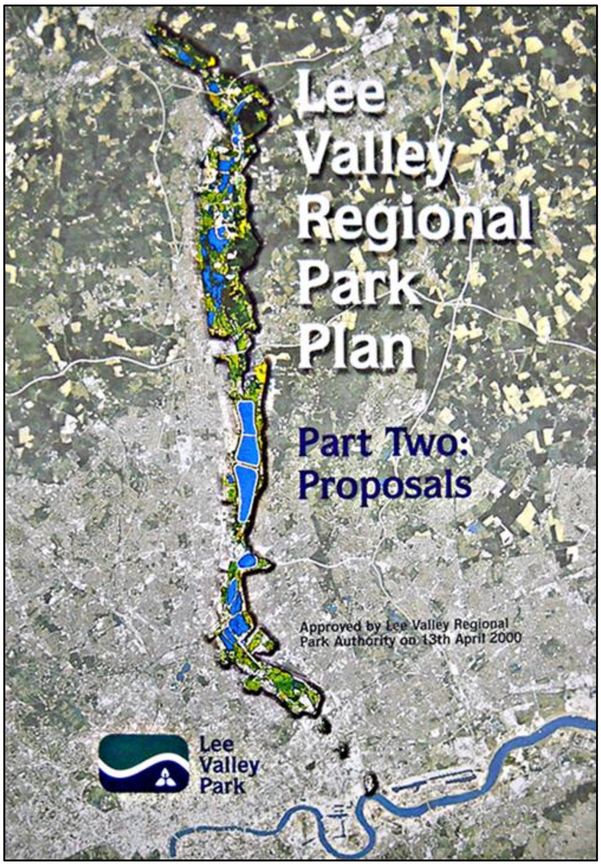

Figure 6.29: Lee Valley Park Plan 1998 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (1998)

Figure 6.30: Lee Valley Plan of Proposals 2000 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2000)

The fourth and current framework, the *Lee Valley Park Development Framework: Thematic Proposals 2011* (LV-PDF) adopted in 2011 essentially adhered to the *Park Development Framework: Vision, Aims and Principles (PDF-VAP)* (adopted in July 2010) and brings into play the core aspirations set down from the 2010 document (see Figure 6.31 below for image of Lee Valley Park Development Framework: Thematic Proposals 2011). Plausibly, with an experience of more than forty years, the PDF-VAP raised the LV's vision and positively shifted its rank as "a world class leisure destination" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010b:p7). As the LVRPA Chief Executive (26th September 2011) sees it, "After the Olympic bid, priorities changed and the vision was adjusted to our opportunity. But our vision then, was to become a regional recreational area and to establish sports centres excellence". In a complete vision statement, the PDF-VAP 2010 outlines its future vision as:

"The purpose of the Park as a place for leisure, recreation, sport and nature remains firmly at the heart of our future aspirations. However, our ambition has grown; we want the Park to become a truly world-class destination and an exemplar of the many benefits that large-scale parklands can deliver"
(Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010b:p7).

With this progressive goal, the LVRPA divided its area of concentration into six parts, namely, *Visitors*, *Sport and Recreation*, *Biodiversity*, *Community*, *Landscape and Heritage*, and *Environment*. In achieving its dream, the PDF-VAP had also stressed the significance of the Park as an important resource for the public and that the aspiration of becoming a world class destination was already taking shape. And this again was repeated in its latest development through its enhanced website, the current Business Plan stating its present goal as "to establish Lee Valley Regional Park as a world class destination for sport, leisure and nature by 2020" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2002e).

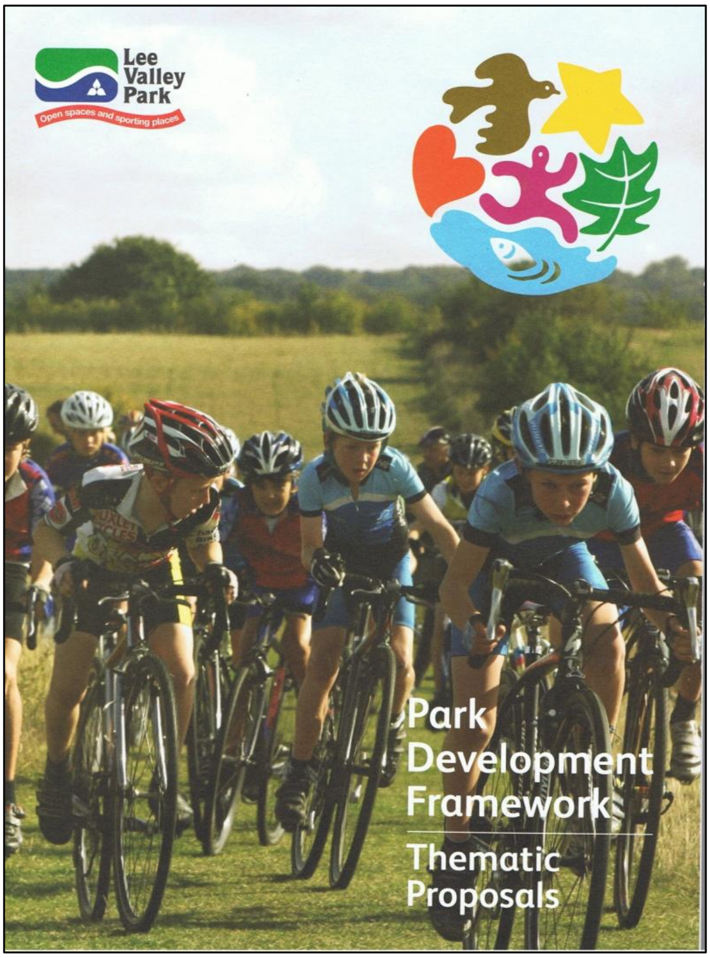

Figure 6.31: Lee Valley Park Development Framework: Thematic Proposals 2011 (LV-PDF) (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2011a)

6.3.3 Benchmarking the Partners and Stakeholders

The similarity between the MW and the LV in terms of the partners and stakeholders is that both were engaged with the public and private sectors, at a local, regional, or national level. The MW administration emerged through a unification of various partners but the LV has its own Park Authority as the head and exclusive administrative body to regulate the Park. The MW therefore depended very much on *The*

Mersey Partnership (TMP) as their administrator and regulator for the partners. The LVRPA on the other hand is the chief or controller for its Park. In contrast, MW partners distinguished the TMP as their main administrative base and referred to the Board's decision, as well as relying on the NWDA which played a monitoring role.

The main partners for the MW were the NWDA, TMP, local authorities (Liverpool City Council, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (Wirral MBC), Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (Sefton MBC), Halton Borough Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council, St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council (St. Helens MBC) and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (Knowsley MBC)). Apart from that, the MW also involved the local communities and representatives of which were known as the People's Panels. This Community Engagement Initiative[32] was also included as part of the decision making for the MW.

In contrast, the LVRPA has a comprehensive power over LV. However, the development within the LV is a combination of effort among partners too. It was identified from the interviews that the LV's key partners are the Environment Agency, British Waterways, Thames Water, and local authorities, the London Boroughs, Greater London Authority (GLA), Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC) and Natural England. Otherwise, the LVRPA also works with the landowners, other agencies[33] and managers within the Park, and operators of other Olympic legacy sports facilities, as well as educational institutions. And, since the LV is one of the venues for London 2012, partnership working has been vitally important with the OPLC and other related sport agencies.

Nevertheless, in terms of the role of LVRPA with its partners in delivering regeneration initiatives, it was clarified by the LVRPA Chief Executive that it was not the Authority's specific responsibility. He elucidated, "We don't lead that agenda. No! That is not our job to lead the urban regeneration agenda. That is for the Greater London Authority, the Mayor, the London Boroughs, and the Counties. That is their responsibility and that of various other partnerships, the London Thames Gateway Development Cooperation….but we contribute significantly to that role so we own 20% of the Olympic Park, the top end".

[32] MW Community Engagement Initiative will be discussed in detail in the later section of this chapter (see Section 6.4.10)

[33] Other partners for LV include the rail operators (for example, the National Express East Anglia), London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC), Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC), British Waterways, Environment Agency, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, London Wildlife Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), English Heritage and Olympic Delivery Authority.

Accordingly at this point in the interview (26th September 2011), the LVRPA Chief Executive also indicated the multifaceted function of the Park Authority its partners and stakeholders in delivering the projects. He admitted, “our relationship [work] with those organisations involves British Waterways, the Environment Agency, local authorities, Sports England, the GLA, the government, it’s a complex network of relationships in terms of funding, projects that we’re part of. We couldn’t do these things on our own….whether it’s a heritage project, a sports project, an environmental project relies on match funding from other agencies and that’s how we deliver those. But we lead and deliver projects”. For this reason, the researcher sees partnership arrangements were significant for both case studies, especially in delivering the projects for the Park.

6.3.4 Benchmarking the Organisation and Management

There is a huge difference between the MW and the LV in terms of their organisation and management. The MW had different administrative arrangements compared to the LV. It did not have a dominant organisation to manage the whole operation. The LV, on the other hand, has its own Statutory Body to govern and control the whole Park, whereas the MW had the TMP to administer and run the operation of its regional park. The LVRPA has administrative power of its Park but the MW took its mandate from the NWDA and operated as a collaborative programme among several local authorities. The researcher values this as an advantage to the LV. The function of the LVRPA itself offers a secured approach to the park management and development. This is confirmed by the general duty of the Park Authority as an independent body which is referred to in Section 12(1) of the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966 as:

> “*It shall be the duty of the Authority to develop, improve, preserve, manage or to procure or arrange for the development, improvement, preservation and management of the park as a place for the occupation of leisure, recreation, sport, games or amusements or any similar activity, for the provision of nature reserves and for the provision and enjoyment of entertainments of any kind.*”
> (Great Britain Law Statutes Etc., 1967:p10).

The MW organisation consisted of the Board Members, the Management Group and the Technical Advisory[34] (TAGs), and the Executive Team. The Board was made up of representatives from the main components of the partnership, which included individuals from the local authorities, the private sectors and other key interest groups, 15 in all including the Chairperson. The Management Group was among the lead local authority officer, the NWDA and MW Executive Director. Meanwhile, the TAGS included the Mersey Maritime, the Tourism, Sport and Leisure, and the EDM team.

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[34] In the beginning of the MW Commencement Programme planning, a steering group consisting of the Wirral MBC, TMP, NWDA and other Merseyside local authorities and four working groups (drawn from the partners) was formed. The working groups (which were described earlier),

except for the Major Flagships, were maintained and was renamed as the TAGs. The Major Flagships was terminated but its focus of attention was distributed among the other groups.)

In this respect, the way that the MW organisation performed was that the NWDA monitored the organisation. The Board Members gained the top-ranking position since the NWDA was the observer. Underneath the Board was the Management Group, while the TAGs were positioned alongside the Management Group. Beneath the two (the Management Group and the TAGs) was the Executive Team (see Figure 6.32 below which displays the arrangement of each position or rank). This idiosyncratic arrangement was enshrined in a “comprehensive partnership agreement” (Regeneris Consulting, 2005:p1).

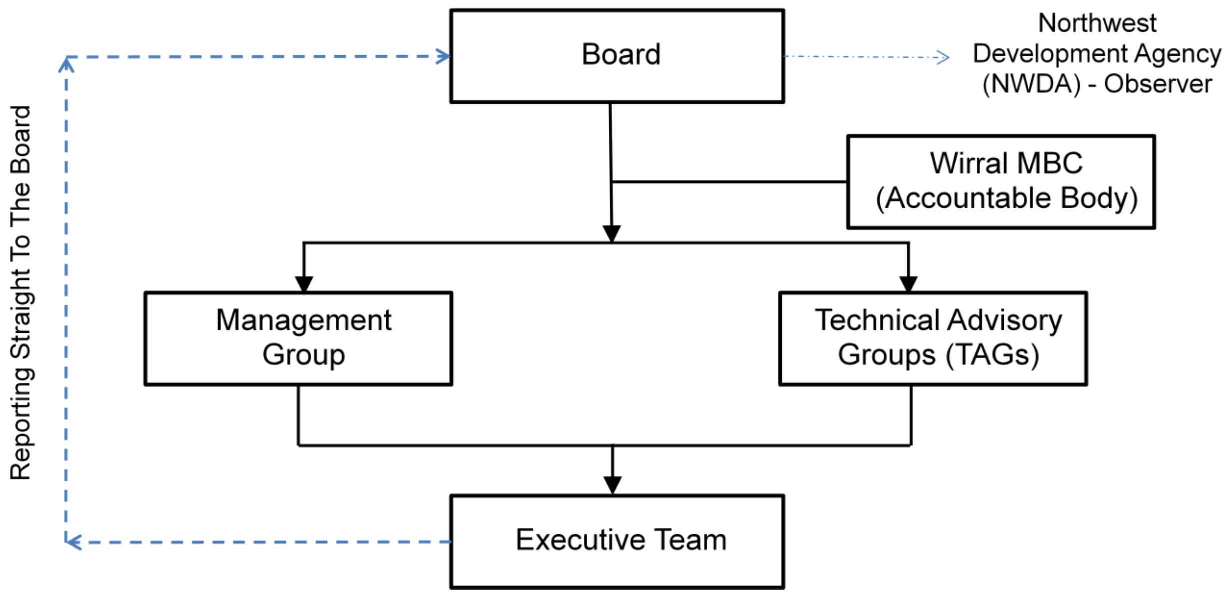


Figure 6.32: MW Organisation Chart
Source: Author

In terms of their duty, for the MW, the programme was run on a day to day basis by a programme executive (Regeneris Consulting, 2005:p1). The NWDA took the status of an observer for the programme, the TMP played the host for the Executive Team whilst the Wirral MBC acted as the Accountable Body for the MW. The Wirral MBC being the Accountable Body had the role of appraising and approving projects for the MW, as well as accepting and processing the claims for project funding. Even though the Accountable Body had a major role in terms of finance, the highest authority was held by the Board which made decisions and had delegated powers accordingly. The Management Group on the other hand, supported the role of the Board. The TAGs were intended to assess the proposed projects (project appraisals) and monitor the projects. However, they did not have the power to approve the projects. Meanwhile, the Executive Team had a wider responsibility in trying to facilitate timely project implementation within the NWDA budget as well as the task of working with the partners in developing new and existing riverside and coastal plans. Additionally, it also had the duty to raise the profile of the MW, and at the same time influencing and bringing investors to the area (Regeneris Consulting, 2005). And for this matter, the Executive Team had the privilege of reporting straight to the Board (see Figure 6.32 before).

The wide powers or the Board and the important role of the Executive Team in terms of project approvals differed during the Commencement Programme and the Succession Programme. Throughout the Commencement Programme, any projects costing less than £30,000 needed approval from the Executive Team only, which will afterwards be reported to the Board. Projects that cost from £30,000 to £250,000 were assessed by the Management Group and TAGs, yet needed approval from the Board. Additionally, projects that were worth more than £250,000 required approval from NWDA. However, during the Succession Programme, projects were examined by the Board and approved by the Accountable Body. Nevertheless, the Wirral MBC also conducted the assessment, and rectified those approved projects by the Board.

Also, it was spelt out in the MW Strategic Framework (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p26) that the MW would not “take responsibility for development implementation – [but would] rather act as a facilitator with partners; seek to own or manage land within the regional park zone; take a formal planning role or seek a formal planning status; or directly promote investment opportunities to the marketplace”. In this sense, it was made clear that the MW was just a launch pad for development, and had no obligations for maintenance, promotion or involvement in any planning procedure for the park. This is incongruent to the LV as it owns and manages its land, as well as taking the role in marketing the regional park and paying attention to planning approvals involving its own area or adjacent land.

Unlike the MW, the LV has a rather extensive organisation. Due to the presence of the LVRPA, and the duties it has for the park, LV has a more complex administrative composition. At present, there are many departments with specified a role within the institution (see Figure 6.33 below). Interestingly, the Park Authority has its own building known as the Myddleton House which occupies the management and administrative staff and also its departments (see Figures 6.34 and 6.35). Besides the main building for the management, there is also a Technical Office (see Figures 6.36) to serve the purpose of the technical team headquarters and a Visitor Centre (see Figure 6.37) that operates to facilitate the visitors to the Myddelton House or the Myddelton Garden (see Figures 6.38 and 6.39) which surrounds the building.

The LVRPA management team is comprised of ten senior members of staff, and a Chief Executive heads the Park Authority (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012a). There are two Corporate Directors for the Authority, which are divided into the Resources and Business Development, and Parkland & Venues. The

Deputy Chief Executive also leads the Parkland & Venues section. These two core departments are responsible for many other aspects within Park. The Resources and Business Development division is accountable for all the Support Services like Human Resource, Information Technology, Health and Safety, Finance, Performance Management and Internal Audit. Also another unit under the same department is Business Development which is in charge of existing facilities and new business opportunities. Parkland & Venues, on the other hand, is responsible for two separate units: (1) Parkland & Venues (consisting of Venues, Parklands Activation and Building Surveyors); and (2) Olympic Legacy (comprised of Construction, Projects, Assets, Management and Environmental Design). Besides the two main departments, there are also other main units under the Chief Executive: (1) Communications (containing Marketing, Public Relation, Corporate Communication and events); (2) Planning & Partnership (which consists of Planning, Strategic Partnership and Environment Policy); and (3) Legal & Property Services (encompassing Legal Committee and Property) (see Figure 6.33 below).

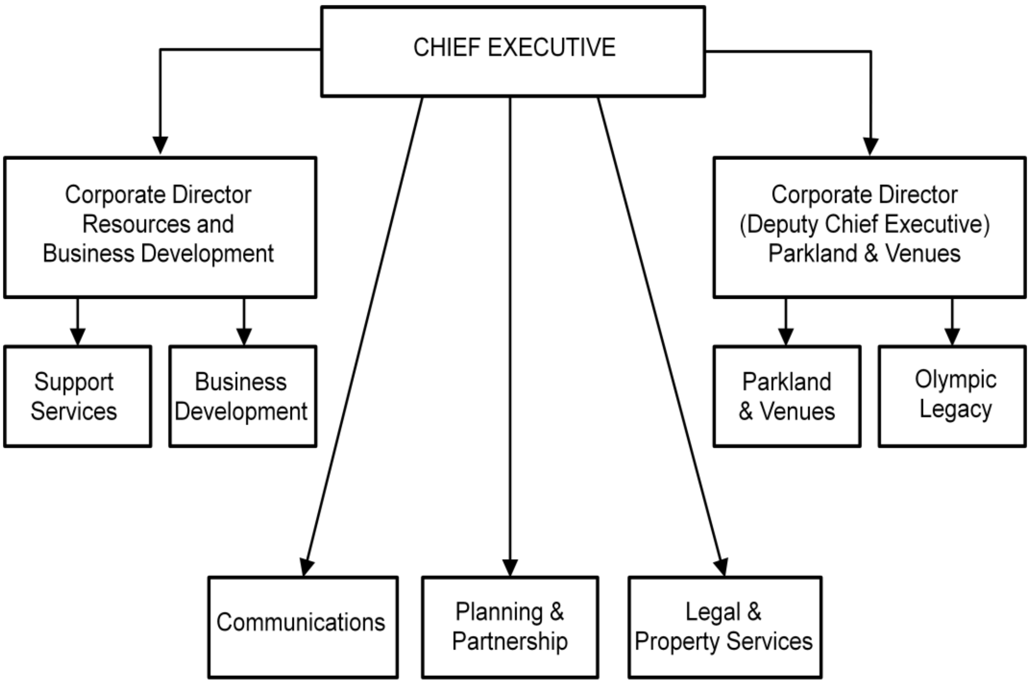


Figure 6.33: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority Organisation Chart
Source: Author

Figure 6.34: Access to Myddelton House which houses the LVRPA organisation.
Source: Author

Figure 6.35: Front elevation of the huge Myddelton House building overlooking its front garden.
Source: Author

Figure 6.36: Technical Office for LVRPA known as the Abercrombie Lodge situated near Myddelton House.
Source: Author

Figure 6.37: Visitor Centre which provides information about LV and LVRPA situated near Myddelton House.
Source: Author

Figure 6.38: Part of the Myddelton House Garden.
Source: Author

Figure 6.39: The pond in Myddelton House Garden.
Source: Author

Like MW, the LV has a Board currently embracing 28 Members (including the Chairman and Vice Chairman) from various organisations. This huge numbers cannot be compared to MW as LV has more local authorities within the park. This number was also mentioned in the 1986 Park Plan therefore suggesting that the structure had remained the same. Also, the Authority Board has more members from the public sector especially the elected Councillors across London, Essex and Hertfordshire. The Park Authority Members are from the riparian authorities (of which the LV's boundary crosses their borders). Members are appointed for a four-year term and the current Board expires on June 2013 (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2002d). The Members include those from the Hertfordshire County Council, London Borough of Enfield, London Borough of Islington, London Borough of Haringey, Essex County Council, London Borough of Newham, London Borough of Havering, Essex County Council, East Herts District Council, Broxbourne Borough Council, London Borough of Barnet, London Borough of Camden, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, London Borough of Hackney, London Borough of Bexley, London Borough of Harrow, London Borough of Redbridge, Epping Forest District Council, London Borough of Southwark and London Borough of Waltham Forest (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2002c). Also, another two co-opted Members were included, each from British Waterways and the Environment Agency (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2002d).

It was also identified from the interviews that at present the LV has 150 full time staff, and generally increases to 220 to 240 during the summer months (both including full time and part time). The LVRPA Head of Performance & Information mentioned that the LV has many voluntary workers. At the time when the interviews were conducted in late summer 2011, the LV has clocked up 40,000 voluntary hours throughout the summer.

From the information, it was clear that the MW organisation and personnel, being operating and functioning within a specified time-frame were terminated after the completion of programme in March 2011. In contrast, the LV's organisation and management is still in force, and will continue into the future due to the statute outlined in the LV Park Act 1966, unless the Act is ceased.

6.4 Benchmarking the Delivery of Programme

In order to be au fait with the differences between the MW and the LV's approach to programme delivery, the analysis now presents the results from another area of benchmarking; *Benchmarking the process of programme implementation through delivery mechanisms*. In this particular task, the investigation systematically assessed various aspects of programme of delivery. The purpose of this exercise was to ascertain the mode and means during the practice and to identify the differences between the two case studies, hence appraising the key lessons to successful regional park programme. For that reason, the benchmarking assignment evaluated the performance of both regional parks in terms of the following subjects:

1) Comparing project management;
2) Comparing preliminary work for programme;
3) Comparing regional park resources;
4) Comparing financial management;
5) Comparing Park Plan or Park Development Framework;
6) Comparing project plan and timescale;
7) Comparing efforts on benchmarking other exemplar;
8) Comparing the practice of monitoring and evaluation;
9) Comparing quality and performance standard;
10) Comparing the efforts for public participation;
11) Comparing the work of maintenance;
12) Comparing the work on branding and promoting the park;
13) Comparing the practice of risk and safety assessment;
14) Comparing the support and opportunities for events and activities within the park; and
15) Comparing future arrangements for the park.

6.4.1 Comparing Project Management

The LV and MW considered project management as the essence of the whole process of delivering the projects. In this instance, project management includes planning the work process and delivery of projects, managing the operation of projects, controlling the resources, and following the standard operation procedure. For LV and MW, project management is generally under the responsibility of project manager(s) for the project(s). In this modus operandi, parts of the process include planning, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, work delegation and managing.

The LVRPA Head of Performance & Information informed that LVRPA has a standard Project Management System which is compulsory for large projects. For smaller projects, a timeline delivery is practiced. Each project has a project team, a project plan, delivery timetable and schedule. Other than that it was clarified that project management covers several key aspects like clear funding, strategy, quality procurement and quality monitoring of the project. It was agreed by many of the participants and interviewees for both case studies that project management is one of the key success factors in project delivery.

6.4.2 Comparing Preliminary Work for Programme

There were many forms of preliminary work carried out for the MW and the LV before implementing a project. For both regional parks, projects have to go through the screening process called 'Project Appraisal'. For this reason, proposals were assessed before being approved for delivery and funding. The researcher regards this as a premeditated approach as it demonstrates the feasibility and practicality of the projects and the potential it has to meet the Park's needs. In terms of practice, projects were scrutinised in detail with regards to its purpose, cost, funding, benefits, risk and safety issue, timeline, intended outcome or outputs and impacts.

For the MW, the process included the work of identifying the right projects, the planning process, appraising the project, finding the funds and bid scrutiny (Abdullah and Batey, 2011). A Board Member claimed that there were many archives to prove that a lot of effort had been given to planning and developing the programme. For the MW project appraisal, projects had to address its potential and credibility in terms of its strategic added value, objectives, impact and key issues, its delivery, to show elements of good practice for future investment and recommendations.

Additionally, the researcher found that the MW had experienced benchmarking approaches during the course of proposing the projects. MW had undertaken the task of learning from other exemplars through what they called the 'Seeing is Believing' Initiative. In fact, a majority of the interviewees claimed this exercise as a success in achieving its intended aim: to learn and adapt key lessons with regards to waterfront development from other countries like Germany, Spain and Italy. The initiative organised field trips to the Emscher Park, Berlin, Genoa, Venice, Marseilles and Lyon. The representatives were selected from the MW partners, other parties like the private sector, public agencies, and NGOs.

6.4.3 Comparing Regional Park Resources

The MW had a distinctive source of funding as compared to the LV. Financial support was mainly provided by the NWDA as the main regulator and observer of the programme. However, the MW also received grants from other sources. Unlike the MW, the LV has a more stable source of funding. The Park is funded by the levy charged to the residents of Hertfordshire, Essex and Greater London. The calculated levy from the council tax base is based on The Levying Bodies (General) Regulations 1992 which are modified annually referred to inflation (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012e). The MW, on the hand, did not acquire this source of funding source.

During the Commencement Programme, the MW deployed £8.54m of NWDA funding and £40m of public sector budget till September 2007 and later when the programme was extended for another 18 months till March 2007, further funding was obtained from NDWA resources with the total of £330,000, bringing the amount of funding from the NWDA to £8.87m. In sum, the exact expenditure for the whole Commencement Programme was approximately £48.87m.

Meanwhile, the Succession Programme received £9m from the European Objective One[35] funding and £10.9m from NWDA. Other sources were from the private sectors. Throughout the Succession Programme, the Regional Park spent almost £20m. Looking at these breakdowns for both the Commencement and Succession, overall, the Regional Park received funding of almost £69m.

Sadly, when the funding stopped, MW was ended too therefore resulting the discontinuation of funding allocation for future reserves for the purpose of maintenance. This was argued by several interviewees who felt that the MW should have thought about its future maintenance and management. Other than that, it was the issue of promoting the waterfront and spending on marketing. As a Board Member voiced, "There is reluctance in the public sector funding to support marketing and yet that is what this project was about ultimately, about communicating a set of ideas which would change other people's perception". In some way, NWDA salvaged and directly funded some of the projects that were affected by the global economic downturn and the crash of the housing market sometime during the Succession Programme. These were projects that required more funding than the MW could offer and were potential to the waterfront.

The LVRPA's revenues is currently based on its Business Plan 2010-2013 which identifies specific income generation aimed by March 2013 (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2011b:p1). The Plan had estimated savings/income through: "(1) £400,000 per annum savings from senior management rationalisation (30% reduction); (2) £150,000 per annum increased cash income from existing activities; and (3) £250,000 per annum through 2012 related and new activities (business development)" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2011b). According to the LVRPA Assistant Director Resources and Business Development (LVRPA-R&B), the Park needs approximately £750,000 a year to run and maintain the Park. However, it was also mentioned that having the Olympic Games in future, it would raise the LV's profile and bring a lot more private income.

[35] European Objective One is part of European Funding. Objective One itself is drawn from various European funding such as European Regional Development Fund, or European Social Fund, or European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund, or even Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance. The purpose of Objective One funding is to support regeneration projects especially in terms of economic growth. Objective One is invested for a region which per capita GDP is less than 75% of the European Community average. It was mentioned by Bartlett (2011) that between 2000-2008, Objective One had funded more than 1,802 projects throughout Merseyside (see Bartlett, 2011; BBC News, 2003; Network for Europe, 2006).

In terms of potential future income, the LV forecasted its funding through other sources like sponsorship and commercial rights strategies (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2011b). It was specified that the "Sponsorship Strategy was introduced to the Park Authority from Grant Thornton in partnership with The Superlative Group[36]" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012b:p1). In relation to this, the proposal aimed to draw in some income by selling naming rights within the Park. Promisingly, the LVRPA Assistant Director Resources and Business Development (LVRPA-R&B) said that despite the unwillingness of the public to pay the levy and the amount that will be reduced in future, the LV can still rely on capital projects. This would be possible with the arrangements with the partners in terms of delivering the maintenance alongside the operation costs. In a positive response, he said,

> "*You've got to find the capital projects. You've got to get other partners for the actual maintenance and the operation cost. You've got to make people pay on the door. You've got to charge realistic prices. Then you find out how much your services are really wanted. That means if people have to pay then they will have to pay in the end....grass doesn't cut by itself. Trees don't look after themselves... some way they have to pay. And we're trying to get fair balance between what comes out a public person, what comes out to the people who actually use the facilities, the centres, the open spaces, etc*."
> (LVRPA Assistant Director Resources and Business Development, 27th September 2011)

Other than that, it was also anticipated that the LV could generate income from the Olympic facilities. Interestingly, it was discovered that the White Water Centre in Broxbourne, which was designed for rafting and kayaking, had already shown an increase of income. According to the LVRPA Chief Executive, for the first six months of its operation, the White Water Centre had made around £1.5m, not mentioning other expenditure around the Park that the visitors had spent. An interviewee mentioned that the canoe course can be let for commercial use, therefore enabling income through corporate of private booking. Moreover, he added, "We can make a lot of money through serving food, merchandise, etc. So that's really good!" But there is also an issue to it, as the canoe course is a seasonal course and therefore money is generated more during the summer. However, at the time when the interviews were conducted (26th September 2011), plans were being made to meet the demands for autumn and winter.

Nevertheless, despite the assured funding from the tax payers and other potential resources, the LV does face some issues. The need to deliver good services but with less money is said to be a challenge to the Park Authority. The income of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority "is financed from a levy calculated from the council tax base of Hertfordshire, Essex and Greater London" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2011d). Additionally, an interviewee said that the levy charges will be reduced to 50% in three years time. Currently, the levy is charged at £3 per household per year for the Park.

[36] *The Superlative Group* is a private corporation established in 1994 which specialises in selling the 'Naming Rights' and 'Corporate Sponsorships', for examples, for municipalities, for parks, or zoos, for universities or stadiums, arenas and convention centres. The purpose of partnership engagement with The Superlative Group is because the company helps to market and promote LV's Olympic venues. LVRPA has assigned The Superlative Group to market several facilities like the Lee Valley White Water Centre, Velodrome, Hockey Centre, Tennis Centre, and the Park Authority itself. The benefit of engaging The Superlative Group is because the company helps an agency or institution to generate income (see The Superlative Group, 2012a, 2012b).

Interestingly, little by little, the levy has been reduced since the beginning in 1966, from 66% to 60%, and currently 59% of the Park's income, and is targeted to soon go down to 50% by 2020. It seemed that the LV is facing pressure from the stakeholders and the locals about the issue of value for money and the levy. As an interviewee shared, "We are under pressure from our stakeholders in terms of London Councils to show value for money, and we're increasingly doing that. One of the arguments that we get from some of the London Councils is about the fact that none of their residents uses the using park" (27th September 2011). And because of this, the LV Chief Executive stresses "To ensure that the benefit isn't primarily local, politically we need to ensure the accountability to tax payers" (26th September 2011).

Other important form of the LV's resources is its Greenspace Ranger Service which monitors the Park. This ranger service covers a number of functions including patrolling the Park, executing repairs and maintenance within the area, monitoring the wildlife, performing guided walks with the visitors and many other duties (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2012k). This was totally different from the MW because, during its period of existence, there were no specifically assigned rangers by the MW to perform comparable duties.

6.4.4 Comparing Financial Management

The case studies have different approaches to financial management. The NWDA set down the arrangements for financial matters and appointed Wirral MBC as the Accountable Body to administer and control the financial side, while the LVRPA manages the LV's financial aspect itself.

It was interesting to hear about the LVRPA's thinking with regards to financial management. It was claimed that everybody in the Authority works with the same philosophy. The LVRPA-R&B commented, "This is the public's money, this is tax payer's money" (27th September 2011). Surprisingly, the levy charged for the populations of London, Hertfordshire and Essex is equivalent to just £1 each person a year. An interviewee regarded this as "A lottery ticket. One lottery ticket buys all of this [all of the facilities in the Park]. It's worth it!" (27th September 2011). Inevitably, it was believed that the danger in terms of funding is the economic climate. The LVRPA-R&B stated, "The biggest single risk is the economic climate for us because I think that is what drives people to cut budgets" (27th September 2011).

According to the LVRPA-R&B, financial management is divided effectively through the Resources & Business Development, the Managing & Monitoring, and other units in the Authority. However, each individual facility centre is responsible for its own budget. He described the process in detail saying, "For the budgets allocated there are specific rules which they must follow and procurement rules while they're spending their money. This was last updated April 2010. We usually update every year because procurement rules tend to change because we're governed by the European procurement. Additionally, you've got to get quotes to try and create competitiveness. This includes managing their income and employees. And a lot of that they have their own operating process as well" (27th September 2011).

Besides being audited by the Audit Commission, the Park Authority also performs internal audit every year. The way it was conducted was explained by the LVRPA-R&B, "They do different things in different years, they have a five year plan and within that plan, they visit different facilities, they do different thematic audits. That's agreed at the beginning of the year with audit committed. *It's an outsource service but we use it in 160 days worth of audit and it's carried out through the whole year* [engaging external auditor and the outcome of audition is referred within 160 days while the process of auditing runs throughout the year as LV has many units and facilities]. And when the external auditor comes to look at, they look at what internal audit work we've done, so they don't duplicate some of the work" (27th September 2011).

In each of the LV's capital development projects, the project manager is in charge of the financial aspects. Budgets are outlined for each project and the Accountable Officer (normally the Director) works with the project manager. The process involves revenue monitoring which is then set against the outlined budget. In this sense, the Accountable Officer would provide the rationalisation of variances. In making sure the effectiveness of the financial management, the LVRPA follows a strict financial management. It is the Park Authority's duty to give details to the elective members. As the LVRPA-R&B described, "We report quarterly to our elected members. We have specific department that does monitoring....every month the managers have to send back a report to centre saying how they're building against their budget" (27th September 2011).

Similarly, MW also followed strict financial management. A Project Manager worked of all aspects of project costs. Financial reports were provided to the Board quarterly and claims were made through the Accountable Body.

6.4.5 Comparing Park Plan or Park Development Framework

In benchmarking the MW and LV's Park Plan or Strategic Framework, the discussion will be divided into two topics; (a) Delivery of Park Plan or Strategic Framework; and (b) Content of Park Development Framework.

(a) Delivery of Park Development Framework

There is a vast difference between the MW and the LV in terms of their Park Plan or Park Development Framework. There were many factors that may have influenced this condition. MW was a programme that lasted only eight years. Additionally, MW was not obliged to any Park Act that requires it to produce a Park Plan. Throughout MW delivery, MW produced only two Park Plans, of which one was called the *Mersey Waterfront: Commencement Business Plan 2002* and the other one was its Strategic Framework in 2007 (*MW Strategic Framework*) (see Figure 6.40 which shows the image of MW Strategic Framework). However, MW Strategic Framework was only produced almost five years after its founding. Although this was a key document for the MW, still there were many other supporting policies and strategies to assist the MW development. During the early course of MW establishment, the Mersey Waterfront: Commencement Business Plan 2002 produced by TMP (The Mersey Partnership, 2002) was the chief document to set-up MW. This document however contained other standard policy and regulations specified by NWDA, as well as other related guidelines in connection to the region's strategy. Nevertheless, the researcher regards the number of frameworks within the eight year delivery period as good progress.

The MW Strategic Framework document was produced through a consortium involving Gillespies, AMION Consulting, LOCUM Consulting and Creative Concern. The researcher considers the MW Strategic Framework to be a complete framework and an advanced document as compared to the original idea in 2002 since it serves many purposes and leads the future aspiration. In brief, the various areas covered in the framework were:

- Establishing the Vision for the MW to 2020;
- Assessing the current and planned facilities;
- Reviewing and setting out the strategic context;
- Defining the MW in terms of geographical area and its characteristics;
- Standards and Quality Benchmarks;
- Specifying a framework for investment priorities to 2020; and
- Thinking and proposing suggestions for a future organisational structure (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007)

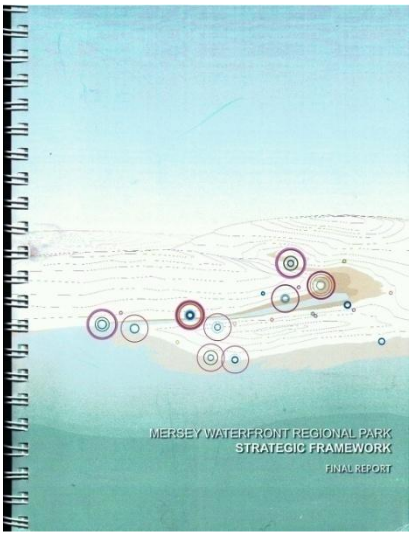


Figure 6.40: MW Strategic Framework 2007 (above)
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007)

In its Commencement Business Plan 2002, the proposed plan addressed the MW's potential and included its initial vision for the MW, as well as the marketing scheme and the approach to delivery. However, the Commencement Business Plan 2002 was not as detailed as the MW Strategic Framework.

The LV, on the contrary, produced four major development plans supplemented by many other vision statement documents and environmental strategies since 1966. LVRPA is obliged by Section 14 of the LV Park Act 1966 to prepare its plan of proposals after two years of park establishment. In relation to that, unlike MW, LV is therefore forced to follow the ruling. LVRPA therefore produced its first park development framework in 1969 (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969). 17 years onwards, in 1986, the LVRPA had then produced another development framework, the Lee Valley Park Plan (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986). Following this document, in the year 1998, the Park Authority again formulated another core framework which was sub-divided into two main documents; (1) Lee Valley Regional Park: Part One: Strategic Policy Framework (adopted in 1998) (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1998); and (2) Lee Valley Regional Park Plan. Part Two: Proposals (adopted in April 2000) (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2000). And, the latest framework is the Lee Valley Park Development Framework: Thematic Proposals 2011 (LV-PDF) (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a). However, the LV-PDF is a succeeding framework of the 'Park Development Framework: Vision, Aims and Principles' (PDF-VAP) produced in July 2010 (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010b). The PDF-VAP was the core foundation to the construction of the LV-PDF. In fact, the LV-PDF functions with the support from the vision, aims and principles addressed in the PDF-VAP.

The current LV-PDF however is not applied in isolation. It is supplemented with other development frameworks applied, including:

1) A Vision for 2017 produced in 2007 (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2007; see also Figure 6.41);
2) Park Development Framework: Statement of Community Involvement adopted in July 2010 (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010c; see also Figure 6.42);
3) Park Development Framework: Park Development Scheme adopted in July 2010 (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2010d; see also Figure 6.43); and
4) 2020 Vision: A World Class Visitor Destination in the Lee Valley (see Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011e; see also Figure 6.44).

LV Park Plan 1969 (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1969) was a complete document containing descriptive plan of proposals and maps. Interestingly, the proposals were not just conceptual ideas but were aided with guidelines and measures, as well as photos and diagrams, in the same document. It had also outlined the Park Authority's responsibility in working with other agencies for the benefit of the Park, which included partners like the Central Electricity Generating Board, British Waterways Board, Area Electricity Boards, Lee Conservancy Catchment Board, etc. Following the LV Park Plan 1969, the 1986 Park Plan emerged. However, this framework is slightly different from the first Park Plan. It did not have sketches (perspectives) but mostly contained written statements and maps of the development programme.

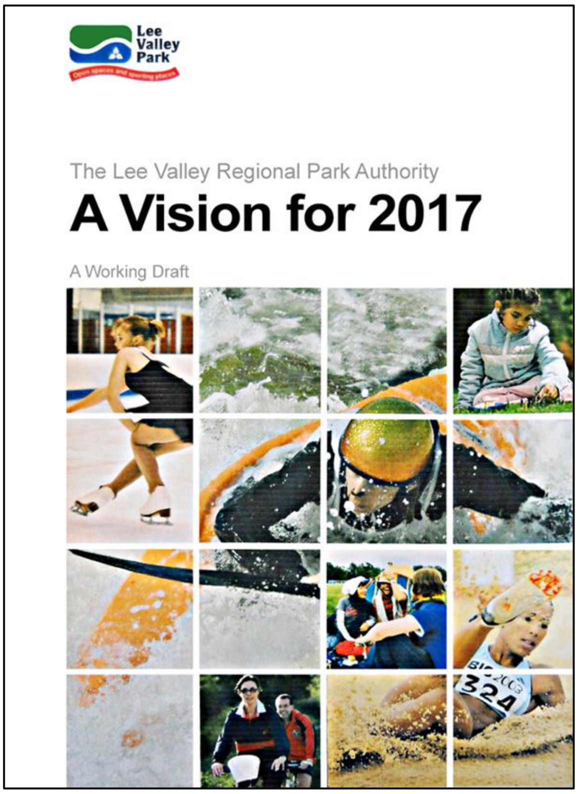


Figure 6.41: A Vision for 2017 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2007a)

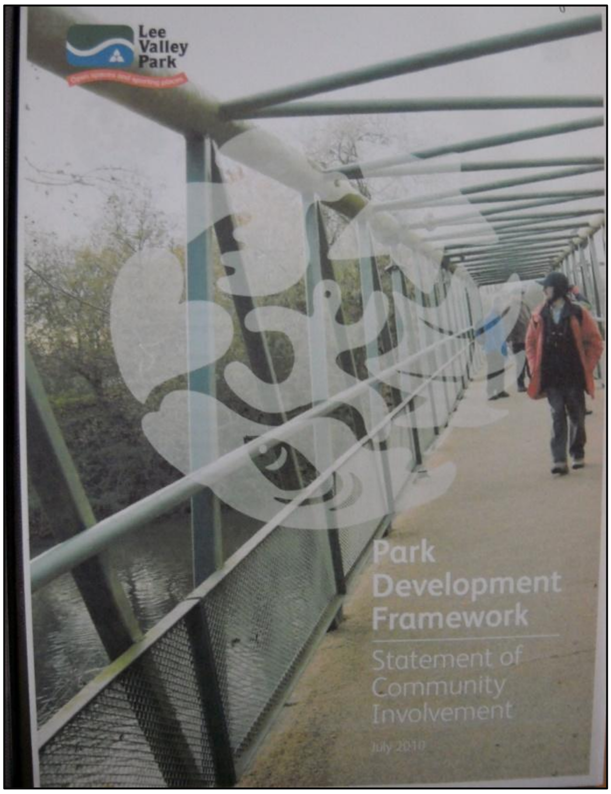


Figure 6.42: Park Development Framework: Statement of Community Involvement 2010 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2010c)

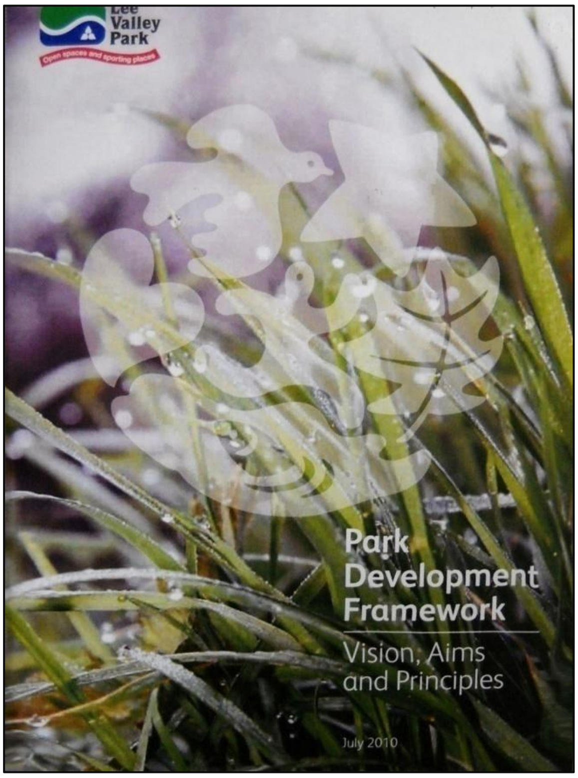


Figure 6.43: Park Development Framework: Vision, Aims and Principles (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2010d)

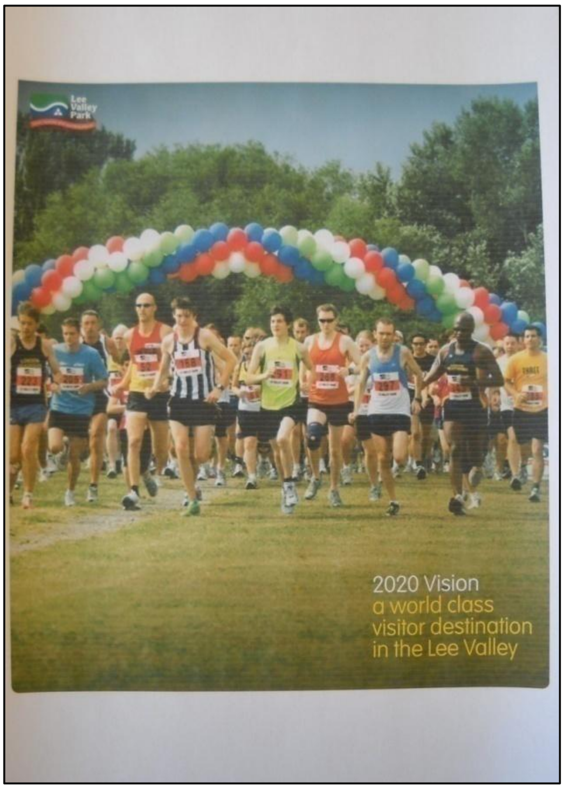


Figure 6.44: 2020 Vision: A World Class Visitor Destination in the Lee Valley (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2010a)

The second Park Plan produced in 1986 was a considerable advance on the first Park Plan. This time, the framework was designed with a specific timescale. Unlike the 1969 Park Plan, the framework envisaged its programme delivery within ten to fifteen years. Interestingly, in contrast to the first Park Plan, the improved version included a special section which described the implementation of development. In this particular section, many key aspects were highlighted, such as factors affecting the development programme and the delivery programme. The 1989 Park Plan therefore proved to some extent that emphasis should be paid to the core components of development, its priority projects and monitoring and evaluation. A major difference between the first and the second framework was that the 1986 document also informed the present development plans of the related local authorities as well as other agencies' development intentions (Lee Valley Regional Park Plan, 1986) which implies the link between the LVRPA development and its concern towards other main partners' development schemes.

Following the 1986 Park Plan, the LVRPA developed its third framework; the Strategic Policy Framework (Part One), produced in 1998 and supplemented by the Proposals (Part Two) in 2000. The difference between the two was that the first presents the LVRPA's tactical ideas and structure of development, whereas the latter delivers the proposals in the form of written statements and justification of those proposals. In a more specific description, Part One delineated its vision and the hub for future development, its resources, visitors' opportunities and approach to development (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1998). Meanwhile, Part Two elaborates the Park's proposals combining together the general proposals and specific area-based schemes (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2000). However, the 2000 Proposals did not have maps. It was merely a description of ideas presented in separate divisions; generally distinguished between the (1) strategic proposals (designated for any piece of land within the Park's boundary), (2) park-wide proposals (indicates proposals for the Park in total), (3) section-wide proposals (a specific topic which focuses on eight sections of the Park); and (4) site proposals (proposals of the eight sections that were subdivided into several sites).

Through this third framework, the vision paid heed to the role and characteristics of the Park, as well as the development proposals. Over the 32 years since its beginning, the emphasis evolved from establishing the character of development which focuses on landscaping (in its 1969 Park Plan) and continued with the provision recreational areas and its importance (during the phase of the 1986 Park Plan), and gradually shifting its focus to sustaining the Park whilst at the same time offering more opportunities within the Park and promoting conservation of its natural assets (from the late 1990s onwards, before the LV-PDF). However, the research discovered that there was no specific timescale of delivery associated with the framework. It was indicated that it would "guide the future planning and development of the Regional Park and take it into the 21st century" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1998:p14).

As mentioned before, the current LV-PDF was adopted in January 2011. It was a product of a three-year exercise involving various stages of work including studying the current scenario, finding alternative scenarios and the preparation of selected development options. The construction of this framework was a result of collaboration among partners which included LVRPA, CABE Space and other stakeholders. Looking at the time difference between the third framework (Park Plan 1998) and the present framework, it can be concluded that the LVRPA was strategically updating its frameworks due to the issue discovered in the making of Park Plan 1986, whereby development duration was not outlined in the 1969 Park Plan, and therefore suggesting that Park Plan 1998 was only fitting for a period of ten years. Henceforth, in going forward and meeting the current demands, the LV-PDF is believed to be practical in implementation. The purpose of this framework is to steer the LVRPA in achieving its aspirations for future development and management. It proffers direction and guides the activities of the Park Authority and other stakeholders. The framework is now a blueprint which acts as guidance for the Park Authority and other related Riparian agencies intended for the purpose of development and management of land within the Park. According to the LVRPA, the framework "provides two functions: the strategic framework for ongoing activities and guidance for others involved in the development and management of land within the Park" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a:p4)

According to the Park Authority, once adopted, it will replace the current Strategic Business Plan (2000-2010) and A Vision for 2017. However, the LV-PDF does not stand alone. The framework is associated with other core documents along with the application of other supporting documents. The core documents include the Park Development Framework: Vision, Aims and Principles (PDF-VAP) (adopted in July 2010), Objectives and Proposals through the LV-PDF and the Area Proposals (which are still ongoing and targeted to be completed in April 2013). Meanwhile, the supporting documents for the present LV-PDF include the following:

- Lee Valley Regional Park: Strategic Policy Framework. Part One (adopted in 1998);
- Lee Valley Regional Park Plan. Part Two: Proposals (adopted in April 2000);
- Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Lee Valley Park Development Framework. Sustainability Appraisal Report (November 2009);
- Habitats Regulations Assessment for the Lee Valley Park Development Framework. Screening Statement (November 2009);
- Park Development Framework: Statement of Community Involvement (July 2010); and
- Park Development Framework: Park Development Scheme (July 2010).

In addition to those documents, there are other supplementary strategies, policies and plans which are also referred to as part of delivering the LV vision. These include the Lee Valley Biodiversity Action Plan 2000, the Sports and Leisure Policy 2002 and the Volunteers Strategy 2006. As in July 2011, the LV-PDF is still in the process of enhancement and will gradually incorporate proposals for all the land within the park. For that reason, the Park Framework can also be named as a 'working framework'. Once fully completed, the proposals will replace the Lee Valley Regional Park Plan 2000. However, any relevant proposals from the Park Plan 2000 will remain and be incorporated in the current plan. To this date, the area based proposals are still in the process of fulfilling the Park's whole development proposals.

(b) Content of Park Development Framework

At this point, attention turns to examining the content of both the MW Strategic Framework and the LV-PDF. This is done to see how both frameworks differ in terms of its coverage and emphasis, given the fact that both frameworks are current and intended to serve their purpose for the next ten years for the MW and fourteen years for the LV based on its future role.

In LV-PDF the core themes for the park and the potential key areas for future development were highlighted into various key areas as follows (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 2011a):

- Foreword;
- Aim- Visitors;
- Aim- Sport and Recreation;
- Aim- Biodiversity;
- Aim- Community;
- Aim- Landscape and Heritage; and
- Aim- Environment.

Figures 6.45 and 6.46 below demonstrate examples of the LV-PDF 2011 contents. Both figures show how a key area is presented in terms of vision and objectives.

Lee Valley Park
Open spaces and sporting places

9

Park Development Framework

Our Aim for

Visitors

A Park that is a high quality and regionally unique visitor destination

Why do we think it is important?

- A regional park should be a special place that offers visitors experiences they cannot find elsewhere.
- We want as many people as possible to visit the Park and experience and enjoy what it has to offer.
- Visitors desire high quality facilities and services. It makes the visit enjoyable and memorable, invites return visits, and encourages a positive experience to be relayed to family and friends.

In this section:

Objective 1.1 – Identity and brand
A Park that is known and attracts visitors from across the region

Objective 1.2 – Access to the Park
A Park that is easy to access and experience

Objective 1.3 - Routes
An extensive network of routes

Objective 1.4 – Visitor facilities
A network of visitor facilities

Objective 1.5 – Accommodation
A range of visitor accommodation

Figure 6.45: Part of LV-PDF contents which addresses the aim for visitors and its objectives (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2011a:p9)

Park
Open spaces and sporting places

Visitors

Objective 1.1 – Identity and brand

A Park that is known and attracts visitors from across the region

Where are we now?

Over four milion visitor enjoy the Park each year. We use a range of marketing techniques to communicate with curent and potential visitors, and with stakeholders, partners and benefactors. We undertake promotional activities throughout the year: seeking media opportunities, carying out campaigns, producing regular bulletins, updates and briefings, apearing at conferences, seminars and exhibitions - and of course communicating all up to the minute information through our website. In addition, we produce supporting literature for each key site and for the Park as a whole.

What do we want to achieve?

- To deliver a distinctive and memorable brand and identity that captures the core values of the Park, symbolises its uniqueness, and reflects its importance as a place to visit.
- To create a brand and identity that instills pride in those landowners within the Park.
- To draw upon the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games as a focus for increasing the profile of the Park.

How will we deliver?

For the whole Park

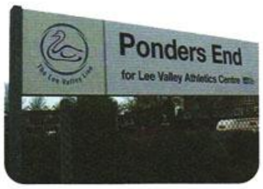
We will

- Prepare a comprehensive branding strategy that wil help define an identity and brand for the Park as a whole.
- Provide clear guidance on how the brand and identity of the Park Authority and our estate will relate to the whole Park brand.
- Prepare design guidance for the visitor infrastructure throughout the Park (e.g. signage, furniture, materials etc). It is important that this guidance should:
- Support the development of the Park as an integrated landscape entity.
- Reflect and celebrate local distinctivess.
- Promote the identity of the Park as a whole alongside individual landowner and manager identities, so as to encourage them to adopt and use the brand correctly and efectively.

On our estate

We will

- Undertake a long term investment programe for new and replacement visitor infrastructure throughout our estate (to include signage, furniture, paths etc.)
- Implement operational rebranding (to include printed material, web pages, uniforms, vehicle livery etc.)
- Continue a range of marketing measures to build market presence and create further awereness of the Park brand.



Working with others

We will

- Work with landowners and managers within the Park to implement an aproach to visitor infrastructure that promotes the Park identity as a whole (alongside those of the individual landowner and manager identities).
- Work with landowners and managers within the Park to develop a coordinated approach to the marketing of facilities, features and the visitor offer that is consistent with our Park identity and brand, and which meets a level of quality compatible with our standards.

Figure 6.46: Part of LV-PDF contents explaining its current situation, targets and approach to delivery in achieving the aim for visitors (above)

Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2011a:p10)

The MW Strategic Framework (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007) in contrast, contained the following areas:

- Introduction;
- The Vision;
- The Function of the Mersey Waterfront;
- Spatial Framework;
- Quality Benchmarking;
- Organisation and Management; and
- Next Steps- Delivering the Framework.

Figures 6.47 and 6.48 below show an example of part of MW Strategic Framework content. Both figures describe the concept of 'Spatial Framework' descriptively and in the form of thematic map.

Looking at the general topics above, the variations between the MW Strategic Framework and the LV-PDF in terms of the subjects incorporated can easily be detected because the focus of agenda for the MW Strategic Framework was wider in terms of coverage as it not only concentrates on development matters but touches on the background of the MW itself. Moreover, the framework also described the organisation and management of the MW. Unlike the MW, the LV-PDF assumed that the public are well versed about the Park and the Park Authority's role. LV-PDF was presented in a way that only focuses on the development thematic proposals. Attention was paid to sports, recreational facilities, along with other supporting elements especially in sustaining the environment, all for the benefit of the visitors. The intensity of conceptual proposals in the LV-PDF however was clear as the whole document was sub-divided into development sections and proposals were generalised by presenting thematic plans like access, accommodation, types of outdoor activities, sports facilities and events.

In terms of the main features of both frameworks, the MW Strategic Framework highlights the Spatial Framework which also draws on the conceptual idea of the 14 Windows on the Waterfront (see Figures 6.49 and 6.50 which demonstrate an example of a Window on the Waterfront thematic concept proposed for Eastham Country Park & Mouth of Ship Canal). These 'Windows' were a conceptual development proposed for the regional park and targeted on a specific area but with reflection of linkages among other areas. This spatial framework illustrates the key areas as a focus of development with the spatial linkages. The components of the Spatial Framework included the Regional Park Zone, the Windows on the Waterfront (development concept) and the linkages. In addition to that, the framework informs the structure of the organisation and its management, as well as stressing the application of Quality Standards and Benchmarking. These were emphasised for the benefit of MW in ensuring effective programme delivery. The MW Strategic Framework also addresses the quality standards for the regional park. It describes the adopted existing standards or guidelines for the park and suggests the development of specific standards to be employed for the regional park. The basis of this idea was to ensure that people would return either to that same place or another different place within the park.

mersey WATERFRONT

4.5. THE WINDOWS ON THE WATERFRONT - DESTINATION ZONES

The Windows on the Waterfront concept has emerged through the development of a Vision for the future of the Regional Park. This is primarily a spatial construct, a way of reflecting the sheer scale and diversity of the Waterfront experience for investors, users and deliverers on the Waterfront.

The Windows on the Waterfront identify and promote a series of experiences/destinations on the Waterfront that respond to the variety and diversity of the Regional Park. These are designed to focus not only the existing assets of the Park, but also on locations of significant potential for change/regeneration. The aim of the Park in these locations will be to work with public and private sector partners to facilitate better access to the Waterfront, deliver a quality of experience and promote them as destinations, both in their own right but also as part of a wider whole.

Each Window will represent a multi-faceted destination zone where a number of attractions/investments are brought together to create a 'hub' of activity. This concept has been debated with the project partners and as a result, there are now 14 windows identified. The nature of the Windows is very different. Some will be urban in character, some will be commercial and some will be rural reflecting the diversity of the waterfront experience. What they will all share, however is high quality visitor experience and facilities as part of the Mersey Waterfront 'signature'.

This concept will in effect create a series of 'events 'in the waterfront landscape. In addition, however, they could also become the focus/location for events which could vary according to the character of the window, from the air show at Southport to the windsurfing competitions at West Kirkby.

In addition to the spatial dimension as described, a physical manifestation of the concept is proposed through the creation of a series of art/design based buildings and structures on the waterfront of varying scales and forms. These physical installations will further animate the experience, and promote an identity and excitement for the identified Windows on the Waterfront. The nature of the design and scale of these physical investments and their delivery will necessarily vary according to the specifics of the location and this is discussed relative to each of the Windows at Appendix 1. This is not to say that such projects will not be funded or delivered elsewhere on the waterfront, rather that the identified destination zones will be a priority.

Where the installation is a building, these might be delivered via the re-branding/improvement of an existing building or through the facilitation of new buildings either through restoration or new build. These buildings will usually be delivered with the private sector and should include publicly accessible facilities/toilets as a minimum and other facilities in the form of a café/restaurant and equipment hire, meeting an identified shortage of facilities on the Waterfront.

The delivery of the Windows on the Waterfront buildings/art pieces will give the Park the opportunity to raise the profile of quality and design. Therefore, where appropriate, the buildings /art installations should be the subject of international design competitions in conjunction with partners. They will also provide the opportunity to promote interpretation of the Waterfront's assets and to act as a focus for educational and interpretive information.

Each of the Windows is set out below. In addition, a profile of each Window is set out at Appendix 1 which addresses the essential character and distinctiveness of the experience for the Park, the existing assets, spatial relationships and the opportunity and role for the Mersey Waterfront.

- *Waterfront Window 1 – Southport*
- *Waterfront Window 2 – Ainsdale - on - Sea*
- *Waterfront Window 3 - Formby Point*
- *Waterfront Window 4 - Crosby Coastal Park*
- *Waterfront Window 5 – International Waterfront*
- *Waterfront Window 6 – Liverpool Riverlands*
- *Waterfront Window 7 – Speke Riverside*
- *Waterfront Window 8 – Mersey Gateway*
- *Waterfront Window 9 – Eastham Country Park & mouth of Manchester Ship Canal*
- *Waterfront Window 10 – Woodside/Hamilton Square*
- *Waterfront Window 11 – New Brighton*
- *Waterfront Window 12 – Hoylake*
- *Waterfront Window 13 – West Kirby*
- *Waterfront Window 14 – Wirral Country Park*

38

Figure 6.47: Part of MW Strategic Framework contents which describe Spatial Framework (above)

Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007:p38)

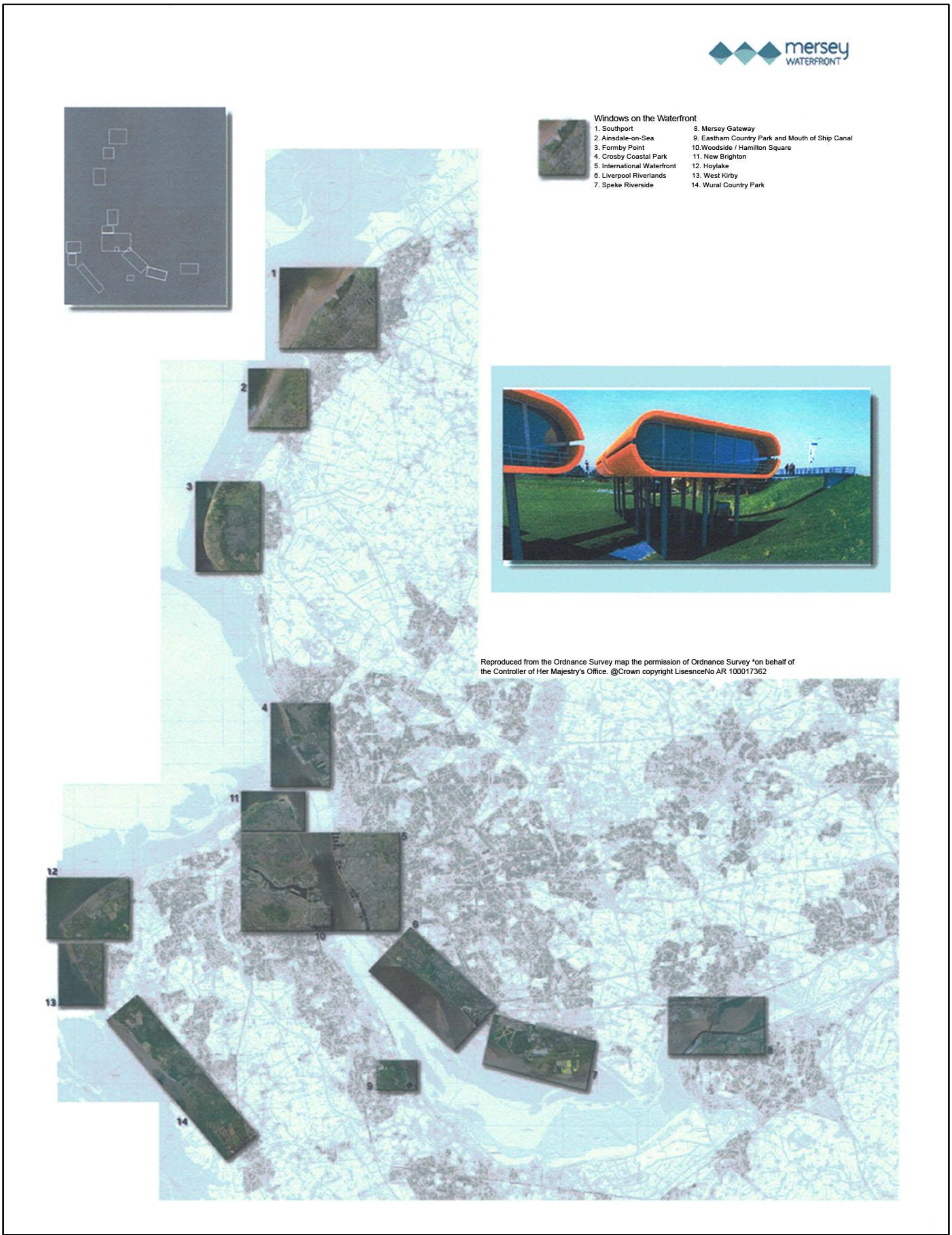
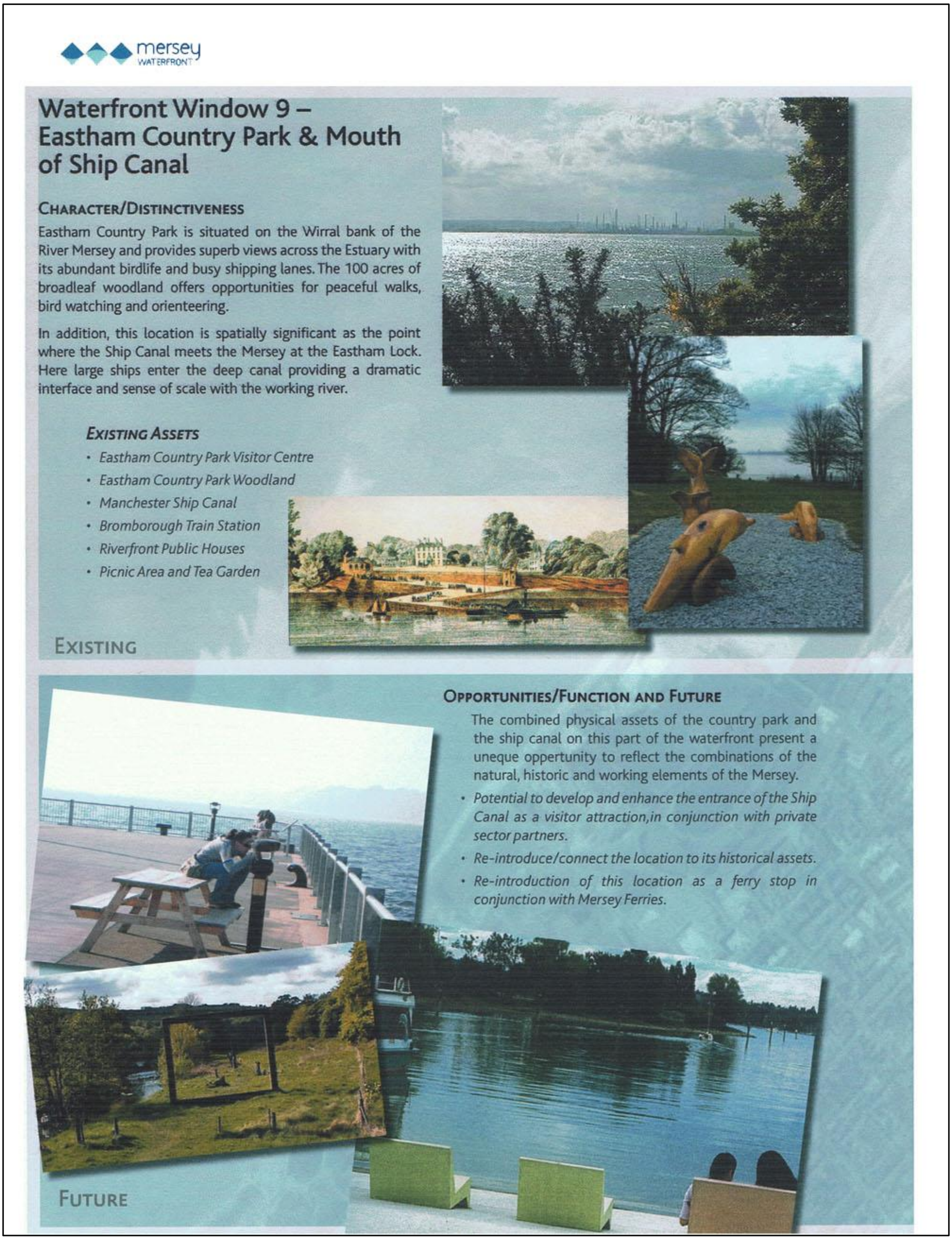


Figure 6.48: Part of MW Strategic Framework which demonstrates a thematic map of spatial framework for MW (above)
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007:p39)



mersey WATERFRONT

Waterfront Window 9 – Eastham Country Park & Mouth of Ship Canal

Character/Distinctiveness

Eastham Country Park is situated on the Wirral bank of the River Mersey and provides superb views across the Estuary with its abundant birdlife and busy shipping lanes. The 100 acres of broadleaf woodland offers opportunities for peaceful walks, bird watching and orienteering.

In addition, this location is spatially significant as the point where the Ship Canal meets the Mersey at the Eastham Lock. Here large ships enter the deep canal providing a dramatic interface and sense of scale with the working river.

Existing Assets

- *Eastham Country Park Visitor Centre*
- *Eastham Country Park Woodland*
- *Manchester Ship Canal*
- *Bromborough Train Station*
- *Riverfront Public Houses*
- *Picnic Area and Tea Garden*

Existing

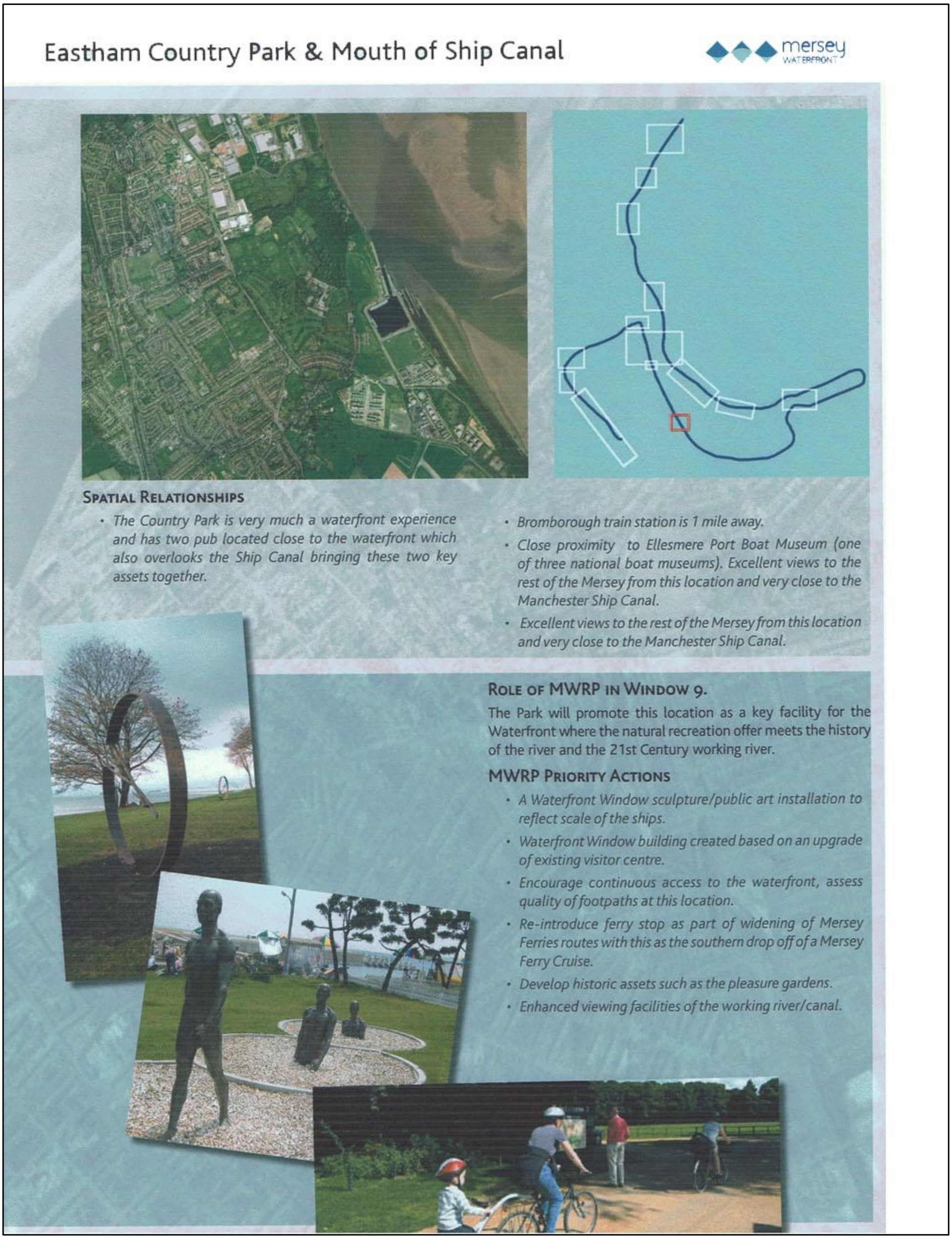
Opportunities/Function and Future

The combined physical assets of the country park and the ship canal on this part of the waterfront present a uneque opportunity to reflect the combinations of the natural, historic and working elements of the Mersey.

- *Potential to develop and enhance the entrance of the Ship Canal as a visitor attraction,in conjunction with private sector partners.*
- *Re-introduce/connect the location to its historical assets.*
- *Re-introduction of this location as a ferry stop in conjunction with Mersey Ferries.*

Future

Figure 6.49: An example of Windows on the Waterfront proposed for Eastham Country Park & Mouth of Ship Canal (Existing and Future) (above)
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007:Appendix 1-p38)



Eastham Country Park & Mouth of Ship Canal

mersey WATERFRONT

Spatial Relationships

- The Country Park is very much a waterfront experience and has two pub located close to the waterfront which also overlooks the Ship Canal bringing these two key assets together.
- Bromborough train station is 1 mile away.
- Close proximity to Ellesmere Port Boat Museum (one of three national boat museums). Excellent views to the rest of the Mersey from this location and very close to the Manchester Ship Canal.
- Excellent views to the rest of the Mersey from this location and very close to the Manchester Ship Canal.

Role of MWRP in Window 9.

The Park will promote this location as a key facility for the Waterfront where the natural recreation offer meets the history of the river and the 21st Century working river.

MWRP Priority Actions

- A Waterfront Window sculpture/public art installation to reflect scale of the ships.
- Waterfront Window building created based on an upgrade of existing visitor centre.
- Encourage continuous access to the waterfront, assess quality of footpaths at this location.
- Re-introduce ferry stop as part of widening of Mersey Ferries routes with this as the southern drop off of a Mersey Ferry Cruise.
- Develop historic assets such as the pleasure gardens.
- Enhanced viewing facilities of the working river/canal.

Figure 6.50: An example of Windows on the Waterfront proposed for Eastham Country Park & Mouth of Ship Canal (above)
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007:Appendix 1-p39)

Conversely, it can clearly be judged that the focus of the LV-PDF is basically channelled towards the opportunities and resources that the Park can offer. It focuses on the development and management of the park's leisure, recreation, nature conservation, sport and entertainment. The main attention drawn to each thematic proposal is centred on the key areas of development. The Thematic Proposals are also influenced by the forthcoming international major event, the 2012 Olympic Games. Another important area addressed is the strategies for park visitors. This was given a priority as the park pays great attention to the visitors. The aim was to turn the park into a great destination for visitors. In achieving this aim, the framework focused on the accessibility to the park, its facilities, routes and accommodation. The LV-PDF also introduced a separate section on the community aspect. This included the health aspects, opportunities in arts, supportive events, the provision of learning opportunities and specification of opportunities for volunteers. Overall, the framework indicates concentration on physical and social development. Nonetheless, each thematic proposal is seen as comprehensively presented as each section describes not only the aspirations and targets but also defines the current scenario and methods of achieving those plans. In contrast, the MW Strategic Framework was not totally looking at its resources, but covered other aspects too. This is probably because the LVRPA had nothing to worry about their future as its position was more secured as the Statutory Body for the Park, and with its promise of funding and arrangements for future maintenance.

Consequently at this point, the researcher discovers an interesting fact of the framework duration for both case studies. Oddly, the MW Strategic Framework was designed for the period from 2007 to 2020, whereby implementation is expected to take around 15 to 20 years (see Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p8 and p69). This has raised an issue as to who would uphold the framework and take responsibility of completing the tasks. The LV-PDF, on the other hand, sets out the park's aspirations and specific proposals for the future use and development of the park. However, it did not specify the duration of the framework application. Nevertheless, the LVRPA Head of Planning & Strategic Partnership convincingly articulates that the LV-PDF was designed to cater for a period of 20 years. He said, "The aims will be reviewed every five years. The area proposals will probably be reviewed every ten years" (27th September 2011). Additionally, the other core document that forms the park's framework which is the Vision, Aims and Principles produced in July 2010 also does not restrict the timeframe for its purpose. The framework documents were designed to direct and assist the park development and management at present and its future.

Despite this concern, there can be no doubt that the local authorities within the park are aware of the existence of the Strategic Framework and hopefully the legacy would be continued. According to the interviewees, even though the MW organisation and management no longer exist, the MW Strategic Framework will remain as a point of reference to the related local authorities and the regional park will be their responsibility as well as other agencies in connection to the development and management of the area. To this end, even though the programme has ended, the MW still exists and the former partners will continue the legacy of developing and managing the park. It is not clear as to who is responsible for ensuring that the delivery of any development work within the park is carried out in accordance with the Strategic Framework. This is due to the fact that it is unclear how far the mandatory decree of the Strategic Framework is being enforced by the main funder (NWDA). Nonetheless, it was believed that NWDA had identified the Strategic Framework as an important source of guidance for further and future development of the Park. For that reason, the researcher concurs with the idea that the MW Strategic Framework continues as a legacy and a direction to whoever is pursuing further development and management of the park.

6.4.6 Comparing Project Plan and Timescale

In terms of regional park intervention as a programme, the LV shows no sign of stopping but the MW had a limited period of delivery. Understandably, a few interviewees expressed their frustration as they anticipated that the MW would be a long-term programme. In fact, two interviewees believed that it should be a 20-year period programme. Sadly, this never happened.

(a) Duration of Programme

MW was implemented in two phases; (1) the Commencement Programme; and (2) the Succession Programme. The first phase ran from 2003 to 2007 while the second phase took place from 2008 to 2011. The Commencement Programme which was initially designed to end in September 2005 was extended to a further 18 months to March 2007. Meanwhile, the Succession Programme was initially prepared in 2005 and designed for the period from April 2007 to March 2010, but was later extended and eventually ended in March 2011.

In the MW Commencement Programme, projects generally concentrated on creating a sense of place, which included the improvement of the link between the town centre and the waterfront in Southport (Natural Economy Northwest, 2008). In this phase, the MW successfully delivered 56 projects of various types and scales (access improvements, feasibility studies and pilot projects and large urban regeneration projects) while the Succession Programme included several major projects including formulating the MW Strategic Framework, and other projects called Brand New Brighton, Pier Head Ferry Terminal, Sefton Water Centre, Another Place, Pride in Our Promenades, Promoting the Place and Engaging People and Quality Assurance Scheme. The difference between the two phases was that the projects for the Commencement Programme were focused on waterfront improvement and the development of economy within the waterfront area, whereas the Succession Programme was focused on promoting the waterfront as a tourism destination. This explains why the MW Strategic Framework 2007 suggested many thematic concepts geographically for the purpose of creating visitor attractions. It was understood that during the Commencement Programme, projects were classified under five core areas; "(1) *Major Projects; (2) Estuary Development & Management; (3) Tourism, Sport & Leisure; (4) Commerce; and (5) Maintenance"* (Mersey Basin Campaign, 2009:p2-3). Alongside those primary focuses, the Commencement Programme also supported two other schemes: (1) Marketing Initiative; and (2) Community Engagement Scheme. Marketing was basically carried out to expose the waterfront and its benefits to the public while the latter formed part of the public's participation in decision making for the waterfront.

In the Succession Programme, the MW underwent some slight changes in terms of its approach to regeneration development. Projects were more concentrated on specific areas and were more targeted in terms of physical development and the focus on visitor attractions. In this stage, the key themes of development included; "(1) *Strategic Places; (2) Animating Waterspaces; (3) Pride in Our Promenades; (4) Coastal Spaces and Places; and (5) Promoting the Place and Engaging People"* (Mersey Basin Campaign, 2009:p3-4).

In comparing the MW and the LV, it is apparent that LV takes longer duration for each period of Park Plan delivery, whereas MW was delivered into two phases throughout its eight years of programme delivery. To date, LV has experienced four different Park Plans. LV spent 20 years in delivering its first Park Plan, 12 years for its second Park Plan and 13 years implementing its third Park Plan. Nevertheless, the researcher does not see this as an argument, as Park Plan differs in terms of duration and forecasting as well as expectations. For most of LV's frameworks, LV planned to deliver its development within 10-15 years, while MW delivery stages were arranged to accommodate its resources and programme duration.

(b) Project Delivery

In general, both case studies indicate that projects have met their delivery plan. There were a few projects that did not meet their targets but that did not cause any failure of the regional parks. There were many key factors that had led to achieving those intended projects (see Section 6.7.1). To briefly mention here, one MW Executive Team Member distinguished that "Working closely with the Board, partners and where appropriate Technical Advisory Groups to ensure projects were delivered on time and within budget" (20^{th} January 2011).

Nevertheless, one of the MW Management Group Members also brought up the issue of delays to several projects. However, these failures were not a total catastrophe for the whole MW. In fact, it had delivered more than 60 projects (see discussion in Section 6.5 later). It was therefore uncovered that the projects that were regarded as unfortunate were the River Lands, the Brand New Brighton project and the Garden Festival Site. One Board Member defended, "The three projects with that kind of slip shall we say were the Brand New Brighton scheme and River Lands, the Garden Festival Site but they've been delayed...but that's not the fault of Mersey Waterfront, that's an issue with the schemes themselves in securing planning approval, putting the financial packages together to enable delivery to start and not because of the impacts of those things happened at the timetable" (14th January 2011). In parallel, almost half of the Project Managers agreed that projects failed due to the collapse of the housing market (Abdullah and Batey, 2011).

The LV interviewees agreed that project delivery was generally monitored in accordance with its schedule. However, there were occasions where unavoidable problems occur as described by an interviewee as poor contractors. In another account, another interviewee commented, "We deliver most things on time and if there are delays, there's a delay with ELM [Electronic Leisure Money] but that's because it's cutting edge in terms of what we're delivering with our software supplier, it is cutting edge" (27th September 2011).

6.4.7 Comparing Efforts on Benchmarking Other Exemplar

In general, when asked about the importance of benchmarking, a majority of the interviewees and participants from the MW and every interviewee from the LV agreed that benchmarking is essential in examining programme performance. In fact, it was no surprise from the LV's interviewees that they know about benchmarking because LVRPA has been using benchmarking exercise. It can be concluded that, for both case studies, benchmarking is ideal in order to understand and learn from other organisations. It was interesting to hear how a MW Board Member perceived the act of benchmarking. He said, "I think when we went to look at the Emscher Landscape Park in Germany, we regarded that as benchmarking. We benchmarked ourselves against that and undertook study visits. We discussed how we were similar in terms of social, economic and landscape conditions and the way in which we can try it ourselves" (10th December 2010). It was then clear that benchmarking was part of the preliminary task for the MW for the purpose of defining its projects for the waterfront. The only argument that the research received from the many responses was that learning from others, especially if it had to be explored abroad, was likely to be expensive.

Equally, the LVRPA-R&B believes that benchmarking is important and that includes measuring a regional park's financial performance. His idea was worthy of note. In his belief, the notion of competing with others inevitably allows one to understand the current condition and to fit into that situation. He said, "I think we're not just one space, we have a variety of elements which makes the Park, need a lot of maintenance and ground maintenance. And you're in a competitive market and if you know what people are paying and what sort of specification, you can drive a very hard bargain with the contractors because you know what market rates are, you know what sort of competitors you have and everyone's paying. We benchmark with all the other athletic centres so we can get best practices throughout the UK; how they run and how cost effective they are" (27th September 2011). In general, most respondents and participants agreed that for any future regional park programme, the practice of learning from others is highly recommended.

6.4.8 Comparing the Practice of Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation differs for the MW and the LV in terms of approach. However, both regional parks considered the process as an important activity in programme delivery. As part of project delivery, monitoring and evaluation is the key principle in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation process. For both case studies, monitoring includes the role of the Board Members. Progress of projects was reported to the Board. For the MW, in relation to the annual monitoring task, the Board Members were notified about changes to project delivery, in order to bring about any alternatives. The LVRPA-R&B stated, "They monitor, they set the budget, they have reports taken to them and they scrutinise. They challenge us. We can't hide from them. We have to report to them. They want to know how we're doing and they set stretched targets" (27th September 2011). Meanwhile, one of the MW Management Group members mentioned, "It's coming from complex multiple funding projects where you have to manage very, very carefully where the money's coming from, how it's spent. So the monitoring is extremely tight" (6th January 2011).

It was understood that the MW project managers had to report quarterly to the Board due to the standard approach structured by TMP, i.e. the standard form for evaluation of projects which was used for the MW projects (The Mersey Partnership, 2007). This form of assessment was carried out to examine the practicality of a project and effects. It was learnt from a MW Executive Team Member that monitoring and evaluation was conducted at two levels; "at programme level via NWDA health checks and District Audits, and at project level by the Finance and monitoring executive (MW Executive Team Member) and through Faithful & Gould Quantity Surveyors" (20th January 2011). Otherwise, there were also regular meeting and updates to seek where necessary. Throughout the whole programme, the MW had engaged a private consultant as an external examiner in assessing its performance; once for the mid-term

Commencement Programme in 2005 (Regeneris Consulting, 2005) and the other during the Succession Programme in 2007 (Regeneris Consulting, 2007).

For the LV, currently it applies the Balanced Score Card[37] to evaluate its performance and monitors its operation by reflecting on the Business Plan. However, according to an interviewee, since some of the indicators of performance were revoked and several internal indicators were no longer relevant, therefore the indicators were reviewed in 2010 and during the interviews the LVRPA was still in the process of re-examining and formulating new indicators. The LVRPA Head of Performance & Information regarded the Balanced Score Card as essential as it focuses on the factors that can stimulate the organisation, therefore aiding LVRPA to achieve its objectives. He explained, “Performance has to relate to our objectives and what we’re trying to deliver in our strategy. We have a clear [direction], here’s our strategy, here’s our core objectives and then measuring that performance, so we have a number of KPIs [Key Performance Indicators] that we measure our strategies against and then we have indicators to monitor against our objectives and indicators to monitor the performance of developed spaces and built facilities. So yes, it tracks [detects] LVRPA performance against what we’re trying to do [targets] if we’re not delivering our strategies, our performance indicators tell us”.

For LV, the way evaluation is done is through specific indicators outlined for projects. And, in doing evaluation, the LVRPA reports to the Board Members every three months. It was also learnt that the LVRPA engages research companies to perform the evaluation, including face-to-face interviews, as well as other technology like the Visitor Counter (to identify the number of visitors to the park). Besides evaluating and monitoring the projects, financial matters are also assessed. In any development project, the national Prudential Code[38] is referred to and financial evaluation is part of that evaluation process carried out at the initial stage of a project, i.e. during assessing the proposal. True to form, as the LVRPA is constantly trying to enhance the park, it also monitors the number of visitors to the park since 2005. This was very much different from the MW during its implementation process. This had therefore raised an issue as to how the MW had monitored its number of visitors. There were many statements provide by the participants and the interviewees that the number of visitors had increased. Unfortunately, according to a MW Project Manager, it was not practical to install the visitor counters for the MW as it was costly. This however happened during the MW delivery period. Currently, it was understood that the TMP (under the Tourism Board) is periodically performing the task of surveys to check the number of visitors to Liverpool, therefore difficult to identify the changes or trend in numbers of visitors specifically for within the waterfront. And for that reason, it was difficult to track any data of the visitor number for the MW itself.

[37] Balanced Score Card approach was described earlier in Chapter 2, under Section 2.3- The types of Evaluation Practice

[38] The Prudential Code is designed for credit approvals and supports local authorities to determine their capital investment decisions. It covers all aspects from capital expenditure, affordability and treasury management. Local authorities are required to look up the ‘Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities’ (developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy [CIPFA]) (see The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, 2011).

According to the LVRPA Chief Executive, the LV uses "a very comprehensive visitor tracking evaluation set up, in terms of actual numbers and where people come from, customers' satisfaction and history of visits" (26th September 2011). Apparently, the LVRPA had installed visitor counters and usage counters all over the park. It was stated that the LV used to have 59 cameras at any one time. The counters were fixed in various parts of the park, including the entrance to building or open space, inside the building and across a driveway. It was understood that this effort was carried out to monitor the volume of vehicles entering the park and the number of people at a specific area. The purpose of recording visitor numbers is to provide LVRPA with information enabling it to plan for its future maintenance and provision of new facilities.

Nevertheless, it was agreed that empirical data is quite difficult to obtain as people move around the park. Therefore, the best solution is to set up the counters at access points and fit five or six counters in an area. The LVRPA Head of Performance & Information clarifies that the counter cost around £250,000 each but it is more practical and easily monitored as compared to the previous type the LVRPA used. Before this, the rangers had to plug in the PDA [Personal Digital Assistant] and write down the data. For that reason, many different devices like road cablings[39] and floor pads[40] were installed. It was mentioned that the statistics are important as it informs LVRPA for future arrangements, for examples, maintenance or provision of additional facilities.

6.4.9 Comparing Quality and Performance Standard

The quality and performance standards were considered as the core motivation to programme delivery for both regional parks. Even though each case study had a distinctive approach to reach the quality and performance standards, nonetheless, there were some criteria and principles that were similar. Both regional parks had projects involving open space that were delivered to meet the requirements for the Green Flag Award[41] standards. Additionally, the LV also experienced the QUEST Accreditation[42].

[39] Road cabling is a technique of detecting vehicles that enter and leave the area. Road cablings are installed on the road and whenever a vehicle passes the cable, it will be counted into the automated system.

[40] Floor pads are installed underneath the flooring at the entrance or exit point of a building. This is also another method of counting the number of visitors.

[41] The Green Flag Award is a national standard award designed to honour parks and green spaces. It was founded in 1996. Winners of the Green Flag Award have to apply each year to safeguard its award (Green Flag Award, 2012).

[42] The QUEST accreditation is conferred on the management of leisure facilities or recreational development. It promotes industrial standards and best practice through the measurement of performance measurement (Quest Quality Scheme, 2012).

MW had to adhere to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Regional Development Agency (RDA) guidelines for outputs and outcomes (see NWDA, 2009; BIS, 2009). And, as part of ensuring the standard and quality of the coastal assets, the MW formulated its own Quality Assurance Scheme (MW-QAS) in March 2009. The MW-QAS was therefore designed to guide the partners and landowners in maintaining the coastline and the waterfront. The main purpose of this document was to assist the local authorities, site managers and landowners in constructing the essential direction to development for the site. The MW-QAS is therefore referred to as a toolkit in generating the idea for development as it steers the related parties in appraising the current status of land and its potential for future development (Mersey Basin Campaign, 2009). It was mentioned by a MW Project Manager that the MW-QAS was employed during the course of delivering the Pride in our Promenades projects for the MW.

LVRPA on the other hand has a specific department called the *Department of Performance & Indicators* to evaluate and monitor LV's performance. It was understood from an interviewee that there was no performance measurement undertaken before 1997, and it was after the 1997 Best Value Legislation that the LV had started to measure its performance. LV has a Quality Assurance Statement (LV-QAS) (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2007b) which is still being used in any park development since it addresses the park's corporate vision, its principles, mission statement, key success factors and significance, in delivering its services and ensuring customer satisfaction is achieved. The aim of the LV-QAS is therefore for "enhancement of the quality of our customers experience and the maintenance of standards in the context of an increasingly diverse customer base and stakeholder input" (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2007b). It is for this function that the LV notifies the staff responsible for the purpose of professionalism, quality and standards or work. Additionally, LVRPA also stresses the importance of excellence, team working, flexibility and integrity for quality purposes (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2007b).

It was mentioned that the practice had changed since the present Chief Executive joined the Authority. Nevertheless, performance measurement was not only specified to the LVRPA Department of Performance & Indicators. The Head of Department comments, "Programme performance is everybody's accountability. So performance isn't just about us. We have some indicators we manage and we are directly involved in the information side of complaints...but other departments are responsible and accountable too. So accountability is throughout. We win or lose together, basically" (27^{th} September 2011). According to him too, the Department of Performance & Indicators is responsible for many areas like the performance policy, strategy, research, information and procurement. Other than that, the department is also responsible for the business support and strategic support for the Authority as well as the operational side. LV also produces its Annual Report to review its delivery each year ever since it was founded. An annual Performance Report was introduced in 1997.

Through its website, the LVRPA informs the public that the Park Authority uses a Performance Management Framework (PMF) which was designed to suit its Business Strategy for 2010-2020. It was established that, besides 10 year Business Strategy, the LVRPA also produces a three year Business Plan and a Service Plan every year. These documents, or more precisely 'strategic plans', are applied for all departments for the purpose of systematic and strategic management (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012i). In terms of its guidelines, the PMF addresses its seven KPIs are:

- The levy charged as a percentage of the maximum chargeable levy;
- Service Plan Progress;
- Stakeholder Perception;
- Carbon Emissions from Authority operations;
- Progress of priorities from the three year Business Plan; and
- Number of users of the Regional Park.

(Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012i)

LV also conducts research to analyse people's perceptions about the park in terms of value for money. It was mentioned that there was much research conducted previously. The purpose of this was to study the customer's satisfaction level. The LVRPA calls this the 'visitor tracking surveys' which are normally conducted through a market research agency as well as self-completion online surveys. The LVRPA believes that such an approach will indicate customer needs and provide ideas for programme improvement.

6.4.10 Comparing the Efforts for Public Participation

Both case studies indicated that public participation can strengthen the work of delivering projects but adds more costs and time into the process of programme delivery. It was generally agreed that public participation ensures that projects are delivered in accordance with the public's requirement. In this respect, the research recognised the approaches taken by both regional parks to include the public in decision making process. The MW had established what were called the People's Panels to allow the community and representatives to provide with their ideas during the Commencement Programme. They were set-up in 2003 and ended in 2007 due to limited resources (Abdullah and Batey, 2011). The benefit of this community engagement initiative was that locals could influence the waterfront projects for their advantage. An Executive Team Member described, "The People's Panels were a successful way to canvas members of the local community about programme priorities and how funding could, would, should be spent. Other community activity literally looked to build civic pride and increased ownership of their waterfront" (20th January 2011).

The LV interviews revealed that the public's opinions are often included in their Park Plan. In fact, during the course of preparing the LV-PDF, the LVRPA made public the draft on its website to encourage the public to comment. However, notwithstanding the idea of incorporating the public's view, LVRPA also faces the problem of trying to accommodate the community's requirements and time and again requires more exertion and time. It was explained by the LVRPA Chief Executive that the process is sometimes not realistic and commented, "In the ideal world, we would be able to consult and engage an entire regional audience because the park is relevant to them...but it's just not possible due to the cost, time, effort as well as engaging with nine million Londoners and other two million from Essex and Hertfordshire" (26th September 2011). And for that reason the LVRPA chose to include public participation through user forums, the internet link to the various stakeholders, workshops and community engagements, as well as incorporating the GLA and other agencies that were believed to have a London perspective or national perspective (for example, sports or environment). The Chief Executive added, "We had to find a way of making sure that there has been dialogue [with the public] that can help us in shaping the PDF [Lee Valley Park Development Framework 2011]". He added that "it will never be a perfect mechanism because we can't physically consult all of London and to say they agree as we consult the neighbouring communities up and down the valley" (26th September 2011).

6.4.11 Comparing the Work of Maintenance

For both case studies, maintaining the park was considered as an important task in ensuring the park continually functions and serves its purpose. Sadly, this was not the case for the whole Mersey Waterfront after the programme ended. The LVRPA, in contrast, has a strategic plan for maintenance and is responsible for the park's maintenance. An interviewee mentioned that each facility and amenity within the park has been arranged for its maintenance for several years in its financial management. This was done in order to ensure that the facilities and buildings will always be in good condition.

The MW, during its first phase, the Commencement Programme, introduced a pilot project involving a small maintenance team that operated for two years. Unfortunately, due to the shortage of funding, the scheme was not continued. However, several maintenance schemes were designed before the MW ended. These include a maintenance agreement for its promenades in Egremont, Otterspool and Dingle, in agreement with British Waterways and Liverpool City Council for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, as well as an arrangement for the Garden Festival Site which involved Langtree McLean and the Land Restoration Trust. Otherwise maintenance is currently the responsibility of the related local authorities.

6.4.12 Comparing the Work on Branding and Promotion

Benchmarking the work on branding and promotion of a regional park for MW and LV is discussed under separate headings, i.e., (a) Promoting the regional park, and (2) Branding and logo.

(a) Promoting the Regional Park

One of the huge differences between the MW and the LV is the fact that the MW did not put in place any scheme to continue publicising Mersey Waterfront as a regional park after 2011. It was apparent throughout the investigation, that there was no evidence that plans were made by the MW to acknowledge the public about the existence of a regional park as an entity for Merseyside. When MW was still in its delivery period and whilst this research was taking place between 2009 and early 2011, there was a specific link on the MW and that there was much information about the regional park. But now, it is a letdown to find a specific website on MW. The MW website was removed and it is impossible to get hold of its Strategic Framework (MW Strategic Framework 2007). There was no effort by the main funder to reproduce the framework and spread its initial vision. For that reason, MW is now (in 2012) a name only to those who were aware of its programme. If not, the public would accept it as a variety of visitor attractions located at different locations. This researcher sees this as a very unfortunate fate of the MW as future generations might not realise that the regeneration projects along the coastline were actually a result of MW programme. However, the TMP now plays an important role in managing the *Official Tourist Board for the Liverpool City Region* which provides information on the tourism industry (The Mersey Partnership, 2012).

(b) Branding and Logo

In terms of logo and branding, it was discovered that in the beginning of MW establishment, MW Commencement Business Plan 2002 had addressed the idea of ‘brand management” and that branding was considered as “a key role of the marketing manager” (see The Mersey Partnership, 2002:p18). Throughout the delivery of MW, it had used the same logo (see Figure 6.51 below). During programme implementation, the logo was used to designate the programme through its brochures and publications. Interpretative signage was also installed at certain attraction like ‘Another Place’ at the Crosby Beach in Sefton mentioning the source of funding. Additionally, the MW Strategic Framework 2007 also highlights the importance of signage through its proposals, for example, proposing an interpretative signage at the entrance to an attraction like Sailing Club. However, currently, the marketing of Liverpool’s local attractions has now been taken over by the Official Tourist Board for the Liverpool City Region therefore the logo of the MW is no longer being used. Unlike the MW, the LV is constantly promoting its regional park. The research does not see this as an inconsistent comparison measure because LV is still operating and MW had ended. It is interesting how the LV carefully thought about branding and marketing. One MW Board Member regretted that the MW's brand was not manifested. He criticised that "branding was weak and never became an iconic brand". The LV Chief Executive pronounced, "Another area which is important to us is around that branding. So we've just produced a new brand and it's not about Lee Valley Regional Park but the Lee Valley as a whole and people think Lee Valley of somewhere to visit with all these different things to do" (26th September 2011).

Figure 6.51: MW logo (above)
Source: Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (2007)

Meanwhile, LV had experienced the application of three logos throughout its practice. LVRPA had embarked on the process of re-branding their logo (see below for Figure 6.52 which shows the former LV logo and Figures 6.53 and 6.54 for LV's current logo). During the interview, the Chief Executive commented, "We've just been through a re-branding exercise. The first time we've been through it for 40 years and trying to project the park as ambitious, as modern, has been part of that exercise. And then that gets reflected through a logo…I think that's important. And that's important when it comes not only to visitors but looking at sponsors, looking at private sector partnerships. Once the brand becomes established, people want to be part of that, they want to associate themselves with that" (26th September 2011).

Figure 6.52: LV logo before 2011 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2010b)

Figure 6.53: LV logo for LVRPA after 2011 (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2012g)

Figure 6.54: LV logo for its website (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2012g)

No doubt, the LV has an all-embracing website. The LVRPA has two key websites; one which informs about the Park Authority and the other provides information of the park's opportunities, facilities and events. The first is targeted for the public as an informative website about the LVRPA in total (see Figure 6.55), while the latter is focused for the interest of visitors (see Figure 6.56). As the LVRPA Chief Executive explains, "What we want to do is to make sure there's one for the destination, and something very distinct about the organisation" (26th September 2011). Interestingly, the two websites have separate brand logos which differentiate the characters and status of the LVRPA and the Park (see Lee Valley Regional Park 2012g; Lee Valley Regional Park 2012h). It was understood that the logo has been changed to a new one since August 2011. The motive of having separate logos was explained by an interviewee as, "Stakeholders, owners, operators of land and other facilities have got a similar symbol" (27th September 2011).

The LVRPA website is therefore a completely interactive website which can direct a viewer to the specific website about the Park. It is a total introduction of the Park and its organisation. The LVRPA website covers every aspect of the LV background, the Park Authority's function, activities within the Park, its vision and Park Plan, the London 2012 agenda, sports, education, as well as business and finance (Lee Valley Regional Park 2012g). Every detail is organised according to topics and features and each subject is presented comprehensively. The LV website is designed to fully connect the public to the main attractions and activities within the Park. Potential visitors can plan their journey ahead of time as it provides description under many key subjects, namely, *Sports and Outdoor Activities*, *Kids & Families*, *Nature*, *Parks & Gardens*, *Where to Stay & Short Breaks*, *What's On*, *London 2012* and *Education Zone*. For example, under the subject of 'Sports and Outdoor Activities', one can easily gain information on the types of sports activities, its venues and how to reach and the forthcoming events (Lee Valley Regional Park 2012h). Beside those structured presentations of information, viewers can also download publications and leaflets.

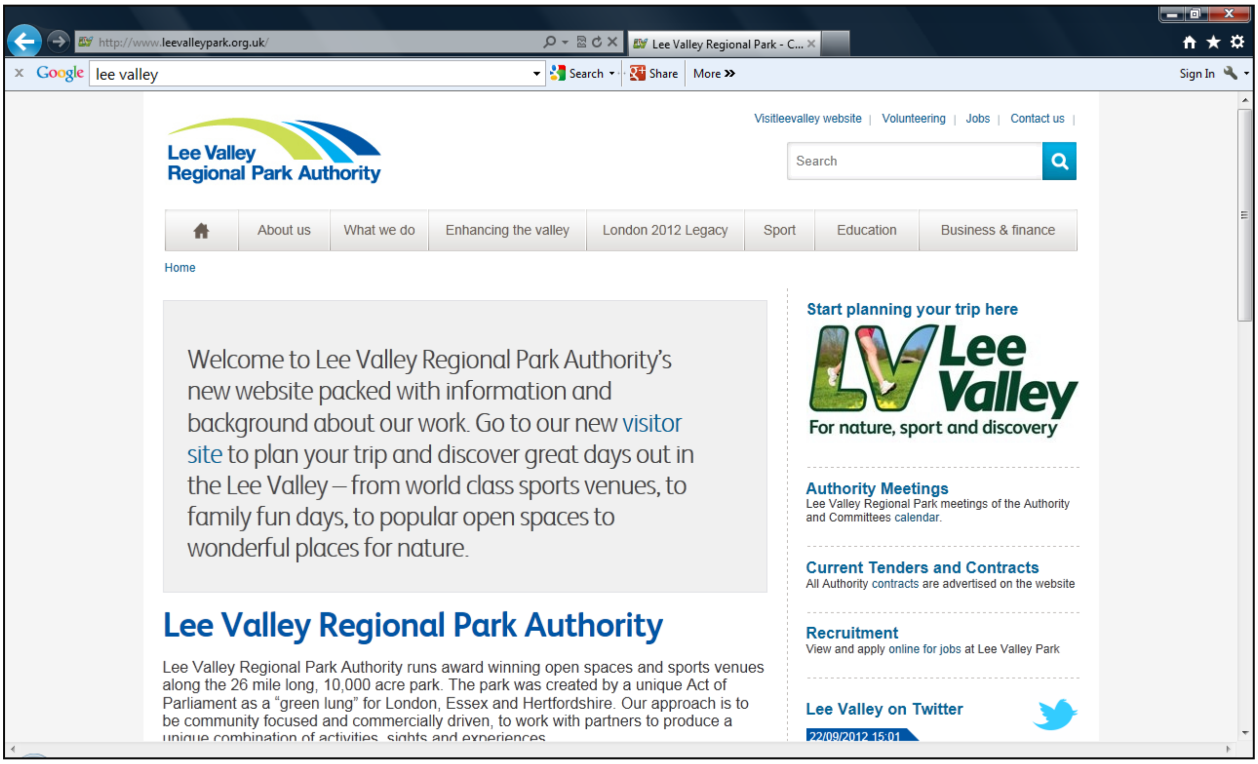


Figure 6.55: Website about the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2012m)

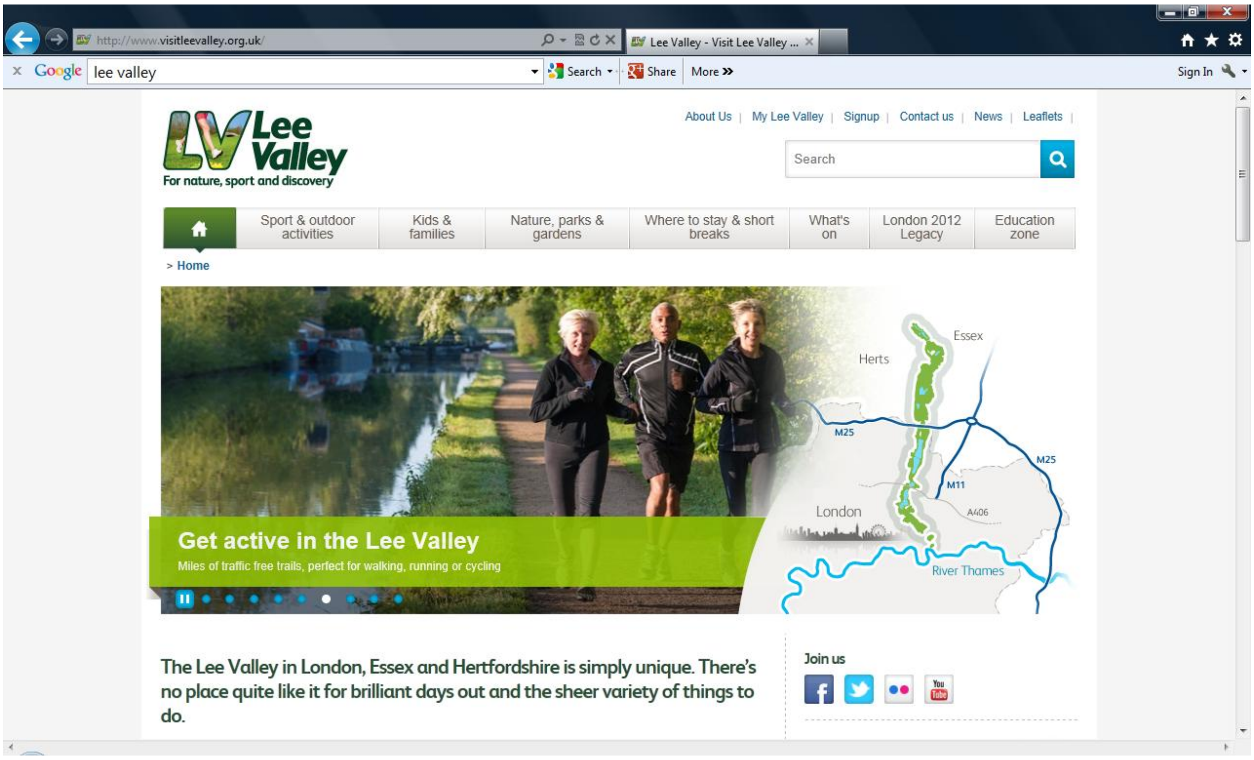


Figure 6.56: Website about Lee Valley Regional Park (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2012n)

These separate websites, in turn, simplify the effort of viewers, in a sense that those wishing to know more of the Authority and its responsibilities, or finding information and published documents will only be directed to a specified site, but any person deciding to explore the activities within the Park, or finding a suitable place to stay and spend more time in the Park can easily find the information through the Lee Valley: For Nature, Sport and Discovery Website (Lee Valley Regional Park 2012h).

6.4.13 Comparing the Practice of Risk and Safety Assessment

Looking at the discussion on project appraisal earlier on (Section 6.4.2 before), risk and safety assessment is also part of the crucial delivery process for both programmes. It was agreed by the majority of the MW and the LV interviewees that risk and safety measures are important in deciding on project feasibility and its impact. For MW and LV, the risk and safety assessment was done continuously as part of the monitoring and evaluation process. One MW Board Member recalled the process as a vigilant exercise. He said, “The Board had to consider the projects and to make sure that there weren’t any big risk that would involve any additional funding to the project” (20th January 2011). Nevertheless, another MW Board Member clarified that the duty to assess the safety of projects was also the responsibility of project managers.

The LV uses a 'Strategic Register' for every project to log on any issue or any matters pertaining to the project and its risk. This method facilitates the process of monitoring and assessing the progress of each project. Meanwhile, MW applied a standard evaluation form introduced by The Mersey Partnership to assess the risk and safety of a project (The Mersey Partnership, 2007).

6.4.14 Comparing the Support and Opportunities for Events and Activities within the Park

The examination revealed that there were various events and activities being conducted within the parks. Some of these events and activities are seasonal but some took place daily, especially for the LV (at present). In addition to that, some events are at the local level, others were regional or national. However, it was made clear that not all of the events and activities are directly organised by the regional parks. The point to highlight here is that the parks provide place and opportunity to perform those occasions.

Throughout the MW implementation period, for example, there were international events like the Tall Ships (2008), Europe's Capital of Culture (2008) and Open Golf Championships (2006 and 2008), and the Clipper Race (2005). There were also other events like the On the Waterfront Festival (2010), Mersey River Festival, the North West Coastal Forum, Urbanism Boat Parade (2009), Canal Opening (2009), Slavery Remembrance Day (2007) and community engagement activities to seek the public's view about their waterfront.

The LV was said to have over 500 events in a year including local events, for example, Family Cycle Ride, Open House- Myddelton House, A Walk in the Park and Summer Wildlife Spectacular (see Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012j). Additionally, there are also national events like the forthcoming South East of England Championships and British Masters Championships which focus on athletic events (see Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012j). Meanwhile, the latest international events delivered in the LV were the 2012 Olympics and 2012 Paralympics. Apparently, LV has volunteers to conduct the activities too. It was noted from the interview that the LV has 800 volunteers and over 20,000 volunteer hours, along with 25,000 school events throughout the year.

It was interesting to find out from the LVRPA's website that there appear to be so many upcoming activities informed for the year 2012 itself. The events embrace all range of people, from kids' events to adults. These include the Lee Valley Fun Run, Open Farm Sunday, Music and theatre, Park Run, Wild About Wetlands Dry, Countryside Live, The Great British Cucumber Festival, King George Sailing Club Open Day and many more (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012j; see also Figure 6.57 below which illustrates the brochure on LV's forthcoming activities). The researcher sees this as a plus side of the LV since the programme is still ongoing. The MW has demonstrated a good example in delivering international events.

In fact, the researcher believes that if MW was still delivering its programme, it would certainly continue to deliver various events for MW.

January 2013

Sun 6 10:30 - 12:30
A Walk in the Park
Blow away the cobwebs and join us for our monthly walk in River Lee Country Park to discover Cornmill Meadows, the Dragonfly Sanctuary and Tree Park.
Starting in Waltham Abbey Gardens car park (E)

Sat 19 - Sun 20 10:00 - 18:00
South East of England Championships
Come and watch as some of the country's best athletes compete.
Lee Valley Athletics Centre (E)

Sat 26 - Sun 27 10:00 - 18:00
London Indoor Games
Calling all athletes to our open competition. Call 020 8344 7230 or visit the website for entry forms.
Lee Valley Athletics Centre
Competition fee applies (E)

Sun 20 15:30 - 17:00
Bittern Roost Watch
A short guided walk followed by a roost watch in the Bittern Information Point, with hot drinks and biscuits. We may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of an elusive Bittern coming into roost.
Starting in Fishers Green car park (E)

February 2013

Sun 3 10:30 - 12:30
A Walk in the Park
Join us for our monthly leisurely paced walk in River Lee Country Park. This walk will discover the history of the regeneration of this park.
Starting in Pindar car park (E)

Wed 6 10:00 - 11:30
Gardeners' Coffee Morning
Join our gardeners for the first coffee morning of 2013 with a tour of Myddelton House Gardens and all your questions answered.
Myddelton House Gardens
£6.50 per person (A) (B)

Sun 10 14:30 - 16:30
Valentines Disco Skate
Get ready for Valentines Day by treating your sweetheart to a skate across the ice in our romantically themed session.
Lee Valley Ice Centre
£6 per person (skate hire included) (E)

Sat 16 10:00 - 17:00
Opening Weekend at the Farms
The doors are open for 2013 - why not come and see who's sleeping in the stables, plodding around the paddocks and what we've been up to over winter.
Lee Valley Park Farms (F) (£)

Mon 18 - Fri 22 13:00 - 16:00
Star Track
Budding athletes aged 8 - 12 years can learn a range of athletics skills. Sessions are also available for children aged 6 - 8 years.
To book call 020 8344 7230
Lee Valley Athletics Centre
£50 per person (C) (B)

Figure 6.57: An example of a brochure produced by LVRPA providing dates and details of events within the park (above)
Source: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (2012j)

6.4.15 Comparing Future Arrangements for the Park

There were several future arrangements for MW. MW established a maintenance agreement in 2012 for the Leeds and Liverpool Canal with the British Waterways to maintain the canal. The Garden Festival Site project which is still ongoing is now being managed through collaboration between the Langtree Group Plc, NWDA and the Land Trust. Additionally, the Langtree Group Plc is the key developer for the Garden Festival Site with 10-year management and maintenance plan (Abdullah and Batey, 2011). Also, the Pride in our Promenades in Egremont, Dingle and Otterspool were also prearranged with a 10 year maintenance plan. However, the MW is now under separate management and maintenance of its own local authorities. During the data collection, a Member of the Management Group pointed out that since NWDA is no longer the core funder, therefore developments are the local authorities' responsibility.

Meanwhile, LV indicates its plan for future income. LVRPA forecasts its expenditure and estimates its expenses including the maintenance costs. The future expenditure is therefore built into the financial plan. For instance, the LVRPA-R&B mentioned that a facility is designed with a 10 year financial plan which considers its development and maintenance. He described that the 10 year plan is important in ensuring the local public gains the benefit of facilities and value for money since they have to pay the levy. Since the levy will be reduced by another 2% by 2012, the LVRPA has made plans to build its savings and generate more income in order to make up the difference.

6.5 Benchmarking the Outcomes of Programmes

Besides examining the setting and delivery mechanisms for both case studies, the research also benchmarked and analysed the outcomes of both regional parks. The objective of assessing the outcomes for both programmes was to compare the achievements of those interventions and therefore facilitating the next stage of benchmarking analysis which will be presented in the following chapter. For this purpose, this section indicates the outcomes of both programmes in terms of goal achievement and their intended and unexpected outcomes. Together with these analyses, the research also examined some unfortunate causal factors that also affected their intentions. This section, therefore, should assist the reader to delve further into programme outcomes as well as their failures to meet some of their aspirations.

To start off, the research would like to describe an idea by Bradford and Robson (1995) which suggested that outcomes are not easily justified as compared to outputs. To them, outputs are measurable which can be easily examined through quantity. But outcomes are rather subjective, for example, the benefits gained, the quality or improvement in terms of environment. Outcomes are end results of programmes either intended targets or unexpected achievements, often referred as effects "rather than inputs or processes" (Kellaghan and Madaus, 2000:p98). Outcomes can therefore be examined during the delivery of programmes or after their completion (Kellaghan and Madaus, 2000). In contrast, outputs are actual results that are forecasted, for example, forecasting the number of jobs from a business venture and to examine whether the delivery of intervention had actually generated the number of jobs targeted (see Ad Esse Consulting, 2005; The National Federation of Community Organisations, 2010). For that reasoning, the research therefore examined value added gained by both regional park programmes.

6.5.1 Goal Achievement

One of the key aspects in assessing the performance of a programme is to examine its goal achievement. In this respect, the research recognises the majority of the participant's and interviewees' perceptions that the overall goal was achieved, either for the MW or the LV. The majority of the interviewees and participants for both case studies agreed that the regional parks had served their purpose and achieved their general aspirations. In fact, for both case studies, most of the interviewees claimed the programme as successful in fulfilling their aims.

There were many testimonies provided by the interviewees and participants which exhibit the benefits of both regional parks. The first and foremost conception that the programmes had achieved their goals was the fact that the initial aim to regenerate the area was in point of fact accomplished. Both regional park programmes delivered what they were intended to accomplish as their founding basis. By and large, both programmes were beneficial in improving and transforming the area especially in terms of physical development.

The MW underwent a lot of changes to the waterfront assets. No doubt the changes made to the regional parks also contributed to the enhancement of the natural assets and its built environment. In addition to that attainment, both case studies saw improvement in the natural vista of the area, improved social well-being and a boost to the local economy. Even though the MW had ended, the programme certainly laid the foundation for continuous support to demonstrate the diversity of recreational and leisure functions of the area and certainly generates the cause to further sustain the area.

In the LV case, generally the 1986 Park Plan concluded that the review carried out for the park from its beginning to the year 1986 had proven that there were transformations made to the area and that the 1969 Park Plan had served its purposes to be the foundation for the LV's development (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986). This development then gradually progressed over time and much of its achievements can now be seen from its built recreational facilities and amenities. And now, the LV can be proud of its Olympic Park. An interviewee believed that LV has changed a lot in terms of its physical condition as compared with the beginning of the programme

Undoubtedly, the MW had seen a lot of change too from where it started. In 2002, when plans were being prepared, much of the natural environment was decaying and the waterfront was unappealing. But with the eight year programme, the waterfront and its surroundings were uplifted with substantial improvements made along the coastline and riverside. As a matter of fact "the transformation saw changes in terms of improvements of image, profile, quality of life and the environment" (Abdullah and Batey, 2011:p55). Additionally, a majority of the participants and interviewees agreed that the projects attracted much attention to the area. In general, the MW participants and interviewees agreed that the programme had achieved its goal in view of the projects it had delivered which was more than 60 large and small scale projects throughout it eight-year duration (Abdullah and Batey, 2011).These projects included the delivery of redevelopment for road access, revitalisation of existing buildings along the coastline, development of new buildings and public facilities, and regenerating derelict areas. In fact, a majority of the participants claimed the programme as very effective and had created a sense of place and belonging for the area.

In another account, partnership working across related local authorities was also achieved for MW. It was understood that even though there was no specific organisation or authority to fully manage and control the programme like the LVRPA, yet the MW had managed to pull all the related authorities together to deliver the programme. What's more, a Board Member asserted that it was one of the greatest attainments. He claimed, "I think one of the great achievements of the programme is that we extended the partnership arrangement to work on a cross boundary partnership process as opposed to individual authorities working alone" (12th January 2011). He also added, "This is a ground breaking programme". Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees agreed that it had helped to raise the waterfront's profile, growing the city region tourism sector and had made a major impact on the waterfront's physical entities. However, a Board Member observed that the MW did not realize the potential it had in terms of economic opportunity which was set out in the original plan with an organisation called Mersey Maritime. Another MW Board Member rationalised the cause to achieving the MW's goals was very much influenced by partnership working and stated, "We've got various local authorities working together constructively" (23rd December 2010).

From the analysis, the research then synthesised the various perceptions from the participants and interviewees with regards to the transformation in terms of the physical, economic and social aspects. It was then found that the majority agreed that the physical changes were obvious through its general upgrading and enhancement throughout the area, as well as provisions of new structures and elements. Meanwhile, the economic benefits can be seen from the tourism sector and improved business sector. The social aspect on the hand had generated awareness among the public with regards to the MW assets, improved social-being, involved the public in decision-making and promoted collaboration among working partners. It was also surprising to hear how the participants and interviewees praised about some of the MW work. Significantly, the majority commended the Another Place (see Figures 6.58 and 6.59) tourist attraction, as well as the Pier Head Ferry Terminal (see Figures 6.60 and 6.61) and Pride in our Promenades especially the Otterspool Pride in our Promenades (see Figures 6.62 and 6.63). There was also praise for other projects like the Brand New Brighton, Liverpool Waterfront (see Figure 6.64) and the Garden Festival Site (see Figures 6.65 and 6.66) (Abdullah and Batey, 2011).For the MW Commencement Programme itself, it was attested that part of its achievement was: the new and improved

23km of trail for cycling, pedestrian and bridle; successfully reclaimed 26 hectares of land; 40 hectares area of enhanced habitat area; jobs creation; and an additional 18,000 bed nights within the MW (Mersey Waterfront, 2011a).

Figure 6.58: A close-up of one Anthony Gormley's statues installed in 2005, weighing 650kg each, and with a height of 189cm (left).
Source: Author

Figure 6.59: The statues scattered along the Crosby Beach. There are 100 cast iron statues in total. The statues can be seen clearly during low tide.
Source: Author

Figure 6.60: The Pier Head Ferry Terminal Building.
Source: Author

In reference to Figure 6.60 above, despite the participants' belief that it is an iconic building to the MW, however, it was discovered that the Pier Head Ferry Terminal building won the Carbuncle Cup in 2009, The Carbuncle Cup indicates the building as "Britain's worst new building" due to the fact that it affects the image of the UNESCO Heritage Site containing the Three Graces (BBC News, 2009).

Figure 6.61: The side elevation of the Pier Head Ferry Terminal from Albert Dock. The photo also demonstrates the Liverpool Waterfront scene (above).
Source: Author

Figure 6.62: The play area at Otterspool, part of the Pride in our Promenades scheme (above).
Source: Author

Figure 6.63: The Otterspool Promenade used for recreational and leisure activities (above).
Source: Author

Figure 6.64: Part of the Liverpool Waterfront and the canal located near the Pier Head Ferry Terminal building (above).
Source: Author

Figure 6.65: The entrance to the former Japanese Garden in the Garden Festival site. Photo illustrates the Garden Festival Site in 2009 (above).
Source: Courtesy of TMP

Figure 6.66: The entrance to the Japanese Garden after the restoration work by the Land Trust. Photo illustrates the area in 2012 (above).
Source: The Land Trust (2012c)

In relation to the Garden Festival Site, the garden has been open to the public since June 2012. The Land Trust produced its specific website (see Figure 6.67 below) to inform the public on its background, events and news related to the site. The garden has successfully been transformed and now offers a recreational place for visitors (see Figures 6.68 and 6.69 which demonstrates the outcome of this restoration effort).

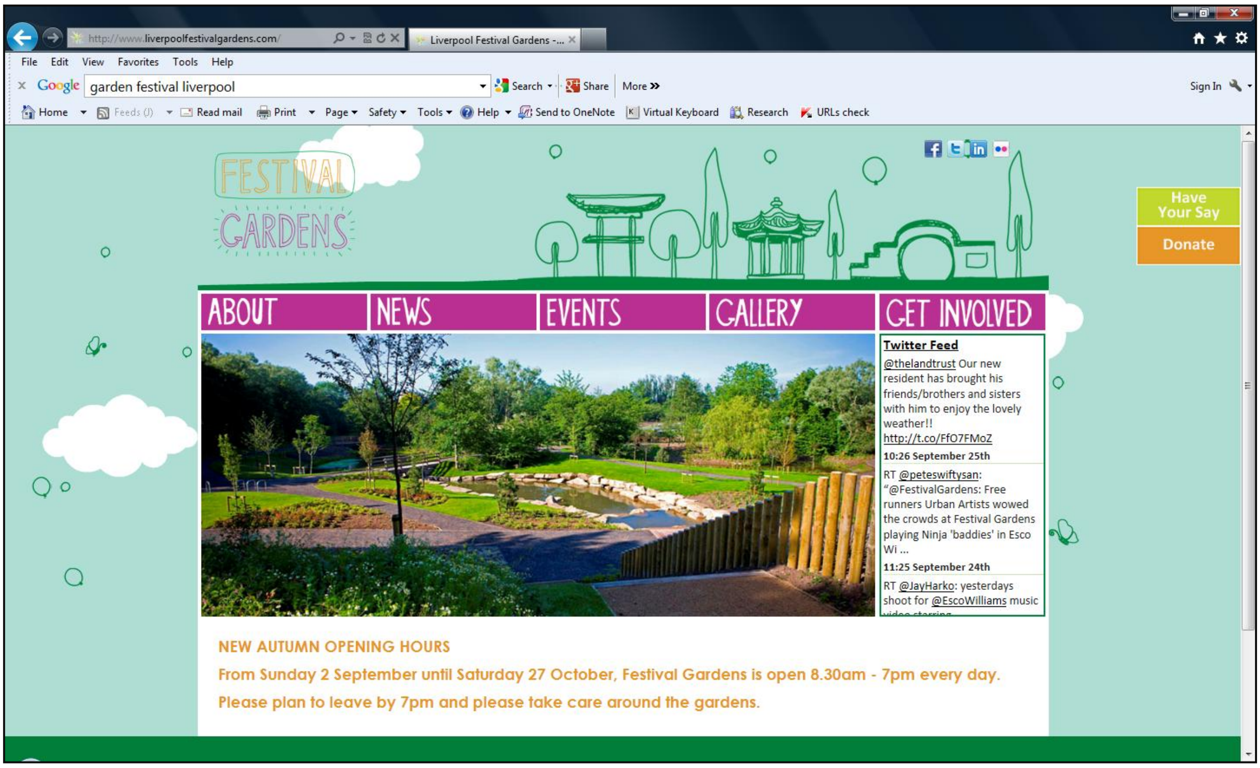


Figure 6.67: The website on Liverpool Garden Festival Site (above).
Source: The Land Trust (2012a)

Figure 6.68: Part of the garden during the process of restoration by the Land Trust (above).
Source: The Land Trust (2012b)

Figure 6.69: Part of the garden after the restoration by the Land Trust (above).
Source: The Land Trust (2012d)

In parallel to the MW, regeneration also succeeded in enhancing the LV's natural assets and provided new facilities, as well as strengthening the existing built environment. This statement can be demonstrated by an interviewee who summed up the overall achievement as a result of regeneration initiative. And, as expected, all of the interviewees agreed that the LV is a successful programme. The LVRPA Chief Executive held up his belief and explained, "I think it is very successful because it covers a variety of geographical boundaries. Hertfordshire and Essex are probably different from London. That was a particular individual's vision at the time to restore this wasteland through the middle of London to be a play area for Londoners" (26th September 2011).

When LV was first created, there were improvements and enhancement projects within the park to revitalise the area. Several sports and recreational facilities were also developed (see Figures 6.70 and 6.71). Almost 46 years after its founding, the changes have been immense. The LV has evolved its emphasis from a local and regional context to an international sports level. Additionally, this was supported by a statement provided by an interviewee who described, "I would say the best thing about Lee Valley Park is this: the ability to adapt [adapting to current demands]" (27th September 2011). And when asked about the greatest achievement that the LV had achieved so far, all interviewees assented that this was being able to take up the challenge as an Olympic venue.

To date, the interviewees concurred that the most successful sport facility in LV so far is the White Water Centre based on its number of visitors and profit from the business. The LVRPA Chief Executive indicated that that the White Water Centre is constantly used as an exemplar because it brought around £30m worth of world class investment to Broxbourne and had created 150 job opportunities and generated £1.5m in income into the centre in its first six months of operation in 2011.

For both case studies, the majority of participants and interviewees believed that the party that had benefited most from the regional parks is the local population. The Mersey Waterfront respondents agreed that the community living near the coastline and riverside are the ones benefitting most from the park while the Lee Valley had the same idea, it is the people who have the facilities on their doorstep that are getting the most from the recreational area.

Figure 6.70: The Youth Club building equipped with a water-based recreational facility in the Lee Valley Regional Park (above).
Source: Author

Figure 6.71: A parking area located at the area designed for country walks and a dog trail in the Lee Valley Regional Park (above).
Source: Author

6.5.2 Unintended Outcomes

There were many unforeseen benefits acquired by the MW and LV. There was general agreement among the majority of participants and interviewees from both regional parks that the intervention had raised the profile of their area particularly and its region in general. And because of that, it was agreed that that the regional parks had unintentionally raised the tourism profile of the area and attracted more people to the area. Furthermore, the park had offered a variety of leisure and recreational activities hence bringing more visitors to the area and certainly generating income to the tourism sector. Other than that it was the success in building relationships between the public and private bodies, as well as the community, and other stakeholders. The way that the projects were delivered had promoted an effective partnership working among MW's and LV's partners. And, along with those unexpected advantages, both regional parks were believed to have left a legacy of better infrastructure within the area.

Focusing on the MW, the research revealed various views from the participants and interviewees, mostly with different perceptions. However, a majority mentioned that certain projects were unexpected in terms of its benefits. Projects like the Pride in our Promenades, the Anthony Gormley statues on Crosby Beach and the Pier Head Ferry Terminal were seen to have surpassed their intended aim and proved that the projects had received tremendous support from the visitors. Among the MW achievements were the Green Flag Award for management and maintenance, and the BURA Waterways Renaissance Award for partnership in 2010 for its Otterspool Pride in our Promenades scheme. Also, back in 2004, part of the Liverpool Waterfront (from Albert Dock to Stanley Dock) was awarded the UNESCO Heritage Site status (see Figure 6.72).

Figure 6.72: The 3 Graces, part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Liverpool Waterfront. From left to right: The Royal Liver Building, the Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building (left).
Source: Author

The LV had also seen many additional benefits from its programme. The successful Olympic bid in 2005 enabled the Lee Valley to build its Olympic Park (see Figures 6.73 which shows the Olympic Park during its construction and Figure 6.74 which illustrates the image of Olympic Park after its completion) and now working to promote its built facilities and recreational opportunities as a world class destination. Nevertheless, the LVRPA Chief Executive deemed, “There are social, economic benefits of visitors’ economy locally. The profile of the area is lifted by having this Olympic venue and its facilities, and the sense of pride. The Olympic Park has lifted that area” (26th September 2011). The White Water Centre created 150 job opportunities in its first six months of operation. This was considered as a great achievement. Additionally, when visitors come to enjoy certain facilities within the park, there would be multiple benefits which in turn contribute to the local economic growth generally.

Figure 6.73: Part of the construction site of the Olympic Park in 2011. Access was not easy at the time as tight security was in force (above).
Source: Author

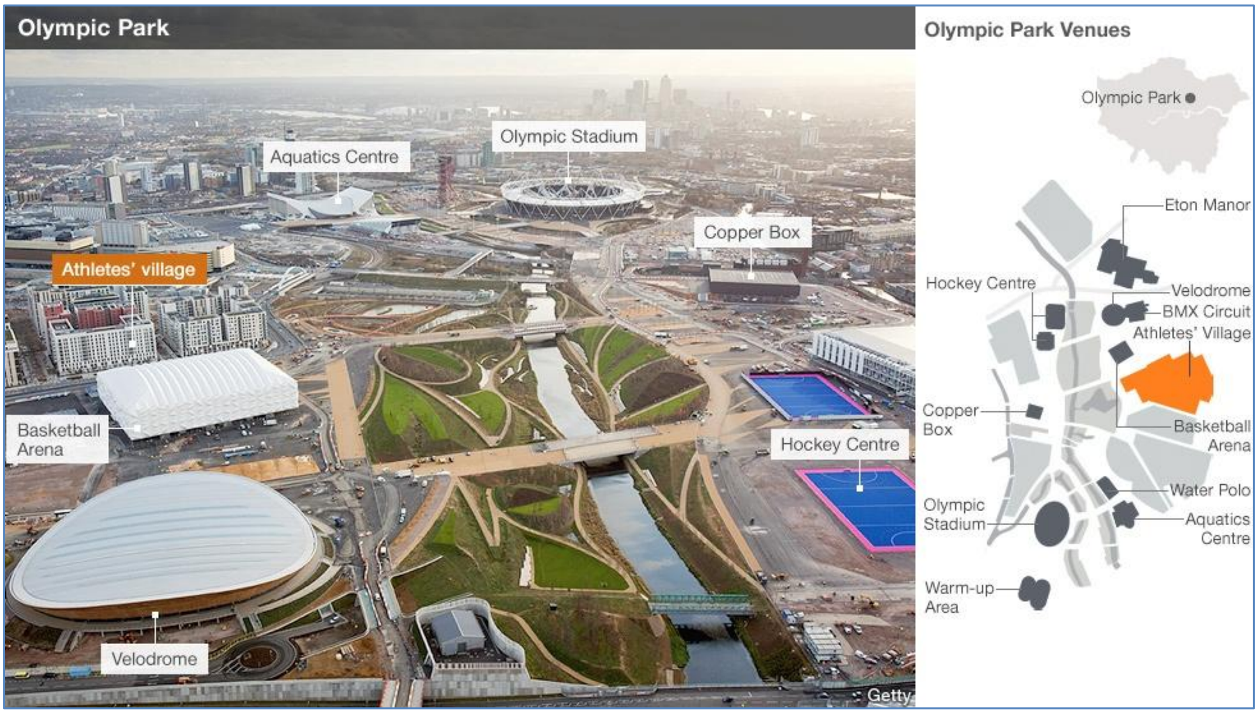


Figure 6.74: Olympic Park (above).
Source: BBC News (2012)

Apparently, the LV has gained several rewards since 2006. It won the QUEST Accreditation for its WaterWorks Nature Reserves and Golf Centre, Riding Centre, Athletic Centre, Ice Centre and Sports Development. Besides the QUEST, the LV also gained standing through the Green Flag Award for its WaterWorks Nature Reserves and Golf Centre, Walthamstow Marshes, Gunpowder Park, Bow Creek, Rye House Gatehouse, Waltham Abbey, Myddelton House Gardens and Tottenham Marshes. Moreover, the LV believed that the Olympic venue and events would leave a legacy raise the profile to the park. Some of the facilities that are considered as the legacy facilities are the White Water Centre, the VeloPark and the Tennis and Hockey Centre in Eton Manor.

6.5.3 Failure to Meet Expectation

There were several issues revealed by the examination experienced by LV and MW. In relation to the LV's experience since its founding and right up to its second Park Plan in 1986, it was discovered that much of its original intention in regenerating the area was generally achieved. This was mentioned in the 1986 Park Plan that the progress of developing recreational centres and facilities was clear (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986). However, not all of the targeted projects were fully completed. It was claimed that "1969 Plan and Land Proposals have been implemented in part" (Lee Valley Regional Park

Authority, 1986:p25). In another statement, the LVRPA concluded that the Park "has been moderately successful in resisting urban development pressures through exercise of its development control function under the 1966 Act" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986:p25). Additionally, it was declared that the park had lost some of its land for other non-recreational purposes. It was also clarified that the landscape proposals "have been less obvious" (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, 1986:p25). Also, in another confession, the Park Authority admitted that some agricultural land converted to other purposes like horse grazing, and that not much was done to improve the conservation nature of reserves.

At this point in time, the MW has ended and had left some mixed-feelings among the partners. There were some schemes that were left unaccomplished due to several reasons, some of them unavoidable. The MW had a tight budget and was affected by the economic recession and credit crunch which caused restricted funds, as well as the collapse of housing market. The community engagement through the People's Panels was not continued in the Succession Programme due to lack in funding. The intention to develop the River of Light[43] project was not carried forward because of ownership and maintenance problems.

Other than that, there was no future arrangement throughout the MW for maintenance after the programme ended, also because of funding shortages. Therefore, maintenance was left to the local authorities instead. The only areas unaffected are the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the promenades which had a special agreement for a ten-year maintenance arrangement, and the Garden Festival Site. Also, the development of Garden Festival Site is partially completed and the thematic concepts proposed in the MW Strategic Framework known as the Windows on the Waterfront were not completed either.

6.6 Benchmarking Knowledge about the Benchmarking Method

The analysis also examined the interviewees' and participants' experience in any benchmarking practice. Not many participants responded to this question and most of them had not experienced this approach to evaluation. Nevertheless, the majority of the interviewees from the MW and every interviewee from the LV agreed that benchmarking is a useful approach to evaluation. And above all, it was discovered that a few interviewees had suggested that every regional park should learn and benchmark the Emscher Landscape Park in Germany.

[43] The River of Light project was proposed as part of the Succession Programme. The scheme was to install lighting at "key historic, architectural and cultural structures" (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p7).

Also, the researcher saw that not all of those who are aware of the benchmarking method know a lot about the concept. Some thought that benchmarking needed to be an exact form of comparison, some also thought that benchmarking is impossible for regional parks, thinking that the comparison needed to be like MW itself, with coastline and similar entities. Some even thought that benchmarking cannot be performed if the subjects were like “apples and pears”. And, there were also thoughts that benchmarking involves a huge subject for comparison when it has so many options and flexibility for the exercise. The researcher regards this as unfortunate as these misinterpretations could prevent people or organisation from performing this approach to performance measurement.

The MW has set out its benchmarking initiative through study trips, the so-called “Seeing is Believing” Initiative. Undoubtedly, it was regarded as an effective way of learning from others as it involved first-hand learning. In fact, it was claimed as a successful approach to adapting and learning best practice from others. The LV unfortunately did not provide much information about the LV’s experience in benchmarking. However it was also agreed by some of the MW interviewees that benchmarking is not an easy task as regional parks are different in character, challenges and approaches.

In an interviewee with a MW Board Member, an interesting comment was received with regards to benchmarking which observed, “Depends what you mean by benchmark, can it be an inspiration or best practice example? Benchmark to me implies it’s reached a level of quality overall that others aspire to reach and therefore it’s almost like an inspirational aim and I think there are still things on Mersey waterfront that need doing and in that sense I don’t think we can hold ourselves up as being better than the others” (12th January 2011).

The research also understood that the LV is used by others as a benchmark. The LVRPA Chief Executive mentioned that others like the Wandle Valley[44] in Southwest London had particularly used the LV as an example, looking at the LV’s 45 years of experience. When others are learning from the LV, the LVRPA itself is also taking lessons from elsewhere. It was found that the LV had also used other Athletics Centres as a benchmark for their Athletic Centre, and it was also mentioned by the Head of Performance and Information that the LV Olympic Park had also referred to the Melbourne Olympic Park as an exemplar.

[44] The Wandle Valley was planned in 2008 (see Wandle Valley Regional Park, 2008) and was addressed in the 2011 London Plan as a potential area for a regional park (Greater London Authority, 2011). The area covers from the River Wandle in South West London, and through Croydon and Sutton and right through Merton and Wandsworth and to the Thames. The research discovered that this initiative was also established based on regeneration purpose (Wandle Valley Regional Park, 2008, 2012a). This area meets the requirement of a regional park addressed in the London Plan 2011 which outlines a regional park as “Large areas, corridors or networks of open space, the majority of which will be publicly accessible and provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. Offer a combination of facilities and features that are unique within London, are readily accessible by public transport and are managed to meet best practice quality standards. Size guideline: 400hectares and Distance from home: 3.2-8.0 kilometres” (see Greater London Authority, 2011:p235). Currently (September 2012), the park is a designated green area and is expected to become a regional park with inauguration within five years (in 2017) and targeted to be a major visitor destination by 2022. Interestingly,in contrast to the MW and LV, the Wandle Valley Regional Park will be a regional park under the management of a Trust named the Wandle Valley Regional Park Trust (Wandle Valley Regional Park, 2012b).

Interestingly, the LV had taken the step to practice benchmarking at a further level as compared to the MW. As the LVRPA Head of Performance and information described, "Process benchmarking has been very important for us because in terms of our processes, we've gone and looked at what others are doing" (27th September 2011). He also added that the LV is a member of the Parks Forum which is based in Australia, as well as being part of the London Park Benchmarking Group and involve in its annual survey. Also, it was reported by the LVRPA Chief Executive that the LV uses the Green Flag standards and the QUEST as the LV's "kite mark for leisure facilities'. It was motivating to hear about the Head of Performance and Information's belief in the performance of the LV, as he said, "We never sit back and go 'Oh! We're good', we're always striving to improve ourselves, that's why we use the excellence model that allows us to see where we are on the journey to excellence" (27th September 2011). Indeed, the LV has set an example of persistent effort in trying to achieve certain standards and position itself as an exemplar.

6.7 Benchmarking the Strengths and Weaknesses of Both Regional Parks

There were many underlying reasons for the distinction between the MW and the LV. To summarise the key strengths and weaknesses of both case studies, the researcher therefore extracts the strong points and drawbacks of the two. However, it is worth to repeat here that the LV has had more than 40 years of practice which makes it a long running programme in the UK contrasting with the MW which had life-span programme of only eight years. The following briefly describes the reasoning.

6.7.1 Comparing Key Learning Points

The inquiry also scrutinised the key lessons from both programmes. This is important as pointing towards Owen and Roger (1999) (see Chapter Three, Section 3.2.1) which stressed that benchmarking should acquire key lessons. This idea, in point of fact, is suggesting the need to examine the helpful tips in achieving good practice or in realising those goals and aspirations, for the purpose of further improvement. In relation to this topic, the researcher thought that there appeared to be abundant aspects of key lessons throughout the delivery of both programmes. The researcher therefore looked into various views from different job/role perspectives so as to set apart inspiration brought up by the top management or an insight from those who had the hands on experience for project delivery. Nonetheless, whether the programme had ended or was still ongoing, the beliefs put forward by the participants were primarily based on the programme's experience and personal views.

One of the key strengths of the MW and the LV was said to be the combination of partners and stakeholders in delivering the programme. It was claimed as a good arrangement. As one Board Member recalls, “We had a lot of experienced people working on the Mersey Waterfront, a lot of very careful people who’ve got a proven track record of delivering regeneration projects” (23rd December 2010). The compositions of various partners, with various skill bases were said to have contributed to programme delivery. Likewise, the LVRPA sees the quality of leadership and partnership benefited the delivery of its regional park.

In another belief, the LV is very fortunate as it had its own Act. The creation of the LV Park Act 1966 provided the LVRPA with certain powers and responsibilities. With the role as a statutory planning consultee, the LVRPA is entitled to “acquire land and to allow compulsory purchase of land, and very significantly has the authority to levy the 33 London Boroughs, the county and assets in Hertfordshire” (LVRPA Chief Executive, 26th September 2011). In addition, the existence of the Park Act inevitably becomes the foundation to the LVRPA. It is seen as an important basis to the Park Authority and claimed as “a bedrock of how the Authority works” (LVRPA Head of Planning & Strategic Partnerships, 27th September 2011) and as the “guardian document [guideline to development]” (LVRPA Head of Performance & Information, 27th September 2011).

It was claimed by the majority of the LV interviewees that the most important tip in assuring the success of a regional park is to have strong faith and commitment in delivering the programme. In relation to this, it was also suggested that those involved in a regional park must have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve. A constructive recommendation was given by an interviewee who commented, “We have a clear understanding of what we’re trying to deliver and what we’re trying to do. So I think that’s a key piece of learning, and it is so important [communication]” (27th September 2011). Interestingly, he added, “If the Chief Executive doesn’t believe in what you’re trying to do, forget it. I’ve heard all the bottom-up approach and everything but if you haven’t got a champion at the top, it doesn’t work”.

In terms of funding, the LV is secured by the levy collection by the whole of London, Essex and Hertfordshire. And this inevitably demands the LVRPA to deliver their service and role for the tax payers particularly and the region in general. The MW on the contrary depended very much on public sector money and was fortunate to receive grants from the ERDF besides that from the key funder (NWDA). Another important key lesson put forward by the LVRPA is the power of branding and marketing the park publicly. All of the LV interviewees mentioned that advertising the park through its website helps to publicise its opportunities, events and activities, and everything that the Park has to offer.

To summarise the key success factors addressed by the LV interviewees, the following points may be made:

- A clear project outline
- Strong belief in what they are doing
- Passion and commitment
- Realistic in timeframe
- Having the right skill
- Having a coordinated approach
- Obtaining grant funding
- Having clear milestones
- Quality monitoring and evaluation
- Good project management

The MW, in the same way, also listed some of the key factors to a successful regional park programme which include:

- A clear project outline
- Strong belief in delivering the programme
- Realistic in timeframe
- Strategic financial management
- Ensuring the quality of the delivery process
- Having the right skills
- Learning from others
- Ongoing evaluation and monitoring
- Partnership approach
- Long term plan
- Good project management

6.7.2 Comparing Issues of Regional Park Programme Implementation

In comparing the issues faced by MW and LV, it was discovered that both do experience problems throughout their programme delivery. Sadly, to overcome the MW's problems was not easy. The team, which includes the partners, Management Team and Executive Team are no longer in existence, and to make things worse, there is no funding to rectify the mistakes. At this point, the mistakes or unfavourable stories unleashed by this analysis should be pondered and not being judged as deprecation. Think of it as a lesson not to be repeated in the future.

To start off, the analysis would like to share some of the unfortunate conditions that the MW was left to endure. This situation however was anticipated in the past by the MW partners and stakeholders but was not felt until the programme had actually ended. The benchmarking activity had unearthed the critical situation that was left for the MW's future fate. There was no money to maintain the MW as an entity. What was absent is the former collaboration of local authorities as a team and the funding. This condition inevitably had worsened with the economic recession and the credit crunch during the second phase of MW. As stated before (in Section 6.4.10), it was for this reason too that the Community Engagement had not continued for the Succession Programme. As one Board Member clarified, "We didn't have the resource to maintain a strong engagement around the People's Panels, for example, and I think if we would've been able to move the Windows on the Waterfront as a Strategic Framework into implementation, we would've put that to the work that we developed in the Commencement Programme around People's Panels" (12th January 2011). Another MW Board Member expressed his frustration and mentioned, "Don't think the programme became leading edge. Still has potential to do" (20th January 2011).

Accordingly at this point, the researcher also finds the vision statement as an ambitious aspiration, as compared to its limited programme duration and resources. Strangely, the NWDA had initially intended to end the programme in 2010. However, the MW Strategic Framework was drawn to accomplish its proposals and increase its duration to the year 2020. With no further funding after March 2011, the framework's core proposals were left incomplete. This was a kick in the teeth for the MW. The lack of funding had also affected the continuous promotion of the MW through publications and website[45]. The website that MW used to have was eventually removed and therefore scarcely left any trace of the programme.

Additionally, the researcher also sees the availability of the MW Strategic Framework as a disappointment. Unlike the MW Strategic Framework, the LV Park Development Framework (LV-PDF) is easily available. It had been publicised through the Park Authority's website and easily be accessed. A possible reason for this is that the MW is no longer in existence. But that was not just the case. During the process of this research and when the MW was still running, it was discovered that the MW Strategic Framework cannot be obtained easily. It was not publicised through the website nor was it easily obtained elsewhere, except from the TMP or the Board Members. When strategies were designed for 15 to 20 years, logically, the document should be easily accessed. Absurdly, the rare copies of reports can only be obtained from certain individuals or former partners.

In contrast the LV-PDF can be easily obtained. The LVRPA had displayed the LV-PDF widely through its website (Lee Valley Regional Park, 2012f). In fact, during the draft preparation of the Thematic Proposals, the proposals were already made known to the public and were published through the Park Authority's website for the purpose of obtaining feedback from the public. Given the difficulty of obtaining the MW Strategic Framework it is feared that any future development within MW may not consider the vision that was put forward for 2020 through the MW Strategic Framework.

[45] The MW used to have a website but it was ceased after the programme ended.

Even though the MW Strategic Framework was first issued in March 2007 during the Succession Programme and the framework became the blueprint until the end of the programme, when the MW ended, the MW organisation and management were brought to an end as well. This left a question as to who would be responsible for the continuity of the MW Strategic Framework and would the Windows on the Waterfront concepts be carried on. One Board Member expressed her disappointment and said, "I think the big issue was when we did the Strategic Framework. A lot of work went into distilling, trying to come up with a workable vision, an inclusive vision that mirrored all the aims and objectives I think it was quite hard to do [deliver the Windows on the Waterfront]" (15th February 2011). The LV may not face this problem since the park continues to be operated by the LVRPA and considering the huge responsibility it has for its future development. And for this reason, the researcher felt that the LVRPA will continue to deliver its LV-PDF.

The short period of programme delivery for MW also affected the organisation. An Executive Team Member clarified, "As the programme neared its end diminishing team numbers meant that tasks and roles fell back on fewer staff. Roles and skills needed to be assimilated quickly to ensure the continued management of the programme" (20th January 2011). This was an unfortunate circumstance for the MW. As a Board Member conveyed, "I think as we moved into the Succession Programme funding was an issue and reduced the capacity of the team to deliver the programme and so we had to work more closely as a partnership. So I think towards the end of the programme we did undoubtedly suffer and those capacity issues but I think inevitably when you go into a large scale in a capital programme and the scale that suddenly gets reduced then it's difficult to retain the staff and positions right to the end of the programme" (12th January 2011). The issue of deficiency in resources was then concluded as the reason for the MW not to envisage the third phase of its programme after the Succession Programme, a point made by two interviewees.

The restricted duration of the MW had an impact towards the legacy of a regional park in the Northwest too. What was once identified as an entity is now in danger of being left as several disparate attractions in the Merseyside at separate locations. Further to this issue was the argument whether the MW had successfully created a sense of awareness among the public about the existence of this first Northwest regional park. A Member of the MW Management Group conveyed his thoughts and questioned, "I wonder if we were actually successful in creating an awareness of the waterfront as an entity. Everybody is familiar with the key sites in their area, so everybody is aware of the Pier Head, the Wirral Waterfront, those sorts of sites. When we started out one of the things that we were trying to do was to create a sensible which people would identify really. I don't think we were successful at that" (21st December 2010).

One MW Board Member expressed his frustration, “Well there is always the last one, [i.e.] about other sources of funding, and yes it would have been nice to have got ongoing commitment from people to keep Mersey Waterfront as a programme going but that hasn’t been the case” (15th February 2011). Inevitably, there were also several disputes with regards to the organisation and management. The MW’s interviewees were more open in expressing their thoughts. Some disappointments were uncovered and in spite of the participants’ belief that working as a partnership was relatively good, there were still some unavoidable issues. A Board Member described, “I think there were issues as to what the role of the Mersey Waterfront Board was and this is the Management Group that has been set-up which consists of officers from the local authorities. And as a Board Member, I was sometimes frustrated that things have been decided outside the Board meeting by this Management Group” (10th December 2010). He then added, “I think I was disappointed when the team was set-up that we didn’t recruit across the whole country, we recruited locally and that rather limited the sort of people that were able to join the team”. In another assertion, he described, “I think there were times where we had a strained relationship with the NWDA where we would dispute what they have said and they might dispute what we have said that sometimes came to the Board Meeting”. He also added, “There were periods that were awkward in terms of that relationship because they were providing the money and needed to oversee what we were doing that amongst Board Members there were sometimes resentment that perhaps they were getting too much involved in what we were doing, not letting us get on with things ourselves” (10th December 2010).

The MW had also experienced difficulties when dealing with the transition of staff. It was recalled when an empty post had to be refilled had caused an inconsistency in work delegation. A Board Member remembered, “We’ve spent a lot of the time with some of the Board Meetings discussing where we were going with changes of Directors within the programme” (19th January 2011). Additionally, in May 2010 onwards, given the fact that the NWDA was going to bring the programme to an end, therefore the team had been wound down in stages.

For the MW, there were also other issues relating to the undelivered projects and schemes. It was understood that some projects were not delivered. First, it was the issue of the programme had to be ended; secondly, it was the issue of funding, and thirdly, the issue of ownership. This ownership issue had led to a termination of a project called the River of Light. According to some of the interviewees, the project was initially designed to light up the key landmarks at the waterfront, but for some reason it was not feasible to carry out the project as there appeared to be a debate on the legacy of owning the lights and their maintenance. There was also reluctance among public agencies to take on the ownership and management of the site as local authorities were trying to minimise long-term maintenance commitment.

The ‘Windows on the Waterfront’ concept unfortunately shared the same fate. In fact, this concept was outlined as part of the MW vision in the Strategic Framework (the MW Strategic Framework). The thematic concepts of geographical linkages along the coastline which was identified by several interviewees as an ambitious idea was basically undelivered as a result of the lack of funding and diminishing work team and restricted programme timing. There was also another big project called the Garden Festival Site [46] which is now open to the public but the project is not fully completed. But this is rather slightly different as it was targeted to be completed beyond the MW duration, plus it is now under separate management and responsibility. Yet, it was still part of the MW intention to deliver the project. The research sees this as unfortunate as the force to keep the projects going was hitched.

The LV, on the hand, in spite of its secured position by the LV Park Act 1966 also faces a problem when playing its role as a planning consultee. The LV Park Act 1966 is perceived as outdated and deficient in relation to the current context. Even though the LVRPA has the power to deliver development for the Park, at some points it has to accept the related planning authorities' decision. An interviewee regards this as inopportune and said, "If you talk about the Park Act, the planning powers, they are insufficient, because we're a statutory consultee, when we make comments, when you look upon planning authorities, when they receive planning applications, they can choose to ignore them as they wish. We have powers according to the statute [LV Park Act 1966] but in practice our powers are insufficient because we lie in a growth area so there's pressure for housing on land not owned by us but by others in the Park and we start to seeing some of that land being lost" (27th September 2011). To make things worse, he mentioned that the 1966 Park Act is too old and probably requires some adjustments to suit the current situation.

A further aggravating issue is the fact that the LV Park Act 1966 does not focus on sustainability matters. An interviewee criticised this issue and said, "The Park Act is very clear on our statutory role but it doesn't necessarily identify very closely with the issues around sustainability and like wider environmental agenda.....we strictly can't have wind turbines on our land or in the park because it falls outside the strict limits [environmental regulations] of the Park Act" (27th September 2011).

[46] The redevelopment project for Garden Festival Site started in February 2010 and the project includes restoration of the existing garden and provision of 1300 new houses. The project received £3.7m of funding from NWDA (see The Official Tourism Website for the Liverpool City Region, 2012). The Land Trust has publicised the Garden Festival Site through their website (as demonstrated earlier) and currently (in September 2012) opens the garden to the public every day (see The Land Trust, 2012a).

In spite of the effort to promote the Olympic Park in the Lee Valley, the LVRPA also faces the challenges in introducing the Olympic Park as part of the Park's entity and at the same time promote the scores of opportunities within the Park. As the LVRPA Chief Executive addressed, "I think one of the challenges that we have at present is to get others, specifically the Olympic Park Legacy Company London, to realise there is a lot more to the Lee Valley than the Olympic Park. The Olympic Park we see as the jewel in the crown of the Lee Valley but the Lee Valley is the Olympic Park plus a lot more, so much more" (26th September 2011). He added, "There's a lot more work to do and then as well we've been very keen with our new branding to make sure the White Water Centre is known as a Lee Valley White Water Centre. Yes, it's an Olympic venue but the Lee Valley tells you where it is and will be doing the same other Olympic venues to make sure that people understand that there is an association". He then commented, "I think partly political, partly territorial. It's easier for London politicians to see the Olympic Park as purely a London entity rather than part of something bigger. And that perhaps dilutes that sense of ownership. So, I think there is a bit of territorial politics in there. So what we've got to do is convince the London Boroughs, GLA, the Mayor and others that the value for London is seeing the Olympic Park as part of a much bigger opportunity. So we've got more work to do there" (26th September 2011).

6.8 Comparing Expectations and Suggestions

The researcher also sought to appraise the participants' and interviewees' beliefs, hopes and expectations for the programme, as well as suggestions for any similar future intervention. The research received significant responses from both the MW and the LV. And it was reassuring to see how much people appreciated the programmes and had expectations and hopes for the betterment of regional park intervention.

A good suggestion provided by two interviewees, one each from the MW and LV, was that any regional park should have a firm foundation before delivering the programme. In the case of the MW, the Mersey Basin Campaign had provided the base for the programme to be carried forward once the quality of Mersey River water had been improved, while the LV had a strong base of establishment upon the founding of the LV Park Act 1966.

When asked about the development of a regional park in general, the researcher saw a noteworthy advice provided from the MW side was that any provision of a regional park should incorporate its natural and built environment in a coherent way, hence blending it together yet not destroying the natural environment. Also a MW Board Member advised that any regional park programme should consider the element of value for money in delivering the projects, especially when dealing with public funding. In fact this was asked to be a basic. An interviewee from LV strongly believed that working as partnerships with the local authorities and other agencies can actually contribute to the bigger regeneration picture, which is why the LVRPA is putting more effort into working with related organisations especially in relation to its current status as an Olympic venue. Another suggestion from a Board Member recommended that a regional park should not be delivered within a short time period, and definitely not less than ten years. Meanwhile, another interesting perspective from another Board Member informed that any regional park should act as a catalyst and attract other activities to the area which inevitably provides more opportunities to the park, for example, MW had attracted investors to the area.

There were different aspirations for the MW and the LV. From the MW perspective it was more of an expectation to see the MW remain as a legacy and to continue serves its purpose as visitor destination with plentiful of interesting recreational activities and experience. There were also hopes to see that the local authorities continue to manage and maintain their local attractions. It was very disappointing to learn that the MW might not have portray itself as a collective entity once and quite sad to think that the spirit that was once put together by the partners to expose the MW as a regional park may not be evident to the younger generation or even possibly to those who were not alert to the creation. Alas, a MW Board Member expressed the feeling of despair for MW and said, "I hope once the programme has finished some of those relationships will continue…the whole of the Mersey being of greater value than the individual parts" (21st December 2010).

It is without doubt that the LV is now looking forward to its future vision to become a world class destination for leisure and recreation. And with its Olympic Park, the LV is expected to attract more visitors to the area, especially this year. Nevertheless, with a variety of sports facilities of world standard, the LV believes that its future will be strengthened. It was targeted that in the next ten years the LV will meet up to the Olympic standard as development are progressing and events are on their way. The LVRPA Chief Executive had faith and said, "We are using the Olympics absolutely as a springboard to elevate our ambition and to achieve the world class leisure destination status over the next ten years" (26th September 2011). Additionally, the LVRPA expects to deliver more projects in the following three years whilst at the same time reducing the levy charged to the public. And finally, as anticipated by the Chief Executive is to concoct the Park Authority as "a world class organisation too" [as an exemplar]. His strong confidence was seen from his belief saying, "In here it is our values, which are about excellence, about creativity, delivering in what we promise, being fair in terms of customers, staff, stakeholders and being business minded which is about in community centred but commercially focus. And that is very much our mantra; community centred and commercial focus and making sure they go hand in hand" (26th September 2011). Looking at his optimism, the researcher therefore sees the Chief Executive as an enthusiastic and devoted leader.

6.9 Conclusions

The overarching purpose of conducting the benchmarking method was to tease out its practicality and benefits in evaluating urban regeneration initiatives through regional park programmes. This examination was carried out based on the shortage of references on the evaluation of regional parks of which were established based on urban regeneration purpose using this method of examination. And it was the fact that the MW had never attempted to benchmark its performance by comparing with other similar intervention, as well as the paucity of any research attempting to benchmark and assess regional parks by means of combination of the benchmarking method and the Realistic Evaluation approach. This researcher had therefore taken the challenge to try out the evaluation using the benchmarking method and the categorisation of the CMO configurations simultaneously to assess the case studies. For that, this chapter is the result of those actions. Even so, this chapter only presents the outcomes of this benchmarking exercise, i.e., the results of the comparative assessment. The results of the expanded analysis with the specific framework of the CMO configurations application will be addressed in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Six has thus managed to understand the whole picture of urban regeneration intervention through regional parks and particularly recognised the various approaches to programme delivery through certain important mechanisms. It was also then realised that the classification of main areas for analysis through the categorisation of the Realistic Evaluation systematically grouped the analysis into separate functional areas. The way that the analysis was conducted was practical and useful in addressing the performance of both MW and the LV. The process of conducting this benchmarking exercise enabled the researcher to fully understand the importance of following the standard benchmarking procedure put forward by many scholars in order to gain the benefit from the task. It informs the settings of both programmes through their setting and nature of programmes. Moreover, it also helped the researcher in understanding the process of programme delivery through the mechanisms employed such as funding, park frameworks, monitoring and evaluation, maintenance, branding and promotion and many other means. Other than that, the benchmarking exercise also discovered the issues and problems of those programmes, its strengths and weaknesses.

Nevertheless, the benchmarking procedure also has its flaws. Although the steps to conducting the procedure are orderly, because the research involves people’s perceptions and the management and administrative groups particularly, inevitably the process very much relied on people’s willingness to participate. Furthermore, not all of the responses were fully received as anticipated. To some extent, some information needed was not acquired from the primary data collection. As a result, some analyses appeared to be imbalanced.

Indeed, it was not a complex task nor was it arguable when trying to justify which regional park is far better than the other as both case studies are unique in their own context and process. It was clear that the MW was not able to continue after eight years while the LV continues to operate. For the sake of argument, the researcher came to a decision to turn back to the basic purpose of this benchmarking process. It was certainly not the case of trying to revive the MW. It was the intention of learning from others and learning from the MW experience, as well as exposing the variations of approach to programme delivery from the two case studies.

It is therefore concluded that a regional park established under a certain Act and possessing its own Statutory Body or Park Authority has a more secured position and prospect. Inevitably, it protects the park, allowing it to mature in time. This "permanent" status permitted the park to continuously evolve and alter its vision to suit the current demand and opportunities. Also, it is important to note that it is an opportunity and a positive force for any regional park to encompass a variety of natural assets along with the built environment so as to ensure its growth and potentials. The fact that funding has great influence to a regional park's development and sustainability, therefore, funding is perceived as the key mechanism for any regional park implementation. All these elements help to explain why the LV is going forward to become a world class leisure destination and why the MW never got the chance to reach maturity.

Also, it was discovered that a restricted duration for the delivery of a regional park has an effect on its implementation process and effectiveness of the programme. The researcher noticed that a regional park with a planned timetable can lead to many issues like maintenance, sense of awareness and future perspective. However, from the analysis, the researcher is confident that despite the short-term nature of programme delivery period for the MW, the MW has been successful in achieving its original intention in particular, and successful in delivering almost its entire list of intended projects, provided that it has all the right mechanisms to deliver the projects. Even though there were a few projects that were left unfinished, nonetheless, achieving almost 60 projects throughout its eight-year period was good in spite of the credit crunch and recession period it had to face during the Succession Programme. The restricted funding and reduction of staff towards the end of the programme had not failed or threaten the whole programme. The partners and the team managed to complete the programme in March 2011.

It was evident that the LV has so much to offer in the future while the MW is now left to the hands of its related local authorities. This inevitably affects the appearance of Mersey Waterfront as a regional park as a whole instead now known as local attractions at separate locations. Nevertheless, both regional parks can be perceived as successful in their own way and within its own context. Both had achieved what it intended to do in the beginning, and both have had the experience of transforming their area and delivering the projects. However, it is hard to say whether the MW had portrayed itself as a world class standard as aspired in its 2009 document (Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2009). The LV in contrast, has clearly demonstrated its progressive attainment in reaching its aim to be a world class leisure destination, with its Olympic standard sports facilities. At this point, the researcher does not see any prospect of the MW being revived. The LV is fortunate and has a brighter future in many years to come due to its secured funding and protected Park Authority.

Taken as a whole, Chapter Six has thoroughly discussed the results from the Stage One Benchmarking Process. It analysed comprehensively the delivery of both regional parks in accordance with the three key elements of the CMO configurations, i.e. the *Context* of the programmes, the *Mechanisms* applied for implementation and the *Outcomes* of those interventions. This division of analysis in turn provided several useful plots in evaluating the two major case studies. In relation to this belief, the analysis therefore achieved the following:

(1) A comparative analysis of the two UK case studies;
(2) An understanding of the benefits that urban regeneration intervention may provide;
(3) An understanding of the requirement needed to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of regional park initiatives;
(4) A verdict on the performance and achievement of both regional parks;
(5) Some points to ponder for future undertakings;
(6) The importance of certain mechanisms to programme delivery;
(7) A platform to take the analysis to another level for the Realistic Evaluation; and
(8) The lesson learnt from employing the benchmarking method as an evaluation tool.

In short, the researcher considered the benchmarking exercise as a practical and effective approach while the method of examining the subject into the CMO configurations was practical.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BENCHMARKING THE MW AND THE LV PROGRAMMES USING THE REALISTIC EVALUATION METHOD

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the findings of realistic evaluation for MW and LV. In Chapter Six, we have seen the results of benchmarking evaluation in assessing the performance and variations of the MW and the LV. The primary purpose of this chapter is therefore to re-examine the results gathered in Chapter Six and to conduct *Realistic Evaluation* from those findings. This further pragmatic investigation also employs the exercise of benchmarking in order to conduct the realistic evaluation for both case studies. Additionally, as mentioned much earlier in Chapter Four, the 'realistic method' which was proposed by Pawson and Tilley in 1997 employs the '*Context-Mechanism-Outcome* (CMO) *Configurations'* framework. It was indeed beneficial when the earlier part of assessment (the benchmarking analysis) classifies the attributes for analysis into separate themes, namely; the context of programme, mechanisms for programme delivery and outcomes of programme. These categorisations had therefore prepared a ground work for this further analysis. In a brief description, this chapter attempts to bring together the work from the earlier exercise of the benchmarking process and the examination of the realist approach as a combined evaluation approach.

In light of this, the rationale for analysing the functioning of both case studies using the suggested configurations is to:

(1) Analyse what form of Mechanism(s) and Context(s) produces or triggers the Outcome(s)?
(2) Examine which structure of the Mechanism(s) and Context(s) suit / benefited certain individuals or groups?
(3) Investigate to what extent the CMO Configurations are a valuable assessment structure for evaluating regional scale programmes when it was originally designed for a local scale programme?
(4) Inspect the extent to which the value of the combination of the benchmarking method and the realistic evaluation is practical in evaluating urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional park programmes?

7.2 Examining the Context, Mechanisms and Outcomes of Programmes

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the *CMO Configurations* are applied as a framework to understand the underlying causal effects of 'what works for whom and in what situation?' It was also suggested by Pawson and Tilley (1997) that the general technique of addressing the framework is through the structure as illustrated below:

Outcome = Mechanism + Context

The use of these three key elements is to justify and translate the association of certain mechanisms within a certain context that can activate or initiate certain outcomes. In this instance, the research recalls the idea suggested by Hall and Hall (2004) that it is important to understand why a particular context has positive effects on certain group and not on others. Additionally, it is also essential to recap the idea from Chapter Four that an outcome can be triggered by multiple mechanisms and contexts, and that mechanisms are not always direct but sometimes hidden and often seen as the options and ability of the programme's rationale.

For that reason, to determine a clear direction to the assessment, the attributes that were scrutinised for the realistic evaluation were classified under:

(1) The *context* of the programme which is mainly centred on the background, or setting, or institutional, geography, socio-economic or political of the programmes;

(2) The *mechanism* applied for programme delivery which can be of any process, structure, element, device, instrument, line of tactic, approach, plan, strategy, means or procedure during the process of delivery, which can be classified as its contributing or causal factors to its outcome(s); and

(3) The *outcomes* of the programme which are basically examined from its end-results whether intended or unintended outcomes.

In the next section, these elements were integrated to demonstrate the effectiveness of those associations in suggesting the causal effects on certain outcomes of the two case studies. Additionally, the findings also show the differences between the MW and the LV in order to recognise which form of correlation is more realistic and straightforward.

7.3 Benchmarking the CMO Configuration Results of Both Programmes

Undeniably, from the analysis, there were many beliefs that drew the causal effects to the LV and MW's outcomes. These findings therefore correspond to the idea of the reasons for the performance and achievements of both regional parks. Additionally, in order to ease the understanding of efficiency and effectiveness of both Park's programme delivery, the analysis of the realistic evaluation was distinguished under separate topics. This method of presentation was done so as to simplify the comprehension of underlying reasons of outcomes and for any future adaptation of lessons from the MW and LV's experiences. Nevertheless, it must be recognised here that any outcomes presented in this analysis were considered as those results produced specifically by the MW or the LV. As the MW does not exist anymore, any outcome that was not generated by the programme is not valid for assessment. For example, the current maintenance arrangement by the former partners or the local authorities is not included as part of the MW intervention.

The research therefore handled the analysis through a sequence of key subjects to programme delivery process. In relation to this, the analysis was undertaken by examining the outcomes in order to investigate the causal effects. To start with, the analysis will review the outcomes from the very first stage of programme delivery which looked into the formation of the regional parks, followed by the process of implementation of regional parks. Thereafter, the thesis presents the findings of the programme's benefits and lastly the park's future prospects.

From the previous benchmarking exercise analysis (presented in Chapter Six) which explored the variations and resemblances of performance and achievements of the MW and the LV, the research then extracted some significant outcomes from both programmes. The following therefore draws out the outcomes and analyses the correlation between the mechanism and context of programme. In relation to this, the outcomes were organised in accordance with four discrete subjects for the purpose of delineating the findings into consistent topics:

1) Outcomes from the *Establishment of Regional Park* perspective;
2) Outcomes from the *Process of Programme Delivery* perspective;
3) Outcomes from the *Programme's Effects* perspective; and
4) Outcomes from the *Park's Future Prospect* perspective.

7.3.1 Outcomes from the *Establishment of Regional Park* Perspective:

The analysis of the causal effects to the achievement in terms of regional park establishment was scrutinised under several outcomes generated from various mechanisms and contexts. These outcomes were detected as:

(1) Creation of a regional park;
(2) Formation of a Park Authority as a Statutory Body for the regional park and the structure and arrangement of organisation;

(3) Possession of power to acquire land, reclaim land and develop land;
(4) Secured and protected Park Authority and the continuation to serve as the responsible Authority for the Park;
(5) Retaining the stability of a regional park;
(6) Secured funding to run the regional park programme indefinitely;
(7) Possession of control over land within the park;
(8) Ownership of land and the right to acquire for land ownership; and
(9) Increased land area of the park.

In order to simplify the following explanation, Table 7.1 is therefore provided at the end of this section, to describe concisely the findings.

Without doubt, the first and foremost outcome of the two case studies was the creation of the regional parks for both Mersey Waterfront and the Lee Valley. It was revealed in the benchmarking analysis that both MW and LV were faced with environmental issues and natural assets were being neglected. The idea of solving the deteriorating state of environment within the area, and the inspiration to revive and stimulate the area then motivated those responsible for instigating the scheme. This was achieved with the emergence of a bold vision and persuasive support from many parties. The establishment of regional parks would not have been possible without the strong belief and robust commitment from certain individuals or organisations at that particular time. Lou Sherman, the Mayor of Hackney and the Civic Trust were all very influential in bringing forward the idea of the LV, whilst the NWDA with the help of TMP were the leading institutions that were instrumental in setting up the MW.

It was obvious from the benchmarking analysis that the most striking outcome of a regional park establishment was the formation of a Park Authority (LVRPA). The presence of the Park Act (in this case, the LV Park Act 1966 for the LV) was an advantage to the formation of a specific institution known as the LVRPA to control and dominate the management and administration of the Park. This was not the case for the MW. For the MW, its park organisation was not established by statute like the LV. The establishment of the LVRPA as a Statutory Body for the park was a unique state of affairs as it was formed along with the creation of the LV Park Act 1966. The MW organisation was nevertheless special in its own arrangements established with a mixture of local authorities as partners. As a result of this statutory, the LVRPA was bestowed with clear rules and function. In addition to that, the LVRPA had the capability and areas of expertise to form its own organisation structure. In relation to the organisational structure and arrangements, it was also discovered that the role and function of the LVRPA has for the park had driven its institution to structure its organisation into a systematic arrangement, separating duties under different units, for examples, Communications, Parkland & Venues and Business Development.

This was drawn based on the LVRPA's definite powers over the park and its comprehension of the park's entities, vision and function.

In another finding, a clear sanction delineated in the LV Park Act 1966 had vested the LVRPA with certain powers. The LV Park Act's benefit therefore allows the Park Authority to acquire land it wishes to own for development, reclaim any land and develop its park. This agreement was fully established and exploited by the LVRPA. The LVRPA can own the land it requires for the park and have the control over this land. Because of this, the LVRPA's land holdings increased. Additionally, the existence of the LV Park Act 1966 and its regulation also provided the Park Authority with a secured position to operate as a Statutory Body for the park. The creation of the LV Park Act 1966 inevitably protects the LVRPA and retains its function as the responsible Authority for the park thus protects and guarantees the existence of the LVRPA and the continuity of the park management too. Moreover, with the LV Park Act 1966 and the LVRPA, the regional park will definitely remain as an entity for the region. It is quite hard to believe that the regional park will disappear or expire. Unlike the LV, the MW is now a legacy of that intervention and perhaps may not be identified as a regional park in the future, other than be known as a place of visitors attractions at separate locations, but not a regional park as a whole entity. Moreover, the hegemony or privilege it has from the LV Park Act 1966 provided a strong basis to enable the LVRPA to confirm the generation of income from the levy collection of residents around London, Hertfordshire and Essex. The following Table 7.1 summarises the findings.

Table 7.1: A summary of the correlation between the 'Outcome, Mechanism and Context' from the *Establishment of Regional Park* perspective

No.	**Contexts (C) +**	**Mechanisms (M) =**	**Outcome (O)**	**Level of Achievement**	
				LV	**MW**
1	• The existence of a location of a regional scale as the setting for the regional park. • Having a bold vision to create a regional park. • The creation of a Regional Plan as the basis of proposal. • Presence of inspiring and influential individuals or organisation to bring forward the idea. • Additionally, having a Park Act as the root to a regional park establishment and its Statutory Body like the LV Park Act 1966.	• Strong commitment and effort to bring forward the idea. • Assessment of current situation of the idea, and addressing the need and opportunities of the area. • Formation of Park Plan to initiate the proposal. • Establishing the organisation to manage and administer the regional park. • Outlining the strategies for the Park.	Creation of a regional park	Fully	Fully

2	• The creation of a Park Act (like the Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966) • Having a competent individual as the leader and skilled personnel to form the organisation structure.	• Distinct command addressed in the legislation which outlines the purpose and function of the Park Authority for the regional park. • Strong concentration and understanding of various subject matters within the regional park paradigm, as well as understanding strategically the core areas within the park, in order to designate particular department to serve the purpose of specific area, for example, business development, or performance, or panning, etc.	Formation of a Park Authority as a Statutory Body for the regional park and its resolute structure and arrangement of organisation.	Fully	Nil
3	• Enactment of law and regulations in the LV Park Act 1966. • The existence of Park Authority as the authorised organisation to carry out the task.	• A clear-cut statute outlined in the LV Park Act 1966 and a clear judgment and exploitation of privilege by the Park Authority.	Possession of power to acquire land, reclaim land and develop land.	Fully	Nil
4	• Presence of a regional park as the root to the park organisation. • Existence of the LV Park Act 1966 and its mandate.	• A definite ruling in the Act and the influence it has over the Park Authority.	Secured and protected Park Authority and the continuation to serve as the responsible Authority for the park.	Fully	Nil
5	• Existence of the LV Park Act 1966 and its statutes. • Presence of a strong park body to manage and control the park. • Composition of park's personnel to run the regional park. • Availability of secured funding to sustain the park.	• The statute shaped in the LV Park Act 1966 positioned and sustain the regional park as an established entity for the foreseeable future. • Continuous effort and operation of the park by various parties; the park Authority in particular and the partners in general. • Operational financial management to run the programme and ensure its incessant steadiness.	Retaining the stability of a regional park existence.	Fully	Nil
6	• Existence of the LV Park Act 1966 and its ruling. • Existence of the Park Authority as the vindicated authorised organisation, which permits the levy to be collected and managed.	• The law drawn in the LV Park Act 1966, granting access to the LVRPA to collect levy from the Londoners as a part of its funding sources and manage the financial side. • Proactive and strategic effort in managing the financial aspect of the park, enabling efficiency of the programme delivery.	Secured funding to run the regional park programme indefinitely.	Fully	Nil
7	• Existence of the LV Park Act 1966 and its jurisdiction. • Existence of the responsible Authority for the park.	• Stipulation of power by the LV Park Act 1966 to the Park Authority in terms of its control over its park and the entitlement it has to decide on its planning and development within the park. • Fortification of power within the Park's boundary by the Park Authority itself. • Enforcement of power by the Park Authority to protect its land.	Possession of control over land within the park.	Fully	Nil
8	• Existence of the LV Park Act 1966 and its regulations. • The existence of the Statutory Body for the park.	• The decree outlined in the LV Park Act 1966. • The domination of power and ability that the LVRPA has in acquiring land and ownership. Familiarisation of the park's function, benefits and opportunities by the Park Authority.	Ownership of land and the right to acquire for land ownership.	Fully	Nil

9	• Existence of the LV Park Act 1966. • Existence of the responsible Park Authority.	• The hegemony it has from the LV Park Act 1966. • The intensification of land area through a familiarisation of the needs and potentials of its regional park, as well as the need to fulfil the current and future demands.	Increased land area of the park.	Fully	Nil

Source: Constructed by Author based on the Realistic Evaluation findings.

In relation to the above table (Table 7.1), it cannot be denied that the LV achieved more in terms of the occurrence and experience it had in relation to the outcomes of programme. Certainly, the creation of the Park Act provided the regional park with many privileges and allocates the LVRPA with certain powers and advantages, especially the supremacy of control over land and advantage to serve as a regional park. To briefly summarise this, a Park Act that is designed for a particular regional park, can protect the park and secure its position as a regional park for a definite period, as well as providing the park with certain powers and the eligibility to establish its own Park Authority. In short, to answer *"what works, in what circumstances and for whom?"* is the Park Act and its regulations that will benefit the regional park and its Park Authority in total, and as a result of this, the park inevitably benefits the people and the region.

7.3.2 Outcomes from the *Process of Programme Delivery* perspective

It was realised that there were several interrelated mechanisms and contexts that influence and shape the outcomes of the 'process of programme delivery'. To help explain this statement, the following discussion elaborates on the relationships of the three elements; the context, mechanism and outcome during the delivery process, while Table 7.2 recapitulates the findings into a rather straightforward version.

From the benchmarking analysis and realistic evaluation of the 'process of programme delivery', the perceptible outcomes generated from the intervention were identified as:

(1) Delivery of appropriate or effective projects;
(2) Achievement of intended and unintended aims and objectives;
(3) Prevention of projects against failure in delivery;
(4) Conformity of project delivery in accordance to project schedule;
(5) Achieving efficiency in programme delivery;
(6) Execution of systematic financial arrangement and management;
(7) Completion of almost all intended projects;
(8) Improvement of existing framework and construction of new framework;
(9) Compliance with the current Park Plan or Park Development Framework;

(10) Establishing the regional park as a complete or self-contained place for recreational and leisure activities;
(11) Attainment of intended performance standards and awards;
(12) Assured quality of recreational and leisure facilities continuously; and
(13) Ability to provide sports facilities of world standard and compete with other standard sports' facilities.

In relation to the outcomes mentioned above, there were many causes that prompted the completion of projects for the regional park programmes. All things considered, the delivery of a regional park requires the existence of a regional scale area as the setting for the programme. It also requires the presence of a specified Park organisation as the essential body to control, manage and administer the park. And, within this organisation context, the institution needed competent staff to run the programme and carry out the numerous tasks for the park in accordance with their expertise. Other than that, the analysis distinguished that funding was also part of the important contexts in programme delivery, especially for project implementation. These four contexts were most crucial in ensuring the practicality and effectiveness of regional park delivery and its project implementation. This is why in many delivery processes the outcomes were generated by these factors (as demonstrated in Table 7.2).

In order to successfully deliver the intended aims and objectives, achieving efficiency of programme delivery and provision of a regional park as a complete recreational and leisure destination for visitors, the findings from analysis indicate that, besides the four key contexts mentioned earlier, the outcomes were also influenced by several mechanisms which were seen as interconnected to these contexts. These mechanisms inevitably trigger the process of programme delivery. It was therefore revealed that it was critical to understand and deliver the park's vision, aims and objectives. The practice of operative project management, monitoring and evaluation, using the Park Plan or Framework as the guidance, as well as the responsibility of partners throughout the delivery had also triggered the positive outcome. Other important mechanisms were the fact that conducting public participation and incorporating the public's idea into the development had also helped the Park in achieving efficacy of programme, as well as understanding and forecasting the visitor's needs and future requirements through visitor research or visitor tracking within the Park.

In addition to that, it was found that there were many mechanisms within the four crucial contexts that had stimulated the completion of almost all intended projects, the delivery of apposite projects for the Park, compliance to project schedule and prevention from project delivery failure. These mechanisms were identified as the high level of commitment by the partners, strategic approach in project management, continuous monitoring and evaluation, the practice of project appraisal in selecting the right projects for development and the act of examining the risk and safety of a project.

It was also discovered that financial aspects were very influential in this intervention. The existence of Park Authority for LV and an Accountable Body for MW as the context and employing a strategic financial approach as mechanism facilitates the Park Authority in achieving an effective financial management. In the case where funding was cut and the occurrence of other issue like ownership, there were a small number of the MW projects like the Windows on the Waterfront and the River of Light that were affected and were not delivered. Inevitably, the unavailability of funding also caused many other disruptions to maintenance, marketing, ongoing improvement of the regional park as an entity and further transforming the Park to a world class destination. This was apparent for MW.

Besides the four most influential contexts, the analysis revealed that the force from the current and future demands had also activated the outcome. Within this context, the evolving aspirations to change and adapt for the future, along with the obligation to periodically review and improve the current Park Plan or framework led to the improvement of existing framework and the construction of new framework for the Park. This however is not achievable without a deep understanding of the current and future demands and opportunities of the Park as well as the strategic approach adopted by the Park organisation. MW only developed one framework throughout its programme due to the restricted time frame for programme delivery. The LV in contrast practiced for more than 45 years produced many Park Plans and frameworks since its establishment. Additionally, the researcher admits that partnership working was also an important mechanism in this operation. Also, in relation to the achievement of compliance to the current Park Plan, it was realised that the continuous effort by the Park Authority and constant monitoring and evaluation were also influential within the related context.

Within the context of the presence of a regional park setting, the Park Authority and the demands from surrounding environment to compete with others, the LVRPA operated the mechanism of high engagement with the partners to ensure that the projects meets the performance standards for the Green Flag awards and the QUEST. This achievement was also made possible with the assistance of other influential mechanisms like project management and constant monitoring and evaluation. The importance of monitoring and evaluation as a mechanism, along with a strategic financial plan in forecasting the future maintenance, and under the same context were also seen as triggering the continuous provision of assured quality of recreational and leisure facilities for the Park.

And finally, the last outcome discovered for the programme delivery process was the ability to provide sports facilities of world class standard, enabling the LV to compete with other world class standard sports facilities. This attainment was achieved within a similar context but with an interesting mechanism of delivery, which was the continuous effort undertaken by the Park Authority to be involved in benchmarking activities by becoming a member of the Australian Parks Forum and the London Park

Benchmarking Group. Through this context and mechanism, the LVRPA was able to comprehend the current and future demands of the Park and position itself with other world class standard facilities.

Table 7.2: A summary of the correlation between the 'Outcome, Mechanism and Context' from the *Process of Programme Delivery* perspective.

No.	Contexts (C) +	Mechanisms (M) =	Outcome (O)	Level of Achievement	
				LV	MW
1	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • Vision and objectives addressed in the Business Plan (for the MW) and the Park Plans and Frameworks (for the LV). • Having competent decision-makers in selecting the projects.	• Committed involvement and strategic decision making by the organisation, Board of Members and partners about the appropriate choice of projects for the regional park in relation to the park's vision and aspiration. • Being meticulous in project appraisal; assessing the project in terms of its feasibility, impact, risk and safety assessment, as well as budget and prospect.	Delivery of appropriate or effective projects.	Fully	Fully
2	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • Having a vision and a set of objectives for the regional park. • Having the right skills and partners within the organisation. • Gaining secured funding for development.	• Enduring the regional park's vision and outlining project planning and schedule. • Project management routine for each project, along with continuous monitoring and evaluation of during the delivery of project as part of the practice.	Achievement of intended and unintended aims and objectives.	Fully	Fully
3	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • Availability to funding in order to deliver the projects. • Having the right skill to select projects for delivery and skilled Project Managers to handle project management of each project. • Having a clear project outline.	• Practicing project appraisal procedure to examine the potential of project before its delivery which includes risk and safety assessment. • Operating strategic project management throughout the delivery. • Following tight monitoring of each project and performing evaluation to monitor the project progress, as well as engaging the external evaluators to assess the project.	Prevention of projects against failure in delivery.	Fully	Fairly
4	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • The existence of Park organisation to administer, manage and control the programme. • Adequate funding to complete the project. • Having a clear and realistic project outline.	• Performing risk and safety assessment of the projects before its implementation. • Commitment by the partners to ensure the delivery of projects. • Strategic project management. • Reinforcement of project monitoring and evaluation continuously throughout the delivery of project. • High concentration of project supervision by Project Manager.	Conformity of project delivery in accordance with project schedule.	Fully	Fully

5	• Good and passionate leadership within the organisation. • Having adequate skills within the institution. • Having a clear programme outline. • The existence of Park Plan or Park Development Framework as the foundation to development. • Having the right environmental setting as the site for the programme.	• Accountability by the partners to deliver the projects. • Constant monitoring and evaluation by the responsible Project Manager. • Operative project management throughout the delivery of projects. • Bringing into play the Park Plan or Park Development Framework into programme delivery. • Conducting public participation schemes and incorporating public's opinions into the delivery of programme.	Achieving efficiency in programme delivery	Fully	Fully
6	• Existence of the Park Authority as the authorised accountable party for the LV and the Wirral MBC as the Accountable Body for the MW. • Encompassing qualified and sufficient skill to handle financial management.	• Execution of operative financial management by monitoring the expenses and scrutinising the budget for each project.	Effective financial management.	Fully	Fully
7	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • The existence of Park Authority and the MW organisation, with competent leadership and Board Members, as well as the right expertise to deliver the projects. • Access to secured grants for project funding. • Having clear milestone for the projects. • Partnership approach in delivery of projects.	• Selecting only the feasible projects to be delivered during project appraisal stage. • Persuasive project management of the Park. • Coordination of work process among the partners. • Ensuring the effectiveness of financial management in managing the financial side of project delivery. • Continuous monitoring and evaluation throughout the delivery of projects. • Creating good relationship and working atmosphere among the partners.	Completion of almost all intended projects	Fully	Fully
8	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • The force of surrounding scenario, as well as the current and future demands to modify the plan; Influential surrounding (locally, regionally or internationally). • Having an enthusiastic regional park organisation, with the presence of creative and motivated team to envisage the future development of the park. • Having adequate budget to undergo the process of reviewing and constructing new plan or framework.	• Evolving aspirations and the desire among the leaders and the park's personnel to change and adapt for the future. • Having the obligation to periodically review and improve the current park plan or framework by producing new framework to suit the present of future need. • Familiarisation of the current and future demands and opportunities of the park. • Strategic approach and work process to formulate new framework for the Park. • Actively reviewing the existing Park Plan and developing new Plans or Framework in order to meet the current and future demands and opportunities. • Highly motivated, and committed in fulfilling those vision, aims and objectives through the work process. • Practicing partnership working with other related agencies and stakeholders.	Improvisation of existing framework and construction of new framework.	Fully	Nil

9	• The existence of responsible department of unit within the Park organisation to monitor and evaluate the progress of delivery. • Having competent staff within the park organisation to handle the task.	• Continuous effort by the park organisation especially the planning and performance unit to measure the progress and extent of delivery in conformity to the Park Development Framework. • Constant monitoring and evaluation to assess the progress of Park Plan delivery.	Compliance with the current Park Plan or Park Development Framework	Ongoing	Nil
10	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • The current and future force inspired by the surrounding to turn the park as a complete visitor destination. • Availability of related resources to develop and meet the identified requirement. • Having 'visitor counters' and tracking devices all over the park to enable the Park Authority to monitor the visitor numbers. • Having a long term plan for the regional park.	• Having aspiration to promote the park as a complete visitor destination, equipped with recreational and leisure activities, as well as accommodation. • Understanding and forecasting the visitors' needs and future requirement within the park through the 'visitor research' and 'visitor tracking study'. And, provision of accommodation, camping sites and caravan sites within the park.	Establishing the regional park as a complete or self-contained place for recreational and leisure activities.	Fully	Nil
11	• The existence of a regional park as the setting of awards' requirements. • Combination of Park Authority and partners as a working team. • The force of surrounding environment to compete with others.	• Efforts and high level of engagement by the Park organisation and partners to ensure that projects meet the performance standard for the intended related awards like the QUEST or Green Flag, through project management, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of projects.	Attainment of intended performance standards and awards.	Fully	Fully
12	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • Access to secured funding for future maintenance. • Highly skilled employee within the organisation to manage the financial side.	• Ongoing monitoring and evaluation as well as forecasting future maintenance of the built environment through financial plan. Therefore allocating budget for future maintenance of those facilities.	Assured quality of recreational and leisure facilities continuously.	Fully	Nil
13	• The existence of a regional park as the setting. • The vision to be a world class leisure destination and the influential surrounding to provide an Olympic Park. • The existence of vigorous Park Authority and competent staff like the LVRPA. • Having sufficient funding to develop the facilities.	• Understanding the current and future demands of the park. • Continuously learning from others through involvement of benchmarking process, in order to compete with the world class standard.	Ability to provide sports facilities of world class standard and compete with other world standard sports facilities.	Fully	Nil

Source: Constructed by Author based on the Realistic Evaluation findings.

Table 7.2 above reveals the widely divergent of the LV's accomplishment as compared to the MW. Almost half of the outcomes achieved by the LV were not obtained by the MW. However it was no surprise that the MW did not review its MWRPSF and construct a new framework, or fulfil its park plan proposed in the framework due to its short-term programme period and the lack of funding, as well the ending of the MW organisation. For the same reasons, the MW organisation was not capable of establishing its Park as a complete self-contained area for recreational and leisure activities, as well as allocating funding for future maintenance, and compete with other world class sports facilities. In general, in achieving the outcomes programme delivery process, the combination of the four major contexts is vital. The contexts and their correlation with project management as well as monitoring and evaluation are the primary mechanisms. This practice benefits the regional park in total as it affects the Park's elements and its development, and in general contributes to the benefit of the people.

7.3.3 Outcomes from the *Programme's Effects* perspective

Accordingly at this point, the research also re-examined the findings from the previous benchmarking exercise using the realistic evaluation to study the 'effects of regional park programmes'. The analysis therefore recognised many evident outcomes as listed below:

(1) Regeneration and redevelopment of the area;
(2) The role of a regional park recreational and leisure destination in terms of local, regional and international perspective;
(3) Transformation of the physical aspects and improved built environment;
(4) Provision of intended sports, recreational and leisure facilities;
(5) Improved image and reflection of the area;
(6) Protection and sustainability of the area;
(7) Sustainability of the physical structures within the area for the future;
(8) Attracting more visitors to the area based on increasing visitors numbers;
(9) Provision of venues for events and activities;
(10) Fulfilling the public need through the opportunities offered by the regional park;
(11) Publicity and exposure for the regional park's opportunities and benefits it can offer to the outside world besides the locals;
(12) Creating a sense of place and belonging among the locals;
(13) Improved public awareness of a regional park's existence, its opportunities and benefits;
(14) Providing positive spill over effect to the adjacent land;
(15) Contribution to the local economy; and
(16) Possessing an Olympic Park and serving the Olympic Games as a venue in 2012.

In relation to the outcomes outlined above, in order to understand the correlation between the 'context, mechanism and outcome' of the *programme's effects*, the following description explains the relationship while Table 7.3 below reviews the findings succinctly and informs the type of contexts and mechanisms that produced the end-results.

The analysis of the outcomes of programme’s effects showed a consistent form of contexts and mechanisms in generating those end-results. It was no surprise to find that the most recurring contexts that had induced the conditions were the existence of an area as the regional park entity, the presence of a potent organisation to govern the Park, the combination of various expertise within the Park organisation, the availability of funding, and the presence of the Park Act like the LV Park Act 1966. These stimulus elements were seen in almost every aspect of programme’s effects.

The first shared triumph of both case studies in terms of programme’s effects was the fact that both had successfully regenerated and redeveloped the area. Unsurprisingly, the blend mixture of several contexts like having a strategic vision and plan, the presence of a Park organisation and the availability of funding, and the use of several mechanisms like commitment by the partners and through developing a strategic plan, as well as conducting project appraisals and learning from others, have all inevitably set off the delivery of regeneration schemes within the Park and thus delivering its intended purpose.

It was no surprise that there were many identical outcomes achieved by the LV and the MW. Predictably, within those identified contexts, there were scores of mechanisms combined which helped to influence the outcomes. There were many mechanisms contributed to the achievements like serving the locals, region and international visitors, the transformation of the physical aspects, provisions of intended sports, recreational and leisure facilities and improved image and reflection of the area. Additionally, there were also similar mechanisms which resulted in provision of venues for activities and events, creating the sense of place and belonging, creating positive spill-over to the adjacent land and contribution to the local economy. These causal effects were identified as the efforts in providing the facilities within the Park through the process of systematic approach, from design to project appraisals, project outline, project management, financial management, and through constant monitoring and evaluation of project delivery, as well as the work on maintaining the Park. It also required a high level of engagement and belief among the partners. In relation to this too, it was also essential to ensure that the Park delivers its aims and objectives through its intended projects, and to make sure that the Park contributes to the local economy through projects like accommodation and shops for local vendors.

In another discovery, the effects of gaining sustainability of the natural assets and built environment, and also the protection of natural environment, were very much influenced by the focus on the protection of the area. This included through enforcement of regulations, identification of sensitive areas for protection designation and constant work on maintenance around the area. Additionally, it was also the work on forecasting the future maintenance through systematic financial plan. These mechanisms combined with the similar contexts as addressed before had therefore galvanised the process of achieving those outcomes.

Additionally, within the same contexts too, and with the operation of certain mechanisms like understanding the needs of the locals through public participation, also influenced the regional park to gain more positive results like attracting more visitors and fulfilling the public needs. In addition to those, it also improves public awareness of the regional park and therefore exposes the park's benefits to the public. These mechanisms were completed by undertaking forums, workshops and discussions with the local communities, as well as the work on publication, advertisement and marketing. Interestingly, the LV had a more robust approach as compared to the MW. It can also forecast its future development based on its visitor surveys.

Finally, for the programme's effects outcomes, it was indicated that the LV now is a regional park with sports facilities of world class standard. Within the context of creative leadership and personnel, as well as the aspiration to progress and the existence of the appropriate setting for Olympic Park, and combined with mechanisms like strong commitment among the partners and the modification of Park Plan and operationalisation of the vision, the LV now has the advantage of offering world class sports facilities Park.

Table 7.3: A summary of the correlation between the 'Outcome, Mechanism and Context' from the *Programme's Effects perspectives*.

No.	**Contexts (C) +**	**Mechanisms (M) =**	**Outcome (O)**	**Level of Achievement**	
				LV	**MW**
1	• Having a strategic vision for the Park, complemented by other aims and objectives to regenerate the area. • Having a strategic plan (or Business Plan). • The presence of an authoritative Park organisation, with strong support from the partners and political will. The presence of a defined setting of environment and identified area for redevelopment. • The existence of a Park Act like the LV Park Act 1966 induces the context and adequate funding to deliver those regeneration schemes.	• High intensity of aspiration and commitment by the Park organisation and partners to deliver the programme. • Developing strategic plan for the Park and performing 'project appraisals' at the early stage of project delivery to select the right projects for development. • Undertaking studies to learn and adopt lessons from others.	Regeneration and redevelopment of the area.	Fully	Fully
2	• Existence of a defined boundary and predetermined area of a regional park. • The existence of a Park Act like the LV Park Act 1966 to protect the regional park and its Statutory Body. • The presence and substance of a park encompassing of the natural assets and natural environment, of various recreational and leisure opportunities to offer. • Having secured funding to deliver the programme.	• The effort to provide and develop an area of a regional park scale and the commitment to provide all the necessary opportunities that a regional park should contain, including recreational and leisure facilities, besides the natural setting or environment. • Continuous effort to ensure that the park will serve its purpose for the locals, region and international visitors.	Serving the locals, region and international perspective as a regional park recreational and leisure destination.	Fully	Fairly

3	• Having sufficient funding to develop the area and with the existence of park organisation to manage and administer the park development. • The existence of that regional park as the location of development. • Having aspirations and targets set for the development.	• Delivering urban regeneration projects. • Continuous work on monitoring and evaluation, along with strategic project management in ensuring the best possible opportunity that a regional park can offer.	Transformation of the physical aspect and improved built environment.	Fully	Fully
4	• The existence of a regional park as the setting for sports, recreational and leisure facilities. • The existence of park organisation and the partners to develop the facilities. • Having secured funding. • Having a vision addressed for the park, as well as the project plan.	• Exercising project appraisal in assessing and selecting projects. • Intensive concentration on the delivery of sports, recreational and leisure facilities. • Outlining the project plan for the Park, its components and schedule. • Unremitting work on financial management, project management, monitoring and evaluation throughout the delivery of projects.	Provision of intended sports, recreational and leisure facilities.	Fully	Fully
5	• The existence of a regional park as the setting for a regional park • The existence of Park organisation and the partners to develop the facilities. • Having adequate and secured funding for the development. • Having a Park Plan or framework and its aims and objectives as the starting point for programme delivery.	• Increasing the work on enhancing the area and maintenance of the existing structures. • Construction of new facilities and redevelopment of the existing built environment. • High levels of engagement by the partners. • By commissioning financial management, monitoring and evaluation, project management and financial management.	Improved image and a sense of place for the area.	Fully	Fully
6	• The existence of a place encompassing of the natural assets as the setting for the regional park. • The presence of park organisation to manage and administer the park. • Adequate funding to run the programme. • The presence of law and regulations, as well as the responsible agencies for natural habitat or biodiversity.	• Concentration of protection for the natural habitat area, river or coastline. Imposing protection regulations at designated area like woodland, forest and marshes. • Designating certain areas as protection areas like forest reserve, SSSI, SPA or nature conservation area. • Adhering to the regulations of nature reserve protection and other related sustainability measures. • Enforcement of law to protect the nature and environment within the park. • Unremitting support and help by the rangers to guard and watch over the park area especially at the sensitive area or the natural habitat locations. • Continuous monitoring around the park by the park organisation. • Working in partnership with other related agencies like the Wildlife Trust and RSPB to protect the area.	Protection and sustainability of the area.	Fully	Fully

7	• The existence of a regional park containing physical structures as part of its elements. • The presence of a park organisation to control and manage the regional park. • Assured funding to maintain the park at present and future. • Having competent staff to handle the financial plan for the park.	• Continuous effort on maintenance by the park organisation and the partners. • Forecasting the future through financial plan and allocating the funding for future maintenance.	Sustainability of the physical structures within the area for the future.	Fully	Fairly
8	• The existence of a place encompassing the natural assets and the built environment as the setting for a regional park, which offers various recreational and leisure opportunities for the visitors. • The presence of a Park Authority to manage and govern the Park. • The existence of visitors' attractions within the park to draw people's attention. • Having secured funding to undertake the visitor research.	• An understanding of the visitor needs and current demand, as well as future requirement for the area. • Strong commitments by the park organisation and the partners in the delivery of projects for the purpose of providing visitor attractions within the park. • Installing visitor tracking device within the park to monitor the mode of movement, volume and concentration of visitors. • Conducting visitor tracking research to make predictions of future demands.	Attracting more visitors to the area based on increasing visitor numbers.	Fully	Vague
9	• The existence of a place encompassing the natural assets and the built environment as the setting for a regional park, which offers various recreational and leisure sites for events and activities. • The presence of a Park Authority to manage and govern the park. • The existence of visitors' attractions within the park to draw people's attention. • Having secured funding to maintain and provide the park with facilities so as to suit the sites for events and activities.	• Delivering the intended projects of natural assets and built environment improvement as to provide location for events and activities, along with the protection of coastline or riverside for the said purpose. • Engaging in monitoring and evaluation of the park entities in ensuring the quality of sites for activities and events. • Delivering the facilities within the park and especially at the identified sites for events and activities to support the execution of events and activities. • Familiarisation of the park in order to allocate and designate certain locations as venues for activities and events.	Provision of venues for events and activities.	Fully	Fully
10	• The existence of a place encompassing the natural assets and the built environment as the setting for a regional park, which offers various recreational and leisure opportunities for the visitors. • The presence of a Park Authority to manage and govern the Park. • Assured funding to deliver the work on public participation. • Having competent staff to handle the forums, workshops, exhibitions and websites to invite and incorporate the communities into the plan.	• Execution of exhibitions, or forums, workshops, or discussions with the community to expose the public with the development plan and allowing the public to address their idea. • To allow public participation through related website, informing the public about the schemes. • To consider and include any logical suggestions provided by the communities into the development plan.	Fulfilling the public need through the opportunities offered by the regional park.	Fully	Fully

11	• The existence of a regional park with various visitors' attractions and opportunities for sports, leisure and recreational activities. • The existence of Park organisation and the partners to develop the facilities. • Having adequate and secured funding for marketing. • The presence of competent staff to carry out the task of marketing and promotion of the Park.	• Persuasive effort on marketing and promotion through branding strategy, websites and publications. • Intensifying work by a responsible department within the Park organisation to advertise and perform marketing tasks. • Creating internet links to provide information about the Park and to allow interactive booking or purchase.	Publicity and exposure about the regional park's opportunities and benefits it can offer to the outside world besides the locals.	Fully	Fairly
12	• The existence of a regional park as the setting to serve the people. • The existence of a mixture of natural assets and built environment within the Park. • The presence of park organisation and its administrative components to manage the park and deliver its function. • The presence of Park Plan that promotes the balance between the people and their environment. • The presence of competent staff to carry out the task of designing the park's entities and elements.	• Intense effort on delivering the aims and objectives of programme and concentration on delivering the intended projects within the park. • Ensuring the high level of engagement in incorporating the needs and suggestions by the communities into the development. • High concentration on park design when developing the schemes as to ensure that the development contemplates and blends the people and its surrounding.	Creating a sense of place and belonging to the locals.	Fully	Fully
13	• The existence of a regional park as the setting to serve the people. • The existence of a mixture of natural assets and built environment within the park. • The presence of park organisation and its administrative components to manage the park and deliver its function. • The presence of creative staff to undertake the work on promotion and publication.	• Intensifying the work on promoting the park as a regional park and continuous effort on advertising the area as a regional park entity. This can be achieved through publications, websites and advertisements.	Improved public awareness of a regional park existence, its opportunities and benefits.	Fully	Fairly
14	• The existence of a place encompassing of the natural assets and the built environment as the setting for a regional park, which offers various recreational and leisure opportunities for the visitors. • The presence of a Park Authority to manage and govern the park. • Having secured funding to deliver the intended projects.	• Ensuring provision of various types of recreational and leisure facilities can be benefited by the region, and not just for the locals. • Emphasis on the work of project appraisal as it can influence the type of projects that may stimulate positive effect to the adjacent land. • Increased involvement with any related agencies which may contribute to the Park Plan so as to consider the spill-over effect. • Providing infrastructure linkages from the park to the adjacent land.	Providing positive spill-over effect to the adjacent land.	Fully	Fully

15	• The existence of a regional park as the means of elevating the economic status. • Having a strategic plan for the area, for example, shaping the park into a self-contained leisure destination, and not just a day visit location. • Creative mind of the park's personnel and the combination of idea from other partners or stakeholders.	• Delivering the intended projects for the park. • Being thorough about the choice and mixture of visitor attractions within the park like shops for local vendors and accommodations which can escalate the growth of local economic.	Contribution to the local economy.	Fully	Fully
16	• Having creative and enthusiastic leadership and personnel within the Park organisation. • Having an innovative vision to develop the area. • Having the right setting of environment which suits the requirement of an Olympic Park and the funding to carry out the development.	• Reviewing the Park Plan and modifying the vision and operation to transform the area. • Strong commitment of teamwork between the park organisation and the partners to deliver the related projects.	Possessing an Olympic Park and serving the Olympic Games as a venue in 2012.	Fully	Nil

Source: Constructed by Author based on the Realistic Evaluation findings.

Based on the review of the CMO Configurations illustrated in Table 7.3, it was noticeable that the achievements of MW were almost equivalent to those of LV. Undeniably, the performance of the MW in producing comparable outcomes to the LV in relation to the programme's effects was very much affected by the analogous mechanisms employed by LV. To briefly conclude, within the similar contexts of Park existence and Park organisation as well as sufficient funding for project delivery, both programmes had benefited the regional park itself and effectively brought transformation to their areas. The approach and process to programme and project delivery especially the intensification of the work process and commitment to deliver the intended projects had mostly affected the outcomes of programme. Overall, it was found that the connection between the contexts and mechanisms, and the outcomes they had stimulated and generated had generally benefited the Park itself and the people that use the facilities. The mechanisms applied were influential either for the MW and LV. These mechanisms however appeared to be common procedures for development programmes.

7.3.4 Outcomes from the *Park's Future Prospect* perspective

So far, the research has exposed and interpreted the findings of the correlations of outcomes from the establishment of programmes, the process of programme and project delivery, and the effects of programmes. At this point, the thesis now presents the findings from the realistic evaluation of the link between the context, mechanism and outcome from the 'Park future prospect' perspective. It therefore brought to light some critical lessons in relation to the regional parks' future potential. Based on the analysis of both MW and LV's experience, there appeared to be many inadvertent benefits from the regional park programme. The positive outcomes were identified as:

(1) Raising the profile of the area;
(2) Leaving a legacy of world class standard sports facilities,
(3) Leaving a legacy of a regional park and its built environment, especially in terms of visitor attraction, recreational and leisure facilities;
(4) Instigating a brighter future as a regional park exemplar to others;
(5) Continuing to receive funding from the levy and other resources; and
(6) Continuing to serve as a regional park for the region specifically and for the wider context generally.

From the examination, the contexts in stimulating the outcomes of the 'park's future prospect' were very much identical to the previous analysis. In order to achieve those effects, a regional park needed a suitable setting of area to become the Park. It also required the presence of a Park organisation to preside over the Park, along with the right expertise and leadership to deliver the programme, and access to funding. Another crucial context is the existence of a Park Plan or framework which draws together the Park's aims, objectives and plan. Additionally, within these contexts, in order to generate the outcomes of raising the Park's profile, and leaving a legacy of the built environment, as well as instigating a brighter future the Park, the Park also required the related mechanisms during the process. In producing those outcomes requires continuous effort in reviewing and updating the Park Plan. This will help the Park Authority to keep pace with the current and future demands. Increasing the work on maintaining the Park can also stimulate the quality of the natural assets and built environment of the area. Other than that, mechanisms should also include strategic project management, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and commissioning performance measurement. Also, the persuasive work on publicising the Park helps to promote the Park to the outside world, while the involvement in benchmarking exercise can actually trigger those achievements.

Within the same contexts too, the LV had acquired extra benefits in comparison to the MW. In contrast to the LV, the MW did not leave a legacy of a world class sports facilities location, will never be funded by the levy (as it never was), and leaves an uncertainty of how the public perceives the MW as a regional park for the region. In relation to this, the evaluation goes back to the basic privileges that were drawn by the LV Park Act 1966 and the chance to be an Olympic venue for the LV, which was never the case for the MW. Although having the credibility to operate other related mechanisms as shown in Table 7.4 below, the MW was lacking in possessing a Park Act and the opportunity of becoming the spot for the Olympic Games. It was then resolved that the existence of the Park Act have a greater influence in securing the funding for the LV and protects the park and its Authority which inevitably attracts the Park as a location for the world standard sports event.

Table 7.4: A summary of the correlation between the 'Outcome, Mechanism and Context' from the *Park's Future Prospect* status.

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">No.</th><th rowspan="2">Contexts (C) +</th><th rowspan="2">Mechanisms (M) =</th><th rowspan="2">Outcome (O)</th><th colspan="2">Level of Achievement</th></tr>
<tr><th>LV</th><th>MW</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>• The presence of park organisation encompassing creative and enthusiastic leadership and personnel.
• The existence of a regional park as the means of recreational and leisure opportunities.
• Availability to assured funding to run the regional park as an asset to the region as well for publicity purposes.
• The presence of competent staff to design and deliver the programme, as well as managing and maintaining the park.
• Having a strategic plan to elevate the park's standard.</td><td>• Continuously updating the Park Plan to keep up with the current and future demands.
• Increased effort on maintaining the park to ensure that the quality of the natural assets and the built environments are well sustained.
• Persuasive publicity on the park's benefits through various works like advertisements, brochures, flyers, publications and website.
• Progressively developing and extending the park's performance and achievement in order to compete with the other regional parks.
• Taking more measures like advancing the status and provision of local or regional visitor destination to an international level.
• Intensification of project design and delivery in meeting the standards of related performance Awards.
• Undertaking benchmarking exercise or getting involve with benchmarking society to familiarise and disseminate the benchmarking procedure.</td><td>Raising the profile of the area.</td><td>Fully</td><td>Fairly</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>• Having the aspiration and vision to transform the regional park into a world class standard.
• The presence of park organisation encompassing of creative and enthusiastic leadership and personnel.
• The existence of a regional park as the means for sports facilities.
• The presence of assured funding to develop world class sports facilities.
• The presence of competent staff to design and deliver the projects.
• Having strategic plan to carry out the scheme.</td><td>• Designing projects that meet the world class standard.
• Delivery of sports facilities of world class standard like the Olympic Park.</td><td>Leaving a legacy of a world class standard sports facilities.</td><td>Fully</td><td>Nil</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>• The presence of park organisation encompassing of creative and enthusiastic leadership and personnel.
• The existence of a regional park and its recreational and leisure opportunities.
• The presence of funding to develop the park's built environment.
• The presence of competent staff to design and deliver the programme, as well as managing and maintaining the park.
• Having strategic plan for the park.</td><td>• Increasing the work on enhancing the area and maintenance of the existing structures.
• Construction of new facilities and redevelopment of the existing built environment.
• High levels of engagement by the partners to carry out the plan.
• Practicing project management, monitoring and evaluation and other strategic work process like financial management, project appraisal and working in partnership.</td><td>Leaving a legacy of a regional park and its built environment, especially in terms of visitor attractions, recreational and leisure facilities.</td><td>Fully</td><td>Fully</td></tr>
</table>

4	• The existence of a regional park as the setting to serve the public. • The existence of the mixture of the natural assets and built environment within the park. • The presence of park organisation and its administrative components to manage the park and deliver its function. • The presence of funding to take forward the Park Plan.	• Involving with benchmarking organisations (for example, the Australian Parks Forum and the London Park Benchmarking Group) and conducting benchmarking exercise to learn and compete with other exemplars. • Increasing effort to further improve the current performance and becoming best practice. • Delivering the tasks required aligned with the aims and objectives of the park.	Instigating brighter future as a regional park exemplar to others.	Fully	Fairly
5	• The existence of the Park Act like the LV Park Act 1966 which addresses the levy charges. • The presence of the park organisation and its competent staff to control the financial aspect. • The existence of a regional park to serve the locals and in return gains income from the levy charges.	• Collecting levy from the Londoners. • Receiving income from sponsorship and naming rights. • Performing operative financial management for the whole park. • Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the financial side to strategise for the future expenditure and income.	Continuing to receive funding from the levy and other sources.	Fully	Nil
6	• The existence of the Park Act like the LV Park Act 1966 which outlines the function of the regional park. • The presence of the Park Authority to manage and control the Park. • The legitimacy of park boundary and its area, defining the regional park. • The existence of a regional park to serve the locals and its region.	• A definite ruling in the LV Park Act 1966 which addresses the existence of a regional park and its Authority to manage the park. • Continuous effort to advertise and publicise the regional park and its opportunities. • Provision of all the necessary facilities that a regional park should encompass. • Persuasive action in understanding the visitors' need based on visitor research and visitor tracking. • Imposing and practicing a strategic approach in delivery and work process to ensure the park continues to serve its purpose.	Continuing to serve as a regional park for the region specifically and to the wider context generally.	Fully	Vague

Source: Constructed by Author based on the Realistic Evaluation findings.

Looking at Table 7.4 above, it is apparent that the LV has a greater prospect in the future as compared to the MW. It cannot be denied that MW only partially achieved the results that were gained by the LV. The MW was unsuccessful in retaining the prominence of a regional park as an entity to the Northwest region. However, it cannot be denied too that the MW intervention in some way contributed to the locals and region in lifting the profile of the area, and left a significant legacy of an improved built environment to the area. In parallel, the LV also shared similar advantages to the region. The LV successfully transformed the area to an improved natural and built environment area, and for that it has also raised the profile of the place which was once an eyesore to the Londoners. Nevertheless, nothing like the MW, the LV's future is more promising due to its performance as a venue for the London 2012 Olympic Games. This was achieved through the effort of delivering and developing a world class standard sports facilities within the park. Inevitably, the core legislation which protects the LVRPA and the Park had provided the means to secure the park's funding through the collection of funding. This condition therefore promises the continuation of the LV to continually serve its purpose. Indeed, this has proven that the LV Park Act 1966 influenced the achievement of the outcomes.

7.3.5 LV as A Benchmark: The Verdict

Putting all those findings together, the research can now conclude the performance of MW against LV. The realistic evaluation indicated the link between contexts and mechanisms in order to achieve certain outcome. Reflecting on the level of achievements for both regional parks, it was then obvious that the LV is beyond doubt a UK exemplar to other regional park practices. The results have shown that much could be learned from the LV all the way from its founding to its delivery process and approach to programme implementation. A clear sign of significant causal effects to its success was the existence of its specific Park Act and the presence of its Park Authority. To that, the research verdict stands that the LV can be a benchmark to other regional parks in the UK, and the decision to benchmark the MW against the LV was not wrong. In this instance too, the researcher believes that the LV is credible as a model for others to learn and adapt its lessons and experience. MW, on the other hand, demonstrated a good example of a regional park programme delivered within less than 10 years.

7.4 Realistic Evaluation as an Evaluation Framework: The Upshot

During the process of conducting the research, it was apparent that there appeared to be a dearth of evaluation research on regional park intervention with the application of the realistic evaluation. Moreover, it was also the absence of studies employing benchmarking and realistic evaluation at the same time in assessing those programmes. It was for these two major reasons that this analysis was carried forward.

And, in relation to realistic evaluation, without doubt there was a significant distinction between just performing benchmarking alone and combining it with realistic evaluation. In the previous chapter (Chapter Six), it was demonstrated that evaluating regional park performance through a comparative exercise can only differentiate the delivery, process, performance and achievement comparatively and inform the variations or similarities. But through this analysis, with the application of the realistic evaluation at the same time, the research can provide a more detailed explanation of how certain outcomes can be achieved. The realistic approach therefore enables the reasoning of outcomes, by addressing the causal effects of which incorporates the correlation between the contexts and mechanisms.

7.5 Conclusions

Chapter Seven has delivered the findings from the *Realistic Evaluation* of both case studies. The process of assessing both case studies using the CMO Configurations was made easy with the categorisations of separate themes for examination introduced earlier (as shown in the former Chapter Six), when evaluating the performance of both programmes using the benchmarking method. It was therefore realised that any realistic approach involving comparative investigation is more practical if the benchmarking approach considered the structure of analysis for the realistic approach beforehand.

The notion of the Pawson and Tilley's framework which links the association of the context, mechanism and outcome facilitated the process of evaluation in finding the effective measures in ensuring the achievement of certain outcomes. The CMO Configurations proved that the realistic evaluation is helpful in understanding further what causes the outcome of a programme. Additionally, the framework is helpful in assessing "what works for whom and under what circumstances". However, it was also discovered that some outcomes required several mechanisms, and within several contexts to attain particular results.

From the findings, it was clear that there were many forms of mechanisms applied to both regional parks which aided the programmes in achieving their outcomes. Nevertheless, it was clear that certain contexts within the LV programme were absent for the MW, therefore providing extra advantage for the LV. This examination therefore provided some key lessons from LV's experience. Without doubt, this further enhanced technique of evaluation derived from the theory-driven evaluation is workable for regional scale programme. And, most importantly, the LV has proven that it can win the position as a UK regional park exemplar, and that the MW was a good example of programme delivery within a short period of time. In fairness, the research therefore concludes that both regional parks are valid in offering lessons.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarises the whole thesis. It reflects on the execution of research, the key findings of this evaluation research, provides recommendations in relation to evaluating urban regeneration schemes delivered through regional parks and the practical approach to evaluation, assesses the whole research against its research objectives and identifies the scope for future research. For this purpose, this concluding chapter divides the discussion into five main topics, namely:

(1) Reflections on execution of research and key research findings;
(2) Recommendations for a practical approach;
(3) Evaluation of the research (Research objectives revisited);
(4) Contribution to knowledge; and
(5) Scope for future research (some perspectives for further explorations).

8.2 Reflections on Execution of Research and Key Research Findings

This section is intended to review some of the key findings achieved from this research. The section will therefore address reflections on the execution of research, revisit the performance of case studies and make a critique on both of this evaluation methods employed for this research.

8.2.1 Execution of Research

The research was designed to evaluate urban regeneration initiatives due to the issues addressed (see Chapter 1, in Section 1.2) mentioning the lack of a standard approach in examining the performance and effectiveness of urban regeneration initiatives, as well as the need to formulate a practical approach to evaluate those interventions. It was argued that there are no clear parameters to measure best practice in urban regeneration, despite the assessment criteria used in the past by the BURA, and that the BURA's assessment instrument was itself claimed as imperfect (see Jones and Gripaios (2000) and Chapter One (Section 1.2) of this thesis). The research then revealed that such evaluation as had been carried out of urban regeneration initiatives through a regional park programme was entirely performed in isolation without any attempt to compare them to other similar initiatives. It was revealed that there was one key feature missing from all the debates that were observed: there were no suggestions to examine the urban regeneration by means of *benchmarking*. Additionally, it was discovered that it was not a common practice in the UK to perform benchmarking procedures among the UK regional parks. Also, the research discovered that the main subject for investigation in this research (the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park) never attempted to benchmark its performance against other regional parks in the UK after the programme had been completed. Additionally, LV has never benchmarked its performance against any UK regional parks either.

For this reason, the researcher attempted to test the application of the *benchmarking* method as the key tool for evaluation, and to supplement that assessment with *realistic evaluation*. In order to achieve these tasks, the research employed a multiple-case study method. The case studies selected for this experiment were the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MW) and the Lee Valley Regional Park (LV), based on their urban regeneration backgrounds. The MW was chosen as the main subject while the LV became the exemplar. In accordance with the principle of benchmarking, a clear understanding of the 'main subject' is required. In trying to comprehend MW in detail, the researcher had earlier conducted a live evaluation project for MW during the course of this PhD work, which took place between summer 2010 and winter 2010. The results of this self-evaluation project were then presented and validated by the MW Board Members in May 2011 and were also presented at a public forum called the *Mersey Estuary Forum* in June 2011.

In relation to data collection, information was gathered from secondary and primary sources. For MW, primary data included pilot interviews, interviews and surveys. These various approaches were done for MW to thoroughly study its practice and experience and to use the information for the self-evaluation project as well as for this thesis. Primary data for LV however was obtained from interviews only. This was considered as adequate based on O'Leary's (2010) idea that qualitative data is sufficient if acquired from just the key informants. And this was proven right, since most of LV's experience and practice were obtained from secondary data, while the four key informants enriched the data. Moreover, much of LV's data was obtained from secondary data. For both case studies, questions for the interviews were semi-structured with some flexibility for the purpose of in-depth investigation.

The process of evaluating both case studies involved a systematic approach. MW was assessed earlier to fully understand its delivery and outcomes. Thereafter, MW was benchmarked against the LV. The comparison attributes were identified and classified into separate themes. These themes were justified in accordance with the Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) configurations suggested by Ray Pawson and Nick Tilley in 1997 for Realistic Evaluation. However, Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggested that this method of evaluation is particularly suitable for a local scale project or programme. It is because of this idea too that, this research aims to test this form of evaluation for a regional scale and to specifically try it out on regional park assessment. In relation to the evaluation themes again, the benchmarking analysis was done through comparing MW and LV according to three major aspects, i.e., the *context* (or setting) of programmes [C], the *mechanisms* for programme delivery and efficiency [M] and the *outcomes* of programmes [O] (as demonstrated in Chapter Six). Ideally, this type of categorisation in the benchmarking examination facilitates the next level of evaluation, the realistic evaluation (as presented in Chapter Seven). In addition to those major subjects, benchmarking was also performed to examine the participants' knowledge about benchmarking, the strengths and weaknesses of both programmes, issues faced by the programmes and participants' expectations and suggestions.

Overall, the execution of research followed the basic procedures of benchmarking. The only difference is that this benchmarking process ends after the completion of examination given that this is a PhD research and not the work of an engaged evaluator, whereas in the real benchmarking world applied by organisations, the process is recommended as a cyclical process (ongoing). The benchmarking process therefore repeats from the start, repeating the exercise from time to time. This enables an organisation to continuously improve its performance and practice. Nevertheless, the outcome of this research achieved its purpose in assessing the performance of both parks (as discussed in Section 8.2.2 below) and the application of both evaluation methods (see Section 8.2.3 of this chapter).

8.2.2 Performance of Regional Parks

Ambrose (2005) believes that any urban regeneration programme ought to be examined during its life span. The researcher concurs with his idea but also believes that the performance of urban regeneration programmes through the delivery of regional parks should be examined through a comparative measure. As reviewed in Chapter Two (see Section 2.4), the purpose of programme evaluation is to examine the effectiveness of a programme (Royse et al., 2004; Rutman, 1980; McDavid and Hawthorn, 2006). The research therefore relates the MW case to Posavac and Carey's (1989) belief that programme evaluation is considered as a summative evaluation if the investigation focuses after the completion of programme. This links very much to the MW case whereby assessment is carried out to measure the extent to which MW achieved its intended goal and its programme effectiveness. In this research, the purpose of examination relates to the idea proposed by Thayer and Fine (2001) and GAO (2011), whereby the importance of programme evaluation is to examine the performance of a programme (see review in Chapter Two, under Section 2.4.2 which discusses on the relationship between programme evaluation and performance measurement). This task was therefore perceived as essential in providing recommendations for future programme improvement, if not for MW (which programme ended in March 2011), the recommendations may be useful for LV or perhaps other similar future interventions.

In addressing the performance of both regional parks, it cannot be denied that LV has had more experience than MW. With more than 45 years behind it, LV managed to produce four Park Plans including the LV Park Development Framework (LV-PDF) 2011 as the latest and that currently being implemented. MW in contrast was not originally designed for an eight-year programme but was affected by the economic crisis causing it to end in March 2011. The MW Strategic Framework, designed in 2007, was actually a vision for a long-term to year 2020 (see Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, 2007:p8 and p69). Nevertheless, reflecting on the results of analysis, it is fair to judge that MW achieved its original vision to regenerate the area and to improve the physical, social and economic condition of the waterfront and along the coastline. Furthermore, MW programme transformed the waterfront assets to an enhanced recreational and leisure place. The transformations made along the coastline and promenades were said to be beneficial for the local communities and visitors from afar.

Despite the unexpected fixed-term duration for programme implementation, MW was claimed as a successful programme considering that it had delivered almost all of its intended projects throughout its period of development. Based on the participants' responses, a few local attractions were mentioned as unexpected successes like the Anthony Gormley statues along the Crosby Beach, the Otterspool Promenade and the Pier Head Ferry Terminal. Even so, the researcher regards the MW's short-term period as unfortunate. MW programme provided so many opportunities in terms of leisure for the region but it could also deliver more if it had not been terminated prematurely. The partnership arrangement among the partners proven that such a regional scale programme is feasible in transforming an area and creating a better sense of place for the area.

In judging whether LV is better than MW, this research has proven that there were many key lessons to be drawn from the LV's experience. The researcher values the LV as a good example of a regional park in the UK in terms of development and institution, as well as the opportunities it can offer at present and in the future. Being the pioneer of regional parks in the UK, the LV has set an example as a secured and functional regional park by having its own Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) which takes full responsibility of the park's management and development. Additionally, the creation of a specific Act of Parliament for LV (Lee Valley Regional Park Act 1966) enabled the establishment of LVRPA and secures its funding continuously through the collection of levy from the Londoners. And, because of the existence of the LV Park Act 1966 and the LVRPA as the statutory body for LV, the LVRPA possesses the power to be continuously in practice. Nevertheless, this does not mean that MW was a failure. In fact, without having its own Park Act and a statutory body to manage the park, MW was able to accomplish a substantial number of projects within a limited timescale through the work of partnership. The major mistake experienced by MW was that it had not considered its future in terms of funding, maintenance for the whole park and institution. The researcher therefore recognises MW as an example of what a short-term regional park can achieve and offer to the region. A vision for 2020 was addressed in the MW

Strategic Framework 2007 but funding was not allocated and forecasted. It would be beneficial if MW was continued, and provided with the funding to deliver what it intended to do in its 2007 Strategic Framework, especially the development of the Windows on the Waterfront. The most frustrating part is that in the future the new generations might not have heard of the MW programme since the website on MW was removed and that the current publicity for local attractions around the waterfront are referred as visitors attractions in Liverpool, not MW attractions.

To conclude on the performance of both case studies, LV has the advantage of delivering more projects since it has been in operation for more than 45 years and therefore has more chances in the future to continue developing its park. LV is definitely an exemplar of the longest standing regional park in the UK and an example of a progressive regional park development, from a local and regional scale in the past to provision of international scale sports and recreational facilities at present. MW on the other hand was successful in delivering most of what it was intended to deliver. It has indeed been a beneficial programme to the Northwest and the footprints of development delivered by the MW will continue to provide leisure and recreational facilities to the locals and the region. When LV is suggesting its Olympic Park is a legacy to its park, the MW participants also believed that the improvements and provision of new developments by MW could be considered as a legacy to the Northwest.

8.2.3 A Critique of *Benchmarking Method* and *Realistic Evaluation* in Assessing Urban Regeneration Initiatives Delivered through Regional Park Programmes

The research discovered that MW never attempted to evaluate its performance against any other regional parks in the UK and this applies to the LV too. Benchmarking was part of their delivery process but comparing with similar intervention within the UK has never been done before. MW experienced benchmarking exercises when learning from other waterfront developments through the *Seeing is Believing* projects, while LV became part of the Australian Parks Forum and a member of the London Park Benchmarking Group as benchmarking effort. Additionally, there were relatively few attempts made to apply the realistic evaluation approach in assessing urban regeneration initiatives. However, these examinations had never been explored for regional parks and this includes either MW or LV. It was suggested by the creator of the CMO configurations that realistic evaluation is only fitting for a local scale project or programme (see Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This was also questioned by Ho (1999) who argued the suitability of realistic evaluation in assessing a national or regional scale programme (see previous review in Chapter Four, under Section 4.5).

In general, the method of benchmarking was proven to be a reliable approach in examining the performance of a regional park programme and how it differs in practice from another similar programme. Not only does it promote learning from others but it does make one aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses as one is also required to evaluate and understand one's own practice and performance before comparing. Instead of just conducting a self-evaluation and understanding one's own performance, benchmarking offers an extra merit; it enables a company or an organisation to compare its performance against other(s). The method can therefore be used to find gaps in practice and adapt lessons from its comparator. In the case of MW programme which ended in 2011, the use of benchmarking was still considered as beneficial in sharing the experience of its practice and learning from an ongoing programme. The benefits of a benchmarking exercise are that any mistakes should not be repeated and any good lessons can be adopted for programme improvement of future intervention.

The research also demonstrated that the scale and intensity of a benchmarking exercise is very much dependant on the benchmarking purpose, the researcher's capacity and other influential elements like resources or references. In a benchmarking exercise conducted by an institution or a company, an evaluator does not work alone. The basic principle of benchmarking is to form a team in carrying out the task. This would therefore work well for an organisation which presumably encompasses of a team of evaluators. In the case of this PhD work, the benchmarking task was 100% dependant on the researcher. And since both case studies were regional parks, this researcher finds that performing on-site investigations for the whole MW and LV parks were challenging. It was realised that performing a benchmarking exercise through case studies requires a lot of effort and a strategic approach to data collection. It require the willingness of participants to participate and commit to any interviews or surveys. Timing and schedule matter too. The researcher could not gain access to LV's Project Managers and Board Members because the researcher's schedule (in 2011) coincided with the targeted participants who were at that time occupied with the Olympic Park development and preparation for the forthcoming event (the Olympic Games 2012). It was quite disappointing that access was not gained to interview the LV's Board Members and Project Managers as this would provide different views from the various scope of work background. Nevertheless, in the end, the four important key informants of LVRPA were sufficient in providing all the information required. Moreover, the research was supported with LV's publications which were extensive. For that, the researcher concludes that a benchmarking task performed through case studies can be achieved with the availability of information and that incorporating surveys or interviews into the research would surely add the richness to the data.

In relation to the application of benchmarking method, the approach was seen as useful in evaluating both regional parks. The approach had made it possible in terms of investigating the strengths and key success factors to programme efficiency and effectiveness. It is therefore apparent that a comparative exercise reveals the differences of practice and the secrets behind a success. However, integrating the key elements of realistic evaluation into the benchmarking process made it even more functional and effective. Instead of conducting benchmarking alone, the use of a CMO configurations framework for examination helped to organise the subjects into orderly attributes for measurement. This permits a systematic approach to fully understand the differences in terms of programme contexts, delivery mechanisms and programme outcomes. Additionally, by incorporating realistic evaluation configurations into the benchmarking examination, the research is intentionally providing the analysis with categorisation of context, mechanism and outcome for further assessment, i.e., realistic assessment. In relation to this, the researcher values this tactic as constructive and effective. The use of benchmarking and realistic evaluation as a combined method for regional park assessment is even better than performing an evaluation with just one tool of assessment or separately. Not only are two regional parks' performance compared, evaluation also enabled 'what works and for whom' to be identified (a general rule for realistic evaluation which is considered as more reliable rather just examining the outcomes of programmes).

To summarise the discussion, the benchmarking method was effective in trying to examine the performance of MW and LV. But combining the method with realistic evaluation makes it even more effective, in a sense that it had demonstrated:

1) The comparison between MW and LV in terms of performance and programme delivery;
2) The comparison between MW and LV in terms of the mechanisms and contexts that trigger or influence programme outcomes (which in this case presented in Chapter Seven);
3) The type of mechanism(s) and context(s) which suit / benefited certain individuals or groups of both MW and LV comparatively (also presented in Chapter Seven);
4) The extent of CMO Configurations' benefit as an assessment measure in evaluating regional scale programmes when it was originally designed for a local scale programme (which in this research judged as doable); and
5) The usefulness of benchmarking method and realistic evaluation as a combined evaluation method, which in this research determined as functioning and workable.

8.3 Recommendations for A Practical Approach

The evaluation of MW and LV provides many lessons and key success factors to regional park programme delivery and the use of benchmarking method and realistic evaluation in assessing regional park programmes. This section presents a practical approach to programme delivery of urban regeneration initiatives delivered particularly through regional park programmes. In addition to that, it also provides suggestions of evaluation methods for those interventions.

8.3.1 Suggestions for Regional Park Programme Delivery

This section provides specific recommendations for urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional park programmes. However, some ideas can be applied for similar interventions for the purpose of programme efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, some of the recommendations for programme mechanisms can also be adopted for other development programmes. Based on the research findings, the suggestions are therefore grouped into two main ideas: recommendations for programme setting and recommendations for programme delivery mechanisms.

(a) Settings of Programme

Both case studies demonstrated the advantages of having a large area consisting of various types of recreational and leisure elements like beaches, coastline, sand dunes and estuaries for MW and riverbank for LV. Both have forest reserves, woodlands, nature reserves, recreational areas, sports facilities, heritage buildings, camping sites and many other visitor attractions. These elements inevitably offer a good setting for a regional park and opportunities in terms of recreational and leisure activities. Based on this observation, any potential large area for a regional park should consider its environmental elements and built environment. Additionally, the area should be located within a large population area. If such an area exists and has potential for a regional park development, then a regional park programme is likely. Anyhow, if such an area exists and requires a transformation, urban regeneration schemes can help to achieve this.

In addition to that, the existence of a specific Park Act as a legislative framework for the park can support the establishment of a park institution. Whilst the idea of allocating a suitable setting for a regional park is suggested, the experience gained by LV has proven that the creation of the LV Park Act 1966 helped to secure the existence of a regional park. The regulation imposed by the Act 1966 compelled the establishment of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA). The LVRPA therefore became the statutory body for the park. This benefits the regional park with a secured existence of its own park institution and management. Based on this experience, any regional park in the future should consider this action; creating an Act of Parliament for the park and drawing regulations in the Act enforcing the park to have its own Park Authority. Moreover, the LV Park Act 1966 also took into consideration the collection of levy from the London councils. This careful thought provided LVRPA the mandate to collect a levy from its surrounding local authorities to fund the park.

Another important element addressed in the 1966 Act was the power granted to LVRPA in terms of park control and development. Even though LVRPA works in partnership with its adjacent local authorities, it has been granted certain powers to own any land it require, develop its land, or reclaim any land it needed, or sell its land and have full control of its land development. Additionally, it can have 28 Members as constituted in the 1966 Park Act.

Also, from the research, it was discovered that part of the settings for an effective urban regeneration initiative is by having a vision. Both case studies proven that having a clear vision statement at its initial stage and delivering that goal inevitably resulted in an effective programme.

Based on the above discussion, it is therefore summarised that any new urban regeneration programmes of regional park interventions should consider having:

1. A large area of high population, encompassing of variety of recreational and leisure opportunities;
2. A Park Act which contains regulations and mandate to establish a Park Authority, collect levy from its surrounding communities and provide certain powers to the Park Authority; and
3. A bold vision statement and objectives for the regional park.

(b) Mechanisms for Programme Delivery

There were many lessons obtained from both MW and LV. Both have similarities and differences in terms of work processes and programme delivery. The following suggestions are mostly adopted by their experiences particularly from LV which has had a much longer programme implementation experience.

1. <u>Designing a Park Plan or Development Framework</u>

   Any urban regeneration schemes, including those implemented through regional park programmes should start with a formulation of a Park Plan or Framework, drawing its goal and objectives. Through this Park Plan, a programme should outline its delivery period. Hence, towards the end of a targeted period, the Park Authority or the responsible organisation for the park, should therefore review its plan and construct a new framework. A good framework should incorporate a vision statement, descriptions of proposals and maps of development proposals. LV showed an example of reviewing its 1969 Park Plan and formulated a new plan in 1986, yet still continues to deliver what it intended to do at the start but also proposed some new ideas for its future development. A regional park inevitably can be shaped through its Park Plan or Framework. However, this cannot be achieved alone without other supporting elements (see further recommendations below).

2. Project Appraisal

   As part of programme's efficiency and effectiveness, any projects for the programme should go through a project appraisal process. This ensures the potential and viability of a project. Additionally, in this process, risk and safety assessment should be included too. A good project appraisal not only examines the purpose, benefits, outcome and feasibility of a project, but also evaluates its funding, maintenance, project management and project timescale. MW and LV proven that project appraisal is essential in ensuring project completion within the budget and project schedule.

3. Institutional and Management Structure

   A regional park requires an institution to manage the park. For this reason, a Park Authority should consider its 'longevity' element, in order to ensure that the regional park is continuously managed and administered. In the case of MW, the organisation responsible for the park was a structure formed by partnership approach consisting of related local authorities. This was an achievement for MW. In contrast, LV has a statutory body created from the LV Park Act 1966. From its experience, it is suggested that a Park Authority should be secured in terms of its establishment, and not a temporary arrangement. Having a specific institution for the park provides a fixed institutional structure and focus towards the development and management of the park. Nevertheless, this does not mean that an organisation made up of a partnership arrangement of local authorities cannot perform its duties; it simply suggests the concentration of role and responsibility specifically for the park.

   Meanwhile, other than a specific Park Authority to manage and develop the park, the organisation must constitute various units to focus and administer various functions, for example, a separate unit or department for finance and a separate unit for park management, or even a specific department for maintenance and monitoring. Furthermore, by demarcating the functions and responsibility according to specialisation of work process, this would inevitably influence and encourage efficiency in managing and delivering the programme.

   In terms of a partnership approach, LV and MW also showed the benefits of collaborative partnership. MW's participants claimed that a partnership approach contributed to MW's success in programme implementation. Similarly, LV's interviewees mentioned the benefits of working with partners. Working with partners, like the infrastructure providers or transportation departments, tends to assist and ease the work in implementing their development. Nevertheless, it was also agreed that this will not work out without good coordination and commitment among partners.

4. Resources and Capacity

In any urban regeneration intervention and particularly in a regional park programme, resources and capacity play a vital role in ensuring the execution and effectiveness of a programme. Resources should include sufficient funding for project and programme delivery as well as maintenance for the park, staffing to administer and run the programme, appropriate technology in work processes and facilities within the organisation, adequate funding in the sense that it can deliver what the programme intended to do and able to fund the maintenance of the park's facilities and amenities. However having a large number of staff to run a programme does not guarantee the efficiency and effectiveness of a programme. It requires a certain degree of skill to carry out the task of programme delivery. For example, having a good Chairman and a Vice-Chairman or a Chief Executive to lead the organisation may also contribute to the success of a programme. This was demonstrated by MW and LV. Also, a good set of top management and a combination of the various working backgrounds of Board Members ensures good decision-making and management. Additionally, having experienced Project Managers to handle projects, or expertise to manage the financial side, or creative personnel to formulate marketing strategies can also support a programme. Having said this, an organisation can always recruit its employees in delivering its tasks.

Along with quality employees, a programme also requires a suitable working place. In the case of LV, LVRPA has a specific building (the Myddelton House near the park) to administer the programme while MW managed by The Mersey Partnership (TMP) was located at a building near the Liverpool waterfront. It is therefore concluded that having adequate funding, human resources, technology and facilities supports the delivery of urban regeneration or regional park programmes.

5. Branding and Promotion of Regional Park Programme

Another important aspect to consider is branding and promotion of a regional park and its opportunities. In order to publicise the benefits and opportunities of a regional park, it is recommended that the Park Authority establishes its own park logo and promotes its park through publications like brochures or pamphlets, or any form of printed information. A standard logo for a park promotes public recognition. Additionally, the regional park should publicise its Park Plan through a website to inform the public of its information and benefits. By having a specific website on the park's opportunities, describing its facilities and elements, visitor attractions, forthcoming events, or displaying its Park Plan can help to advertise the benefits of the park to the public. LVRPA currently has two separate websites; one is designed specifically to disseminate information about its organisation, framework, financial aspects, related publications etc., while the other website provides information about the park itself, mostly on its facilities, activities and local attractions. This mode of communication was found very helpful because the websites do not only cater information for business or stakeholders' purposes, or a researcher's intentions but also offer information and guidance for visitors especially for those who plan to spend more than a day in the park.

6. Public Participation in Decision Making

   From LV and MW's experience, engaging the communities in their development process was mentioned as helpful in trying to understand the local interests as well as the park users. The People's Panels Initiatives assisted MW in making decisions for the provision of recreational facilities in relation to local communities' requirement. The local communities' ideas which were incorporated into planning led to the delivery of promenades, upgrading of existing facilities and provision of new facilities along the waterfront. Similarly, LV also includes public participation in their development, the latest being the community engagement in designing their Park Development Framework 2011. The benefit of this effort allows the Park Authority to provide facilities and deliver its development based on the public's needs and future demands which in turn benefit the locals directly as well as meeting the purpose of the park as a public area.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

   It is recommended based on this research that any similar programme should practice monitoring and evaluation throughout its programme implementation. Monitoring is required as it informs the status of ongoing projects, or the condition of the built facilities and the condition of the park's environment. The practice of monitoring advises the Park Authority for further action and therefore finds solutions to address any faults or allows the authority to make a decision if any improvement is required. Additionally, by monitoring the condition of the built environment within the park aids the Park Authority with information on current and future maintenance of its recreational or sports facilities and landscapes within the park. Similarly, evaluation is also considered important especially in assessing the progress of projects, in examining the financial side or in measuring the performance of a programme. It was reviewed in Chapter Two that evaluation provides many benefits to an organisation and that there are many types of evaluation approaches. This research showed the use of two evaluation methods. In fact, the researcher believes that the application of benchmarking encourages the Park Authority to learn from others and therefore adopts better practice or new technology in its practice. In this research, benchmarking and realistic evaluation are proven to be helpful in examining the process of programme delivery and performance of regional parks.

8. Project Management

   This research also suggests that project management be practiced in any urban regeneration project delivered in a regional park programme. MW and LV claimed that the delivery of their urban regeneration projects was supported by strategic project management. Based on the case studies' experience, the role of Project Managers was seen as influential in project management. Project management should include the work of planning, organising work arrangements and delegation, supervision, overseeing the project according to schedule and managing the resources in a project.

9. Developing Contingency Plans

   Contingency plans may include future strategies in terms of financial aspect, administration or alternative projects. The purpose of having contingency plans is to prepare for any unexpected crisis. If unexpected incidents occur, then the organisation has other alternatives to tackle the situation or remedy the problem. It was discovered that MW was not continued after March 2011 due to funding issues which also led to the termination of the MW organisation. This was not anticipated. MW, affected by the economic downturn, had no other plan to save it. The website of MW was also removed since there were no personnel to administer and update the website while the Windows on the Waterfront projects lost the opportunity to be materialised. The researcher therefore sees the power of a Park Act which can protect and secure the existence and practice of a regional park. Even so, LVRPA has been planning and forecasting its future funding, maintenance and development. In fact, any maintenance for its recreational and sports facilities is being planned for a few years ahead. According to an interviewee, when a facility is developed, a maintenance plan for it is structured too. The plan therefore forecasts its maintenance and expenditure after certain number of years. This inevitably cautions LVRPA on financial matters and future work.

10. Understanding Current and Future Demand

    It is important for any regional park to carry out studies on the needs and demands of the visitors, and to record its visitor numbers for the purpose of programme improvement and provision of future facilities. It is also suggested that a regional park should install counters within its area to systematically monitor and record visitor numbers. This however was not done for MW programme. This approach enables future arrangements to be planned. Additionally, one LV interviewee mentioned that the benefit of recording the number of visitors and their movements within the park enables the LVRPA to make future arrangements in terms of maintenance and provision of new facilities.

8.3.2 Suggestion of Approach to Evaluation Method for a Regional Park

There were two important questions raised in Chapter One (see Section 1.2); The first was, “What would be the best evaluation tool to examine the performance of urban regeneration through regional park programmes and is *benchmarking* suitable in assessing those interventions?” while the second question asked, “Is *realistic evaluation* appropriate in assessing the effectiveness of programme delivery and can it be combined with the benchmarking method?”. To answer these questions, findings from this research demonstrated that benchmarking is very useful in assessing one’s practice and performance, but even more helpful when comparing with an exemplar. Through benchmarking, one can understand well one’s own process and learn from its comparator. The benchmarking partner on the other hand can share its experience and provides lessons for improvement.

Even though applying benchmarking alone is beneficial, supplementing that approach with realistic evaluation adds merit to performance measurement. Through benchmarking, evaluation tends to produce the variations of outcomes in terms of practice. But using realistic evaluation simultaneously facilitates the organisation with a more comprehensive result. The use of realistic evaluation deliberately offers the reasoning behind those outcomes (achievements). Benchmarking alone does not examine the connection between the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, but realistic evaluation helps to analyse this correlation. The benefits of employing realistic evaluation is that it will help to answer the questions of “how, what and who” instead of just “how and what” (see review on realistic evaluation in Chapter Four and results of analyse in Chapter Seven).

It is therefore suggested that benchmarking and realistic evaluation should be conducted for any urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional park programmes. As discussed earlier, both methods have their own merits. A self-evaluation can be performed for a regional park programme through realistic evaluation alone or be evaluated with just benchmarking it against others. Either way, both evaluation methods are useful. However, a mixture of the two is far better. It is therefore concluded that combining both benchmarking and realistic evaluation makes the evaluation task robust and complete.

Going back to first part of this section, in answering the first question, the answer would be ‘benchmarking’ since one will know the extent of its achievement against an exemplar, instead of being content with its own achievement through a self-evaluation alone and given that benchmarking exposes the work of other better practices. And, in answering the second question, the answer would be; Yes! Realistic evaluation is capable of measuring the effectiveness of programme delivery and indeed can be combined with the benchmarking method.

8.4 Evaluation of the Research (Research Objectives Revisited)

In this section, the researcher revisits and evaluates the research in accordance with research objectives conformity and assesses the extent of goal achievement. The aim of this research is "*to examine the appropriateness and potential of applying the* Benchmarking *procedure in evaluating urban regeneration programmes through regional park programmes. And, to complement that aim, by exploring the extent to which the* Realistic Evaluation *is germane to programme analysis and assessment of a regional scale programme*". In reflecting the extent to which this aim is achieved, the research starts with evaluating each objective accordingly.

Objective One: ***To appraise the concept of evaluation, its application to programme performance and the background of UK urban regeneration initiatives.***

In order to understand the concept of evaluation in a broader sense, the topic was thoroughly reviewed in Chapter Two through looking at evaluation's basic concept including its definitions, the start of formal evaluation, the purpose of evaluation and evaluation approaches. Even though the terms evaluation, assessment and appraisal are used interchangeably, the very word 'evaluation' signifies a specific value indicating an action of assessing an activity, or process, or intervention, or even any subject that can be assessed. Formal evaluation was believed to have started in the late 1960s when governments were evaluating the effectiveness of social programmes. Additionally, the main purpose of evaluation was mentioned as a means of providing the decision-makers with solutions for programme improvement. Other than that, evaluation is practiced for the purpose of knowledge given that results from an evaluation exercise can provide information for decision-makers in deciding the approach to improvement or ideas for future interventions. In relation to this, evaluation is therefore flexible; there is no restriction in deciding the subject for assessment or approach to evaluation. Nevertheless, the common steps to evaluation is said to be through data collection, assessing the information and judging those results. However, there is a distinction from an evaluation to a basic research. An evaluation undertakes a more pragmatic approach as compared to basic research which is normally flexible in terms of purpose and exercise. An evaluation portrays an obligation to the organisation but basic research is a form of disciplinary area, therefore concentrates on the theoretical viewpoint.

Chapter Two also reviewed the types of evaluation practice which are common in the planning field. In planning, evaluation can be undertaken through black box evaluation, or theory-driven method, or balanced scorecard, or impact assessment and process evaluation. However each method differs from the others and each has its own merit. Additionally, programme evaluation was studied too. The research distinguished the difference between a project and a programme. A programme is made up of several projects or a group of activities but is delivered with the same purpose or goal. In contrast, a project is an activity or a scheme executed to achieve a certain goal. The research also reveals the link between programme evaluation and performance measurement. The purpose of programme evaluation generally associates the work of examining the performance of a programme which in turn measures the effectiveness or efficiency of the programme.

Besides that, the review also looked at evaluation of urban regeneration initiatives in the UK including the background of UK urban regeneration and evaluation approaches of these interventions. In the UK, urban regeneration was introduced as part of the UK's urban policies. It was designed to solve urban and social problems in the late 1960s. Along with the progress and development of urban regeneration schemes, evaluation of those policies has started too. Evaluations of UK urban regenerations were therefore introduced to examine the effectiveness of government's social programmes. The development of urban regeneration evaluations were then seen as parallel to the movement and development of UK urban policies. Such evaluations included assessing the Urban Programme in 1968 and the Inner Area Studies in the late 1970s. However, during those periods, the focus was believed to be more on *ex ante* evaluation. The effort then grew in the 1980s and in the 1990s a Treasury Evaluation Framework (TEF) was produced along with European Commission's manual which thereafter became a significant guidance in evaluation, along with provision of a systematic evaluation guideline produced by the European Union (EU). The EU guideline had therefore believed to be the beginning of *ex post* evaluation in assessing public policies.

Objective Two: *To review the concept of the Benchmarking Method and examine its modes of application.*

Objective Two was delivered through a detailed literature review presented in Chapter Three. Chapter Three therefore discussed the concept of benchmarking comprehensively, highlighting the various definitions provided, as well as the start of formal benchmarking and the importance of benchmarking. In relation to this, benchmarking is perceived as a form of evaluation method. It is generally recognised as a means of providing ideas for improvement in terms of process, delivery of programme, or operation. Additionally, benchmarking is also identified as an important approach in assessing performance and for the purpose of achieving superiority. However, benchmarking is only permissible through the work of comparing.

Benchmarking is defined through various ideas. A definition through direct sentences is provided by Camp (1989). Other definitions can be seen through separate key subjects (see Camp, 1989; Spendolini, 1992; McGeorge and Plamer, 2002) and there is also an example of benchmarking definition presented in separate lines demarcating each element (see Stapenhurst, 2009). Additionally, benchmarking is also defined and presented through a structured framework, like Spendolini's (1992). Even so, all definitions bring about the same idea; benchmarking is a systematic way of assessing a subject through comparing with best practice for the purpose of improvement.

The review acknowledges the first author of a benchmarking book, Robert C. Camp who was then believed to be responsible in exposing the method to the public domain. Even though it is believed that formal benchmarking started in the 1940s, it is also suggested that the method grew after Xerox's benchmarking experience in the late 1970s. In the UK, benchmarking was made famous in the 1990s. The development of benchmarking can be seen through the establishment of benchmarking awards known as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM). Apart from that, an extensive desk study was performed in justifying the importance and purpose of benchmarking for organisations and companies. Benchmarking is therefore carried out for the purpose of enabling a company or organisation to become the best, to understand one's own strengths and weaknesses and to promote a sense of awareness for improvement.

Benchmarking is conducted for various reasons depending on the focus of exercise and the targeted comparator. Ideally, a company should ask the two key questions; "*Benchmarking of what*?" and "*Benchmarking against what*?" In an exercise, a company can either perform performance benchmarking, or process benchmarking, or strategic benchmarking. Meanwhile, the comparator or 'benchmarking partner' are classified into four categories: *Internal* benchmarking; *Competitive* benchmarking; *Functional* benchmarking; and *Generic* benchmarking. In this research, the types of benchmarking that suits the purpose of this investigation was process benchmarking (benchmarking of what?) and the benchmarking partner was the generic benchmarking (benchmarking against what?). This approach was therefore applied in order to tease out the idea proposed by Andersen and Pettersen (1996) who suggested that process benchmarking should choose generic benchmarking as comparator.

In general, benchmarking is undertaken following a systematic procedure. Scholars have variations in presenting their steps to benchmarking. However, in general, all proposals relate very much to Camp's (1989) original idea. Camp (1989) himself categorises the phases into five separate actions. Any benchmarking exercise should start with planning whereby a company or organisation plans and justifies its purpose. This is considered as an important stage since it involves identifying the exemplar or best practice for comparison and requires the need to fully understand the focus of benchmarking. Following this, one has to compare and analyse its practice against the comparator in order to determine the performance gaps. The third stage suggests an integration phase whereby a company revises its performance goals and establishes new targets. Thereafter, the company needs to implement its new standard and adapt any lesson from its comparator. The last stage was named as 'maturity' where Camp

(1989) believes that a company should start the whole benchmarking again, in other words suggesting the method as a cyclical process.

In spite of the many benefits offered by benchmarking, inevitably, there are also issues in relation to its application. Benchmarking is thought to be a continuous procedure for an organisation in order to constantly improve one's practice and process. Additionally, an organisation will not gain benchmarking benefits if its comparator is randomly chosen. The basic idea is to find a best practice or an exemplar as a benchmarking partner. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that the greatest issue in benchmarking is to have the courage to admit one's flaws and to recognise others that are performing better. It was suggested that benchmarking does not become an option for evaluation method when an organisation is in fear of revealing its own flaws.

In the UK public sector, benchmarking started in the 1970s when government was assessing its programmes in terms of 'value for money'. The establishment of the Audit Commission in 1983, with the slogan "Protecting the Public Purse" had further encouraged benchmarking in the public services like health, higher education and local government. In the UK, the earliest formal approaches to benchmarking were mentioned as conducted through the Next Step Agencies. These efforts were carried out to examine the performance of central government against other private bodies and public services abroad. Also, the founding of NHS Benchmarking Network in 1996 has encouraged benchmarking in the health sector. The UK Higher Education too has been promoting benchmarking since the mid 1990s. However, when the Audit Commission is claimed as an important platform to examine the performance of public services, the Commission is predicted to end its role by 2014. Fortunately, at present, some of the roles of the Audit Commission have been outsourced to other agencies.

In relation to benchmarking UK's urban regeneration, the research discovered that there appeared to be a lack of publications. Benchmarking was sought through local urban regeneration initiatives including through Health Action Zones, Sure Start Programmes and Local Strategic Partnerships. However, there has not been any benchmarking publication on UK regional parks.

Objective Three: ***To review the theory of Realistic Evaluation.***

Along with the benchmarking method, realistic evaluation also form parts of this research analysis. In order to employ this approach into the assessment, Chapter Four presents a comprehensive review on the theory of realistic evaluation. Chapter Four therefore appraised the origin of this theory. Realistic evaluation is believed to have emerged from the theory of 'realism' and evolved from an evaluation method called the theory-driven evaluation. The theory-driven evaluation was an improved assessment technique from the conventional type of evaluation known as black box evaluation. Black box evaluation which was a prevalent approach in the 1960s and 1970s was considered as incomplete since it only examines the outcomes of a programme. Theory-driven evaluation in contrast, evaluates the extent of goal achievement and how certain goal(s) can achieve certain outcome(s). Nevertheless, this approach was still considered as inadequate in providing decision-makers with future recommendations. It was this imperfection that Nick Tilley and Ray Pawson improved in 1997 and named the method realistic evaluation.

Realistic evaluation adds value to the previous methods, black box evaluation and theory-driven evaluation. The most significant difference in realistic evaluation is that it is an assessment framework derived by Pawson and Tilley called the Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) Configurations which benefit evaluators in determining the causal effects to outcomes. Additionally, CMO Configurations enable an organisation to analyse its performance in relation to its settings, delivery mechanisms and how both subjects trigger the outcomes. If theory-driven evaluation concentrates on answering the questions of 'how and what', realistic evaluation on the contrary seeks to answer the 'how, what and who' questions. It sees the correlation of contexts and mechanisms, and how the two affect or contribute to programme outcomes.

In the UK, realist evaluation in urban regeneration can be seen from a study undertaken to assess the performance of the City Challenge programme (see Ho, 1999). Other than that, the researcher could not find any other assessments for urban regeneration schemes using realistic evaluation, especially for a regional scale programme. Ho, in her study suggests, that realistic evaluation for regional or national urban regeneration programmes is questionable since it was designed to examine local projects. Similar to the issue in finding literature on benchmarking regional parks, the research also discovered that results of realistic evaluation for regional parks are nonexistent.

Objective Four: ***To apply the*** **Benchmarking** ***procedure and examine comparatively the delivery of regional park programmes in the UK. In conjunction with this, to consider the applicability of employing the*** **Realistic Evaluation** ***for programme evaluation, i.e., the Context-Mechanism-Outcome Configurations, when analysing the regional park programmes.***

Chapter Five addresses the research methodology and formulates the conceptual framework for this research. The chapter also justifies the research design and strategies. In order to tease out benchmarking and realistic evaluation, the research adopts the case study design, the comparative method, realistic evaluation and document analysis. Case studies were therefore selected based on certain criteria outlined in this research. Both UK case studies are urban regeneration initiatives established as their initial foundation. Each case study must also be feasible for investigation, especially in terms of access to information. Additionally, case studies must be compelling in providing future references which anticipate lasting impact during the process of development. Another criterion is to ensure that case studies suit the benchmarking and realistic evaluation therefore requires the comparator to be an exemplar to the main subject. In relation to these criteria, Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (MW) was selected as the main subject while Lee Valley Regional Park (LV) plays an important role as the comparator. This decision was made based on the idea to perform a summative evaluation for MW and to compare its practice with an ongoing regional park programme. Moreover, LV was the first regional park established in the UK with over 45 years of experience. This characteristic makes it an appropriate example for benchmarking exercise.

Through this conceptual framework, the application and link between the research and both methods are described. The use of benchmarking was significant in comparing the regional parks. In doing so, the attributes for analysis were classified into the CMO configurations, i.e., the context, mechanisms and outcomes. However, given that benchmarking was applied to examine the performance of both case studies and how LV differs from MW, therefore, analysis was presented through two separate chapters. The results of programme performance through benchmarking were provided in Chapter Six while results from realistic evaluation were shown in Chapter Seven. Through these separate chapters, the research reveals a comprehensive investigation of MW and LV in terms of their settings, the practice of programme implementation and outcomes of programmes. In addition to those analyses, findings reveal the strengths of LV continuous practice. The biggest difference discovered between MW and LV was that LV was established by an Act of Parliament, enabling it to set up its own statutory authority. Inevitably, the law outlined in the LV Park Act 1966 permits the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) to collect a levy from its constituent's authorities, hence facilitating the park with continuous funding beside other funding sources.

In terms of programme implementation, the research uncovers various approaches to practice, all for the purpose of programme efficiency. There were similarities in terms of working processes. Both practice partnership working, apply systematic monitoring and evaluation, undertake risk and safety assessment to evaluate the feasibility of projects, develop park plans or frameworks, have their own institution to administer their park, include public participation into decision making and undertook missions to learn from others. Nevertheless, there were significant differences in terms of delivery process too. LV having the opportunity to continue its development and offer its opportunities has made arrangements for its future maintenance, marketing and forecasting its visitors. These were not fully accomplished by MW. Maintenance was arranged for certain areas but that lasts for only 10 years. Promotion of the MW was made during its implementation while visitor numbers were not recorded systematically. Unlike MW, LV has developed a systematic approach to visitor tracking and movement through the installation of tracking devices and counters within the park. This effort provides LV with a constant update of the visitor numbers, therefore allowing LVRPA to plan for its building maintenance, future events and provision of additional facilities within the park. The differences however cannot place MW as a disappointment or failure as MW had accomplished a lot too. LV has never stopped delivering its programme since its founding, therefore experiencing a longer period of delivery and has had more chances in terms of development. And, with the existence of the Park Act 1966, LV tends to be more secure in terms of development, institution and funding. Additionally, with this strong base of setting, LV was placed as the 2012 Olympic major location. This had benefited LV even more. In fact, the provision of world standard sports facilities provides LV with further potential in the future.

Answering the research question, *to what extent does LV differ from MW,* the research concludes that LV has more advantages in terms of development, resources and institution. MW accomplished most of its intended projects and was able to achieve its original vision to regenerate and transform the area. LV and MW do share similar working practices but LV has certainly experience more since it has been in practice for more than 45 years. And looking at LV’s current development and future vision, LV is without doubt a good UK regional park example.

Objective Five: *To assess the reliability and potential of the* Benchmarking Method *and the suitability of the* Realistic Evaluation *method in assessing urban regeneration interventions through regional parks as well as developing a practical approach to regional park delivery and evaluation.*

From this research, it is proven that benchmarking procedure is a very useful evaluation tool in assessing urban regeneration interventions and particularly regional parks established for this cause. The use of benchmarking enables performance of regional parks to be compared in terms of variations in programme delivery. The most significant advantage of conducting this exercise is obtaining a complete understanding of the main subject and how it differs from its comparator. Furthermore, the comparator inevitably provides many lessons for future reference. Benchmarking is therefore a reliable and potential method of assessment.

In addition to that, benchmarking analysis was enhanced and easily delivered through the use of CMO configurations. The application of realistic evaluation together with the benchmarking process enables a more systematic approach to assessment. Realistic evaluation can be performed alone for a regional park and that would still provide a complete examination of the correlation between the context, mechanism and outcome. But using realistic evaluation in benchmarking and comparing two regional parks ideally provides a more comprehensive analysis. Nor does it answer the questions of ‘how, what and who’ for one regional park but it also compares the answers between the two case studies. Even though realistic evaluation was originally proposed for a local scale programme in this research, the CMO configurations technique also suits the examination of a regional scale programme. The researcher therefore sees realistic evaluation as fitting for urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional parks. In fact, the method is very useful when used in a comparative exercise.

Results from MW and LV examinations through benchmarking enabled the researcher to fully understand different approaches and similarities in regional park programme delivery. Surprisingly, benchmarking is like "killing two birds with one stone". Not only was MW's practice examined closely, but LV faced the same process too. From this detailed analysis, a practical approach to regional park delivery and evaluation was developed (as discussed earlier in Section 8.3). The researcher therefore feels that Objective Five has been achieved.

Summary:

The research has achieved **Objective One** through the delivery of literature review in Chapter Two. **Objective Two** was achieved also through a literature review and presented in Chapter Three. **Objective Three** was accomplished through the literature review and provided in Chapter Four. **Objective Four** was achieved through research methodology, fieldwork and analysis of both case studies, and is shown in Chapter Five (Research Methodology) and Chapter Six (Results of Benchmarking Assessment) as well as Chapter Seven (Results of realistic evaluation). Finally, **Objective Five** was accomplished through the evaluation of research and methods of assessment, as well as developing a practical approach.

In relation to this, the extent of achieving the aim can be concluded as:
Looking at the evaluation of each research objective and revisiting the research aim again (as mentioned earlier in this section), the research concludes that this PhD work has achieved its aim; it has examined the appropriateness and potential of applying the *benchmarking* procedure in urban regeneration programmes delivered through regional park programmes. And, it has explored *realistic evaluation* as another tool of evaluation, which has proven to be useful in programme analysis and assessment of a regional scale programme.

8.5 Contribution to Knowledge

In general, this research is an advantage to urban regeneration practice. It adds new information to the existing literature on the practice and process of evaluating urban regeneration initiative. This research has proven that benchmarking method is a very helpful approach in gaining new ideas and lessons from other practice. It is for this reason that the researcher is suggesting the use of benchmarking procedure for urban regeneration assessment. Additionally, it was also evident that the application of realistic evaluation enabled a detailed understanding of the right mechanisms within the right context(s) for the purpose of achieving certain outcome(s). For this reason too, the researcher promotes the use of realistic evaluation in urban regeneration programme assessment. Nevertheless, besides this belief, the following descriptions inform other benefits of this research.

Firstly, to date, there has not been any literature on results of benchmarking exercise or any information on results of realistic evaluation for urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional parks. Moreover, it is difficult to find any literature on results of evaluation which combines the two methods together. This research has therefore provided a sample of work which uses both methods in an evaluation exercise. Additionally, it informs the approach, benefits and practicality of applying the two methods for regional park assessment. And for that reason, this research has contributed in filling those gaps, adding a reference to the current literature on evaluation, and particularly on UK regional parks.

Secondly, in the absence of a strategic guidance or framework to evaluate urban regeneration schemes, this research demonstrated a robust approach in examining those programmes. The use of realistic evaluation for regional scale programmes in this research has proven that the method is workable for a larger programme even though it was originally suggested for a local type programme. It is therefore logical and constructive to suggest that realistic evaluation is fitting for a regional scale programme. Results showed that CMO configurations help to identify and examine regional programme through its contexts, mechanisms and outcomes easily while assessing the correlations among the three elements are achievable.

Thirdly, MW had never performed any self-evaluation which considers the partners' view after the programme completed. In applying the rule of benchmarking, i.e., to comprehend in detail the practice of the main subject, this research inevitably facilitates MW through conducting a self-evaluation project and producing a complete report of MW's experience and a compilation of partners' perception and suggestions. As part of this PhD research, the outcome of the self-evaluation study was also submitted and validated by the MW Board and reports were distributed among partners. Additionally, the results of this self-evaluation study were presented to a public forum called the Mersey Estuary Forum. Furthermore, MW has never assessed its performance against other regional parks in the UK. This research therefore provided a means of assessing MW against another UK regional park.

Fourthly, as a result of the comparative exercise, this research has thus provided some important key lessons obtained from both case studies. Chapter Six demonstrates various approaches to practice, the key success factors to regional park achievements, factors that would affect the efficiency or delivery of programme, the importance of benchmarking practice in regional parks and numerous mechanisms in implementing a regional park. The researcher considers these findings offer an important lesson for future intervention especially in designing and delivering a regional park.

Finally, the researcher believes that this research has proven that Eaton's (2002) idea was wrong. His belief suggested that generic benchmarking is impractical through a case study (see Table 3.4, under Section 3.4.1 of Chapter Three). This research however proves that generic benchmarking is feasible through case studies. In fact the comparative exercise through case studies investigation had provided some useful results.

8.6 Scope for Future Research (Some Perspectives for Further Explorations)

So far the researcher has discussed the findings and benefits of applying benchmarking method and realistic evaluation in assessing urban regeneration initiatives delivered through regional park programmes. In spite of this, the inevitable questions arise: How useful is benchmarking and realistic evaluation in assessing other urban regeneration schemes, especially for a national scale programme? When realistic evaluation is perceived as a practical evaluation framework for local projects, how reliable is the method in examining larger programmes?

Although benchmarking exercise and realistic evaluation are proven to be an ideal way of assessing the performance of a regional park, it is never wrong to test these form of evaluations for other various urban policies too. Additionally, it was suggested that benchmarking is highly recommended as a continuous effort in order to constantly update and improve work processes. However, in this research, the benchmarking method was used as a one-off investigation to suit the purpose of this PhD work. In a real evaluation situation, assessment of urban regeneration initiatives should pursue this basic principle for an effective approach to improvement. Further testing of this cyclical approach for regional parks is therefore essential. Moreover, in trying to achieve efficiency in conducting benchmarking procedure, the researcher suggests the exercise by means of teamwork because this can ease the work of a detailed investigation.

Additionally, in this research, the researcher finds the limitation of time and resources to benchmark the UK regional parks against an international exemplar. Although LV has the longest experience as a regional park in the UK, it has never compared its practice with other regional parks. It would be interesting to compare the UK practice with an international example. In this instance, the researcher thought of the Emscher Park in Germany which became part of MW's selected models in the 'Seeing and Believing' exercise. While performing this research, the researcher discovered the similarities of Emscher Park to MW and LV and the recognition it has among UK practice (see Appendix 11). The research therefore concludes that studying another regional park abroad may provide different approaches to the existing UK practice. It is thus believed that this opens up scope for further research.

It was also discovered that the newly designed Wandle Valley Regional Park is established under a Trust. It would be interesting to learn about the performance of this regional park given that the institutional structure is different from MW and LV. However, since Wandle Valley is still in the process of becoming a regional park, this subject of examination is proposed in the longer term, after it has been materialised.

In this work too, examination of programme delivery for both regional parks covered numerous aspects of delivery practice. It is therefore suggested that further investigation can be performed by concentrating on just certain aspects, for example, in terms of human resources and funding. This may provide a comprehensive study of certain mechanism and possibly suit certain functions (for example, to an accountant) within an organisation. Evaluation is not rigid but it can also be conducted on a particular subject. A further detailed study on how resources contribute to or affect the performance of a regional park can verify or validate the belief that projects can be affected by this criterion or can inform how to generate more income for the park. In considering other areas for investigation, the researcher sees the opportunities for performing an in-depth study for several areas:

1) The extent of public awareness of the existence of MW programme. This can provide future lessons in terms of marketing and to take into consideration this factor when planning for a new regional park in the future; or
2) The performance of MW over a longer period (possibly after a decade or more after its completion) in order to measure the extent of MW effectiveness and to examine whether the recreational and leisure opportunities and facilities are declining or improved? In other words to see the impact of an urban regeneration long after it has been delivered.

8.7 Final Concluding Remark

There are many evaluation methods for programme assessment and performance measurement, and this research has contributed in showing a robust approach in combining benchmarking and realistic evaluation together as one tool for examination. Either benchmarking or realistic evaluation can be conducted alone, but this research has shown the benefits and practicality of using the tools simultaneously. To end this chapter particularly and this thesis in general, the researcher would like to make a remark and propose a question:

> *A regional park programme delivering urban regeneration projects can be examined through either benchmarking or realistic evaluation separately, but combining both methods together provides a more compelling result. So where do we go from here?*

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APPENDIX 1: THE BENCHMARKING CODE OF CONDUCT
(Source: American Productivity and Quality Center, 1993)

Preamble

Benchmarking — the process of identifying and learning the best practices anywhere in the world — is a powerful tool in the quest for continuous improvement.

To guide benchmarking encounters and to advance the professionalism and effectiveness of benchmarking, the International Benchmarking Clearing – house, a service of the American Productivity & Quality Center, and the Strategic Planning Institute Council on Benchmarking have adopted this common Code of Conduct. We encourage all organizations to abide by this Code of Conduct. Adherence to these principles will contribute to efficient, effective, and ethical benchmarking. This edition of Code of Conduct has been expanded to provide greater guidance on the protocol of benchmarking for beginners.

The Benchmarking Code of Conduct

Individuals agree for themselves and their company to abide by the following principles for benchmarking with other organizations.

1. Principle of Legality
    - If there is any potential question on the legality of an activity, don't do it.
    - Avoid discussions or actions that could lead to or imply an interest in restraint of trade, market, and/or customer allocation schemes, price fixing, dealing arrangements, bid rigging, or bribery. Don't discuss costs with competitors if costs are an element of pricing.
    - Refrain from the acquisition of trade secrets from any means that could be interpreted as improper, including the breach or inducement of a secret that may have been obtained though improper means or that was disclosed by another in violation of duty to main its secrecy or limit its use.
    - Do not, as a consultant or client, extend one benchmarking study's findings to another company without first obtaining permission from the parties of the first study.

2. Principle of Exchange
    - Be willing to provide the same type and level of information that you request from your benchmarking partner to your benchmarking partner.
    - Communicate fully and early in the relationship to clarify expectations, avoid misunderstandings, and establish mutual interest in the benchmarking exchange.
    - Be honest and complete.

3. Principle of Confidentiality
    - Treat benchmarking interchange as confidential to the individuals and companies involved. Information must not be communicated outside the partnering organizations without prior consent of the benchmarking partner who shared the information.
    - A company's participation in a study is confidential and should not be communicated externally without its prior permission.

Appendix 1- Cont'd

4. Principle of Use
    - Use information obtained through benchmarking only purposes of formulating improvement of operations or processes within the companies participating in the benchmarking study.
    - The use or communication of a benchmarking partner's name with the data obtained or practices observed requires the prior permission of that partner.
    - Do not use benchmarking as the means to market or sell.

5. Principle of First-Party Contact
    - Initiate benchmarking contacts, whenever possible, though a benchmarking contact designated by the partner company.
    - Respect the corporate culture of partner companies and work within mutually agreed upon procedures.
    - Obtain mutual agreement with the designated benchmarking contact on any hand-off of communication or responsibility to other parties.

6. Principle of Third-Party Contact
    - Obtain an individual's permission before providing his or her name in response to a contact request.
    - Avoid communicating a contact's name in an open forum without the contact's permission.

7. Principle of Preparation
    - Demonstrate commitment to the efficiency and effectiveness of benchmarking by completing preparatory work prior to making an initial benchmarking contact and following a benchmarking process.
    - Make the most of your benchmarking partner's time by being fully prepared for each exchange.
    - Help your benchmarking partners prepare by providing them with an interview guide or questionnaire and agenda prior to benchmarking visits.

8. Principle of Completion
    - Follow through with each commitment made to your benchmarking partners in a timely manner.
    - Complete each benchmarking study to the satisfaction of all benchmarking partners as mutually agreed.

9. Principle of Understanding and Action
    - Understand how your benchmarking partners would like to be treated.
    - Treat your benchmarking partners in the way that each benchmarking partner would like to be treated.
    - Understand how each benchmarking parting would like to have the information he or she provides handled and used, and handle and use it in that manner.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MERSEY WATERFRONT REGIONAL PARK

Reference No.: Venue: Date: Time:

EVALUATION OF THE MERSEY WATERFRONT PROGRAMME

FOREWORD:

Thank you for agreeing to cooperate in this study. This investigation is a combined effort between the Mersey Waterfront and a PhD research programme at the University of Liverpool. There are two main reasons for this joint appraisal:

- As part of the conclusion of the Mersey Waterfront Programme, a comprehensive exit report is required by NWDA, in place of a programme evaluation for which funding is no longer available;
- A PhD research programme which is using the Mersey Waterfront as a case study.

The purpose of the exit report is to capture the successes and benefits of undertaking the programme, hence providing learning points for future projects. To this end the Mersey Partnership is asking all partners and key stakeholders to provide their views about the programme, how, as a whole, it has performed over the past 7 years and the achievements realised through the Succession Programme (2007/2010). Meanwhile, the PhD research, under the supervision of Professor Peter Batey, is attempting to examine the success of the Mersey Waterfront Programme and to explore the relevance and potential of applying the benchmarking procedure for programme evaluation.

Your response, along with that of other key individuals, will be an important element in the evaluation of the Mersey Waterfront and should provide valuable insights into the programme. The report we are producing is intended to identify key lessons for any future programme.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEW:

The interview has a clear structure and is estimated to last no longer than 1 hour. The questions are organised under four main headings, each of which is carefully explained. All questions are open-ended. They range from establishing perceptions, to gathering ideas and comments.

Confidentiality is assured as all responses will be used solely for the purpose of the Mersey Waterfront Exit Report and the PhD Research. If you require any further information on the evaluation of Mersey Waterfront, please e-mail or contact either of the following:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Ayu Abdullah (Postgraduate Research Student)
Address: Department of Civic Design, 74 Gordon Stephenson Building, Bedford Street South, South Campus, Liverpool L69 7ZQ
Telephone: 07948093346
E-mail: ayu_abdullah@hotmail.com

Your Details (Current):

Name	
Organisation	

Appendix 2- Cont'd.

SECTION 1: EXPERIENCE

This section is intended to identify your involvement with the Mersey Waterfront programme. Please answer the questions that are appropriate to you.

Please give a brief description of your involvement with Mersey Waterfront Regional Park.

Period of Involvement (Year/Month)	
Nature of Involvement (Position/Role/Responsibility)	
Outcomes of involvement (Achievement)	
Type/Name of task or project(s) or scheme, if appropriate.	
Amount of funding received and source, if appropriate.	

SECTION 2: PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Please answer any question which you think applies to you, either within your scope of work, or based on your experience, or anything within your knowledge about which you feel you can share your opinions or suggestions.

1. What part did you play in the preparatory work for the programme as a whole or for a specific project?

2. How effective was the programme at achieving the aims and objectives set? (see attached note)

   2a) In your opinion were any of the original aims or objectives not met? Why?
   2b) Were there any unexpected benefits either from the programme as a whole or from any specific project?

3. If you were involved in particular project, did you refer to any standard or Quality Assurance Scheme or guideline? Please specify.

4. What additional, unforeseen benefits has the programme generated?

5. Were there any major issues during your involvement with Mersey Waterfront? Please describe.

6. With reference to the Commencement Programme and Succession Programme, do you think Community Engagement was handled well?

7. Throughout the programme implementation, were you aware that there was monitoring and evaluation being performed? Please describe this and indicate any lesson learned.

8. With reference to the Succession Programme, has the programme been implemented according to the original plan? If not, why and what was changed?

   8a) Was the delivery of the project you're familiar with consistent with the programme plan?

9. Did the project progress in accordance with the original timeline?

   9a) If not, what caused the project delay?

10. Was the allocated time given sufficient?

    10a) What measures were put in place to ensure this worked out well?

Appendix 2- Cont'd.

11. What do you think of the skills you had within your team?

    11a) Did you have any issues with regards to the number staff within your team?

12. From your own point of view, do you think that arrangements for management and work delegation worked well? Explain briefly.

    12a) To what extent were Mersey Waterfront Executive Team involved in your project?
    12b) Could more have been done?

13. Was there any shortfall in terms of funding for your project? Please describe briefly.

    13a) What mechanism was put in place to manage the financial side of the project?

14. How did the programme / project consider safety and risk management?

15. What were the major risks encountered during the course of the Mersey Waterfront in relation to the programme as a whole or a particular project?

    15a) Programme as a whole:
    15b) Project in particular:
    15c) How was the risk managed?

16. Based on your experience and knowledge, what are the key factors in assuring the success of programme implementation?

17. In your opinion, what is the greatest achievement of Mersey Waterfront?

18. Considering both the Commencement Programme and Succession Programme, what were the major achievements of the regional park as a programme as a whole and at the individual project level?

    18a) Programme:
    18b) Project:

19. Which project did you feel had the most positive impact on the coastline? Why?

    19a) What changed as a result of the programme?
    - Physical aspects?
    - Economic aspects?
    - Social aspects?

20. Who do you think benefited most from the programme?

    20a) Do you think there were any groups who could have benefited more?

21. What arrangements are in place for the continuation of activity within the waterfront area after completion of the Mersey Waterfront programme?

22. Would you describe Mersey Waterfront as a successful programme? If yes, what particular aspects come to mind?

    22a) Do you think that the Mersey Waterfront programme demonstrated good practice in terms of project delivery?

23. Do you feel that others can learn from the Mersey Waterfront experience?

    23a) In what way?

Appendix 2- Cont'd.

24. What could have been done better/differently?

25. Can you please sum up the Mersey Waterfront programme in two (2) sentences?

SECTION 3: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND BENCHMARKING

This section seeks to assess views on performance measurement of the programme and 'benchmarking procedure' as a tool of measurement. Benchmarking is another way of measuring one's own performance as compared to others. The "*Seeing is Believing*" initiative for Mersey Waterfront was deemed to be part of a 'Benchmarking Procedure' since it involved the activities of learning from others.

1. What mechanisms were put in place to monitor and assess the programme's performance?

2. In your opinion, what should the critical measure be when evaluating the performance of a programme?

3. Are you aware of regional parks? Please describe briefly.

    3a) In your opinion, which regional park is comparable to the Mersey Waterfront?
    3b) Assuming you are aware of it, how would you compare the Lee Valley Regional Park to the Mersey Waterfront?

4. The "Seeing is Believing" initiative may be considered as benchmarking and learning from others. How would you perceive benchmarking as compared to any other type of evaluation method?

    4a) Have you ever been involved in any benchmarking procedure before (either through "Seeing is Believing" or any other involvement)? How?
    4b) What do you think the Mersey Waterfront learnt from the Seeing is Believing programme?
    4c) What did Mersey Waterfront learn from Emscher Park?
    4c) How would you compare Emscher Park to the Mersey Waterfront?
    4d) Do you feel that benchmarking is a good way of measuring a regional park performance as compared to others? Why?

5. Do you feel that the Mersey Waterfront can now be a benchmark for others? In what ways?

6. In what way did the other regional parks participate in the Mersey Waterfront?

    6a) In what way did the regional parks Exchange learn from Mersey Waterfront?

7. Do you think that the Seeing is Believing approach was a success?

    7a) Would you recommend this approach to others?

SECTION 4: LESSON LEARNED

This section is designed for the purpose of 'summing up' the whole interview.

1. What in your view are the 3 key lessons have we learnt from Mersey Waterfront?

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK

[Please leave this blank] Reference No.: Venue: Date:

EVALUATION OF THE LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK PROGRAMME

ABOUT THE INTERVIEW:
The interview has a clear structure and is estimated to last no longer than 1½ hour. The questions are organised under four main headings, each of which is carefully explained. All questions are open-ended. They range from establishing perceptions, to gathering ideas and comments.

Confidentiality is assured as all responses will be used solely for the purpose of the PhD Research. If you require any further information on this evaluation, please e-mail or contact me:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Ayu Abdullah (Postgraduate Research Student)
Address: Department of Civic Design, University of Liverpool,
74 Gordon Stephenson Building, Bedford Street South, South Campus, Liverpool L69 7ZQ
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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE WITH LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK
This section is intended to identify your current occupation and your involvement with the Lee Valley Regional Park programme. Please answer the questions that are appropriate to you.

Your Current Details:

Name	
Organisation	
Period of Involvement with Lee Valley (Year/Month)	
Nature of Involvement with Lee Valley (Position/Role/Responsibility)	
Outcomes of involvement (Achievement)	
Type/Name of task or project(s) or scheme, if appropriate.	

SECTION 2: PROGRAMME EVALUATION
For this section, the Lee Valley Regional Park is referred to as a programme.

Please answer any question which you think applies to you, either within your scope of work, or based on your experience, or anything within your knowledge about which you feel you can share your opinions or suggestions.

1. What type of preparatory work is normally performed for any development within the park?
2. How effective was the preparatory work? Please describe.
3. How effective was the programme at achieving its aims and objectives set?

Appendix 3- Cont'd.

4. Which policy or guideline or quality standard that were normally referred to for the purpose of Lee Valley programme implementation? Please specify.

5. Based on your knowledge, what additional, unforeseen benefits has the programme generated since its beginning or since your involvement?

6. Do you feel that the public had been included in any decision-making or any other process for the development so far? Please describe.

7. Throughout the programme implementation, were you aware that there was monitoring and evaluation being performed? Please describe this and indicate any lesson learned.

8. Was there any delay in project delivery? Why?

9. What measures were put in place to ensure that the delivery of project worked out well?

10. Was there any shortfall in terms of funding for your project? Please describe briefly.

11. What mechanism was put in place to manage the financial side of the project?

12. How did the programme / project consider safety and risk management?

13. What were the major risks encountered during the course of the Lee Valley in relation to the programme as a whole or a particular project?

14. Based on your experience and knowledge, what are the key factors in assuring the success of programme implementation?

15. In your opinion, what is the greatest achievement of the Lee Valley? Can you please name those achievements / projects / schemes?

16. Which project did you feel had the most positive impact on the Lee Valley Regional Park? Why?

17. What changed as a result of the programme?

- Physical aspects?
- Economic aspects?
- Social aspects?

18. Who do you think benefited most from the programme?

19. What arrangements are in place for the continuation of activity within the park?

20. Would you describe Lee Valley as a successful programme? If yes, what particular aspects come to mind?

21. Do you think that the Lee Valley programme demonstrates good practice in terms of project delivery?

22. Do you feel that others can learn from the Lee Valley experience? In what way?

23. What could have been done better/differently?

Appendix 3- Cont'd.

24. Were there any major issues during your involvement with Lee Valley? Please describe.

SECTION 3: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND BENCHMARKING
This section seeks to assess views on performance measurement of the programme and 'benchmarking procedure' as a tool of measurement. Benchmarking is another way of measuring one's own performance as compared to others.

1. How would you perceive benchmarking as compared to any other type of evaluation method?

2. Do you feel that benchmarking is a good way of measuring a regional park performance as compared to others? Why?

3. In relation to the Lee Valley development, is benchmarking a common procedure?

4. For Lee Valley, what mechanisms were put in place to monitor and assess the programme's performance?

5. Assuming that you're aware of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, how would you compare the Mersey Waterfront to Lee Valley?

6. How would you compare the Emscher Park to Lee Valley?

7. Do you feel that the Lee Valley can be a benchmark for others? In what way?

SECTION 4: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT
This section is intended to assess the Park Authority and its management.

1. To what extent is the Park Authority involved in the regional park programme?

2. What difference does it make by having the Park Authority?

3. From your own point of view, do you think that arrangements for management and work delegation worked well? Explain briefly.

4. According to the Park Act 1966, the role of the Park Authority does not extend to planning permission. Has this been a great issue?

5. Does the Park Authority have wide power on decision making?

6. Was there any issue with regards to the role of Park Authority as a planning consultee?

SECTION 5: PARK ACT AND PARK DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
This section is intended to assess the Park Act and the latest Park Development Framework.

Park Act 1966:
1. The Park Act was created in 1966. How relevant/sufficient is the Act in the current context?

2. Which particular aspect is not included in the Act but should be introduced?

Appendix 3- Cont'd.

3. Is the section and regulation on the role of the Park Authority comprehensive enough or has there been any issue before?

4. Can we say that the Act is a major part of the development mechanisms applied for the efficiency of the park's development? Why?

Park Development Framework: Thematic Proposals (January 2011):

1. Since the adoption of the Park Development Framework: Thematic Proposals in January 2011, how far has it progressed in terms of converting those thematic proposals into area based plan?

2. The framework had left a question of when will each development area be targeted for completion. What is the duration of this framework?

3. The thematic proposals were much focused on the Park Authority's aspirations and the idea of incorporating the partners into the development. However, little is known about who is actually responsible for the delivery of those developments. Can you please comment on this?

4. The framework also did not mention the source and amount of funding. This had given a doubt as to how the proposals would be materialised. Can you please give your comment on this too?

5. When is the target to accomplish the area-based plans for the whole Park?

6. The response by Laurie Elks on the 27th January 2010 with regards to the Park Development Framework during its consultative draft was found constructive. Did the Consultation team considered those comments?

7. Do you feel that the latest framework is more comprehensive than the Park Plan in 2000? In what way?

SECTION 6: LESSON LEARNED

This section is designed for the purpose of 'summing up' the whole interview.

1. What in your view are the 3 key lessons have you learnt from Lee Valley?

2. Can you please sum up the Lee Valley Regional Park programme in two (2) sentences?

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF MW INTERVIEWEES

Note: The information below is based on the original response from the survey.

Mersey Waterfront Board Members		
No.	**Name**	**Organisation**
1	Professor Peter Batey	Vice Chair Mersey Waterfront, Former Chair Mersey Basin Campaign / Lever Professor University of Liverpool
2	Alan Stilwell	Operations Director, Merseytravel
3	Dave Moorcroft	Director of Economic Development, The Mersey Partnership
4	Pam Wislher	Head of Tourism Department, The Mersey Partnership
5	Ian Higby	Managing Director, Atlantic Container Line Ltd. (ACL)
6	Richard Tracey	Head of Environment Quality, NWDA
7	Louise Berritta	NWDA

Mersey Waterfront Former Board Members		
No.	**Name**	**Organisation**
1	Walter Menzies	Private Consultant. Former CEO Mersey Basin Campaign
2	Lord Ronnie Fearn	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
3	Ceri Jones	Retired (Assistant Director Regeneration, Sefton MBC Planning & Regeneration Department)
4	Louise Goodman	Executive Director Groundwork Merseyside. Former Director Mersey Waterfront

Mersey Waterfront Management Group		
No.	**Name**	**Organisation**
1	Mark Kitts	Liverpool City Council
2	David Ball	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
3	Paul Wright	Halton Borough Council
4	Tony Corfield	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
5	Christine Darbyshire	Liverpool City Council

Mersey Waterfront Former Management Group		
No.	**Name**	**Organisation**
1	Carole Caroll	Merseytravel
2	Joanna Hayes	Liverpool City Council
3	Peter Morton	Former Director, Mersey Waterfront
4	Jonathan Clark	Knowsley Borough Council

Mersey Waterfront / TMP / Mersey Basin Campaign Representative		
No.	**Name**	**Organisation**
1	Cathy Elwin	Mersey Waterfront / The Mersey Partnership / Mersey Basin Campaign

APPENDIX 5: LIST OF LV INTERVIEWEES

LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (LVRPA)		
No.	**Name**	**Post**
1	Shaun Dawson	Chief Executive
2	Stephen Wilkinson	Head of Planning and Strategic Partnerships
3	Nigel Foxall	Head of Performance & Information
4	Simon Sheldon	Assistant Director Resources and Business

APPENDIX 6: PROJECT MANAGER SURVEY

Evaluation of the Mersey Waterfront Programme

Foreword:

We have contacted you because you have previously worked with Mersey Waterfront to shape the priorities for the programme and projects delivered as part of the completion of the programme. We are again seeking your views, this time we would like your feedback about how well we have done and what we could have improved.

This questionnaire is a combined effort between Mersey Waterfront and a PhD research programme at the University of Liverpool. Information gained from this process will be fed into the production of an exit report that, it is hoped, will capture the successes and benefits of undertaking the waterfront programme and provide learning points for future projects. To this end The Mersey Partnership is asking all partners and stakeholders to provide their views about the programme and how it has performed over the past 7 years.

Your response, along with that of other key individuals, will be an important element in the evaluation of the Mersey Waterfront and will provide valuable insights into the programme. Confidentiality is assured as all responses will be used solely for the purpose of the Mersey Waterfront Exit Report and the PhD Research. Your response is needed **Before 24th December 2010**.

About the Survey:

The questionnaire has a clear structure and is estimated to last no longer than 40 minutes. The questions are organised under four main headings, each of which is carefully explained. Some questions are answered by ticking the box and allow you to give your thoughts, and some require your ratings or comments. The questionnaire can be answered by using your mouse to select the area to type in your comments or by clicking on the appropriate response. Alternatively, as a fall back, the questionnaire can be printed out and filled in.

If your involvement as a Project Manager has covered more than one project, we would like you to focus upon the project which, in your estimation, has been most successful.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of the following people:

Ayu Abdullah (Postgraduate Research Student)
Department of Civic Design
The University of Liverpool
Email: yusfida@liv.ac.uk
Tel: 07948093346. (Mobile)

Your Current Details:

Name	
Profession/Occupation	
Organisation	

Appendix 6- Cont'd.

SECTION 1: EXPERIENCE

This section is intended to identify your involvement with the Mersey Waterfront programme. Please answer the questions that are appropriate to you.

Please give a brief description of your involvement with Mersey Waterfront.

Period of Involvement (Year/Month)	
Nature of Involvement (Position/Role/Responsibility)	
List of projects or tasks in which you were involved	
Which specific project are you intending to refer to in this questionnaire?	
Outcomes of involvement (Achievement)	
Amount of funding received and source.	

SECTION 2: PROGRAMME AND PROJECT EVALUATION

Please answer any question which you think applies to you, either within your scope of work, or based on your experience, or anything within your knowledge about which you feel you can share your opinions or suggestions.

1. Did you play any part in the preparatory work for the programme as a whole or for a specific project?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   If Yes, Please specify the type of work and your role.

2. Do you think that the preparatory work had facilitated to the creation of Mersey Waterfront programme?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   If Yes, what type of work had helped the programme?

3. Did the project succeeded in achieving the Mersey Waterfront aims and objectives? Please describe your answer. (see the notes below as reference)

Mersey Waterfront Aim and Objectives (application)

Primary Aim: to embed Mersey Waterfront as a key component in the Liverpool City Region's Premier Destination offer by generating greater awareness, use and ownership of the Mersey Waterfront as an exceptional coastal amenity for residents, tourists and businesses alike.

Objectives: these are linked to the aim (above) and enhance positive perceptions of the city region amongst residents, visitors and investors.

- To grow the City Region tourism sector. Enhance the built and natural assets of the coastline and improve existing environmental resources.
- Engender a greater sense of pride and awareness of the Waterfront.
- Contribute to an enhanced Quality of Life offer within the City Region
- Provide new and enhanced opportunities for formal and informal leisure and recreation.
- Explore opportunities for other sources of funding for the ongoing development of Mersey Waterfront and the creative use of private sector investment and planning gain.

Appendix 6- Cont'd.

Yes ☐ No ☐

If No, what was not been achieved and why?

4. What is your project's major contribution to the Mersey Waterfront programme?

5. What were the mechanisms put in place to ensure that the project achieves the Mersey Waterfront goals?

6. Do you feel that those mechanisms were sufficient enough?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   If No, what additional or different type of aid would you suggest in future?

7. During the project delivery, did you refer to any standard or Quality Assurance Scheme or guideline? Please specify according to project.

   Yes ☐ No ☐

   If Yes, which guideline was it?

8. How would you rate your project's achievement as a whole in relation to its part (purpose) in ensuring the success of Mersey Waterfront programme?

   Successful — Very Successful

   1 2 3 4 5

9. What additional, unforeseen benefits have the project generated, and what were the benefits?

10. Were there any major issues during your involvement with Mersey Waterfront? Please describe.

11. How was monitoring and evaluation for your project being done? Please describe this and indicate any lesson learned.

12. Was the delivery of the project consistent with the Mersey Waterfront programme plan?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

    If No, what caused the inconsistency?

13. Did the project progress in accordance with the original timeline?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

    If Yes, what was the mechanism put in place in ensuring this accomplishment? Or if Not, what had caused the project delay?

14. Did you find the allocated time given to complete the project was sufficient?

15. Did you think that the skills you had within your team were adequate?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

    If Not, what was required more and why?

Appendix 6- Cont'd.

16. Do you think that the arrangements for management and work delegation worked well? Explain briefly.

17. To what extent was Mersey Waterfront Executive Team involved in your project and could more have been done?

18. Was there any shortfall in terms of funding for your project? Please describe briefly.

    Yes ☐ No ☐

    If Yes, what was the problem and how was it solved?

19. During the project implementation, what mechanism was put in place to manage the financial side of the project?

20. How did the project consider safety and risk management?

21. Did the project encounter any major risks during the course of the Mersey Waterfront?

    Yes ☐ No ☐

    If Yes, what was the risk and how was it managed or solved?

22. Based on your experience and knowledge, what are the key factors in assuring the success of project implementation?

23. In your opinion, what is the greatest achievement of Mersey Waterfront?

24. Considering both the Commencement Programme and Succession Programme, what were the major achievements of the regional park as a programme as a whole and at the individual project level?
    Programme:
    Project:

25. Which project did you feel had the most positive impact on the coastline? Why?

26. What changed as a result of the programme?
    - Physical aspects?
    - Economic aspects?
    - Social aspects?

27. Who do you think benefited most from the programme and do you think there were any groups who could have benefited more?

28. What arrangements are in place for the continuation of activity within the riverside and coastal area after completion of the Mersey Waterfront programme?

29. Would you describe Mersey Waterfront as a successful programme? If yes, what particular aspects come to mind?

30. Do you think that the Mersey Waterfront programme demonstrated good practice in terms of project delivery?

31. Do you feel that others can learn from the Mersey Waterfront experience? In what way?

32. What could have been done better/differently?

33. Can you please sum up the Mersey Waterfront programme in two (2) sentences?

Appendix 6- Cont'd.

SECTION 3: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND BENCHMARKING

This section seeks to assess views on performance measurement of the programme and 'benchmarking procedure' as a tool of measurement. Benchmarking is another way of measuring one's own performance as compared to others. The "*Seeing is Believing*" initiative for Mersey Waterfront was deemed to be part of a 'Benchmarking Procedure' since it involved the activities of learning from others.

1. What mechanisms were put in place to monitor and assess the project's performance?

2. In your opinion, what should the critical measure be when evaluating the performance of a programme?

3. Are you aware of regional parks?

   Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Assuming you are aware of it, how would you compare the Lee Valley Regional Park to the Mersey Waterfront?

5. In your opinion, which regional park is comparable to the Mersey Waterfront?

6. The "Seeing is Believing" initiative may be considered as benchmarking and learning from others. How would you perceive benchmarking as compared to any other type of evaluation method?

7. Have you ever been involved in any benchmarking procedure before (either through "Seeing is Believing" or any other involvement)? How?

8. What do you think the Mersey Waterfront learnt from the Seeing is Believing programme?

9. What did Mersey Waterfront learn from Emscher Park?

10. How would you compare Emscher Park to the Mersey Waterfront?

11. Do you feel that benchmarking is a good way of measuring a regional park performance as compared to others? Why?

12. Do you feel that the Mersey Waterfront can now be a benchmark for others? In what ways?

13. Do you think your project can be claimed as best practice and be benchmarked or replicated by others?

14. In what way did the other regional parks participate in the Mersey Waterfront?

15. In what way did the Regional Parks Exchange learn from Mersey Waterfront?

16. Do you think that the Seeing is Believing approach was a success?

17. Would you recommend this approach to others?

SECTION 4: LESSON LEARNED

This section is designed for the purpose of 'summing up' the whole interview.

1. What in your view are the 3 key lessons have we learnt from Mersey Waterfront?

APPENDIX 7: PEOPLE'S PANELS SURVEY

EVALUATION OF MERSEY WATERFRONT PROGRAMMME

Foreword:
We have contacted you because you have previously worked with Mersey Waterfront to shape the priorities for the programme and projects delivered as part of the completion of the programme. We are again seeking your views, this time we would like your feedback about how well we have done and what we could have improved.

This questionnaire is a combined effort between Mersey Waterfront and a PhD research programme at the University of Liverpool. Information gained from this process will be fed into the production of an exit report that, it is hoped, will capture the successes and benefits of undertaking the waterfront programme and provide learning points for future projects. To this end The Mersey Partnership is asking all partners and stakeholders to provide their views about the programme and how it has performed over the past 7 years.

Your response, along with that of other key individuals, will be an important element in the evaluation of the Mersey Waterfront and will provide valuable insights into the programme. Confidentiality is assured as all responses will be used solely for the purpose of the Mersey Waterfront Exit Report and the PhD Research.

About the Survey:
The questionnaire has a clear structure and is estimated to last no longer than 15 minutes. Some questions are answered by ticking the box and allow you to give your thoughts, and some require your ratings or comments. The questionnaire can be answered electronically by using the TAB-key to move to the fill-in areas. Alternatively, as a fall back, the questionnaire can be printed out and filled in.

The questionnaire should be emailed or sent to:
Ayu Abdullah (Postgraduate Research Student)
Department of Civic Design
The University of Liverpool
Email: yusfida@liv.ac.uk
Tel: 07948093346. (Mobile)

Before the 20th December 2010

Your Current Details:

Name	
Profession/Occupation	
Organisation	

Experience with Mersey Waterfront Programme:

Period of Involvement (Month/Year)	
Type of Involvement	

The following require you to tick [/] your answer Yes or No, and make your comment based on your answer:

1) Do you think that the People's Panel and Community Engagement had an influence on Mersey Waterfront's decisions and affected the development of the Mersey Waterfront programme?

Appendix 7- Cont'd.

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, how?

If No, why?

2) Do you feel that communication among partners worked well?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If No, why?

3) In ensuring that people's needs and aspirations were met, did you find that the time devoted to People's Panel involvement was sufficient?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If No, why?

4) Do you think the coast and riverside has improved over the lifetime of the programme (over the past 7 years)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, how?

If No, why?

5) Has the quality of facilities along the coast and riverside improved?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, in what way?

If No, why?

6) Have the cultural, recreational and leisure services improved?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, in what way?

7) Has the overall feel of the place improved?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, in what particular respect?

If No, why?

8) Has the fear of crime been reduced when using these waterfront spaces?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, to what extent?

Appendix 7- Cont'd.

9) Would you take your friend there?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, why would you take your friend there?

If No, why not?

10) Would you recommend the creation or formation of similar arrangements like the People's Panel and Community Engagement for other regional park programmes?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, for what particular reasons?

The following questions require you to give a rating. Please tick [/] your viewpoint, one for each statement.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The Mersey Waterfront represents best practice.					
2	The People's Panel arrangement was effective.					
3	Community Engagement worked well and was a success.					
4	The People's Panel and Community Engagement were able to convey people's aspirations.					
5	The role of the People's Panel and the Community Engagement was an essential ingredient of the success of the Mersey Waterfront.					

Please write your comments.

1) If the People's Panel arrangement was to be repeated, what should be done differently?

2) Based on your experience, is there any particular element/idea that can be shared with others?

3) Throughout your involvement, were there any particular issues or problems?

4) Please summarise your overall view of the People's Panel and Community Engagement in one sentence.

APPENDIX 8: LIST OF RESPONDENTS [PROJECT MANAGERS]

Note: The information below is based on the original response from the survey.

No.	Name	Current Profession / Occupation	Organisation	Period of Involvement (as off date of participation for survey)	Nature of Involvement
1	Steve Higham	Regeneration Manager	British Waterways	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
2	David Evans	Landscape Architect	David Evans Consultants	Approx. 2004 to 2010	Working for the Land Restoration Trust in partnership with Langtree and Liverpool City Council.
3	Derek Dottie	Greenspace Client Manager	Liverpool City Council	2008 to present	Part of Stakeholder / Steering Groups
4	Caroline Platt	Project Manager	Wirral MBC	18 months (October 2008 to March 2010).	Project Manager. Involvement in the wind down, financial completion and draw down of ERDF and post project requests for data / information. (The project itself started October 2007 with financial completion December 2008)
5	Brian Kerr	Resource Manager	Mersey Ferries (Merseytravel)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
6	Caroline Salthouse	Regional Coastal Project Officer	North West Coastal Forum	2003 to current date (but also involved in earlier development of MW)	Not much in the way of formal involvement however much information sharing, inviting MW staff to participate in events and so showcasing MW and its achievements as good practice, sometimes to an international audience; involving MW staff in projects such as the North West Coastal Trail, sharing information on quality standards, etc. MW chaired the Merseyside and Cheshire Coastal Access Group for the North West Coastal Forum as good quality coastal access is a mutual goal. MW staff also came to PISCES meetings (coastal partnership meetings) to input information and issues from the Merseyside area and potentially to gain information. In the development phase I was working at Mersey Strategy and as part of that project was involved with the Countryside Exchange Programme that came up with the idea of a Mersey Estuary based regional park.
7	Alistair Macdonald	Development Manager	Liverpool Vision	Roughly between 2004 – 2007 as part of the planning and development process at the Pier Head.	Vision managed and co-ordinated a programme of works at the Pier Head involving landowners, developers and funders.
8	Doug Edmondson	Partner organisation project manager	Newlands Programme	7 years	Project Manager

Appendix 8- Cont'd.

No.	Name	Current Profession / Occupation	Organisation	Period of Involvement (as off date of participation for survey)	Nature of Involvement
9	Gerry Proctor	Chair	Engage Liverpool / Federation of Liverpool Waterfront Residents Associations	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
10	Mike Garbutt	Senior Development Officer	Wirral Council	June 2005 to August 2008	Project Manager
11	Thomas Workman	Retired	Liverpool Sailing Club	Knowledge of Mersey Waterfront since its inception to close.	Supporter of proposal to encourage development and use of the river, particularly with regard to recreation. Previously Chair of Mersey Estuary Recreational Users Group established by the Mersey Basin Campaign. President of Liverpool Sailing Club Council Member of the Mersey Basin Campaign. Co Founder of the Mersey River Festival.
12	Paul Oldfield	Ecologist	Halton Borough Council	3 years approx.	Nature Conservation Officer. Landscape Services Halton Borough Council. Responsible for delivering a range of nature conservation activities including Local Nature Reserves, a Local Wildlife Sites system and Wild About Halton, a project to reconnect people with nature in the Runcorn / Widnes.
13	Neil Mitchell	Project Manager	Wirral Council	Six years	My role involved the development of projects through to securing external investment from the Mersey Waterfront Programme and other funding sources.
14	Clare Olver	Not Mentioned	The Mersey Forest	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
15	W. M. Moody	Planning Officer	Sefton Council	Ongoing throughout the life of the MWF	Manager of projects funded by or coordinated by MWF
16	Paul Nolan	Director	The Mersey Forest	Not mentioned	Not mentioned
17	Tom Duckworth	Chartered Landscape Architect	Liverpool City Council	2006 to 2008	Project Manager
18	Adam Davison	Newlands Project Development Officer	Forestry Commission	5 Years	
19	Richard Cass	Partner (Architect and Landscape Architect)	Cass Associates	2003 to 2010	Consultant

Appendix 8- Cont'd.					
No.	**Name**	**Current Profession / Occupation**	**Organisation**	**Period of Involvement (as off date of participation for survey)**	**Nature of Involvement**
20	Dr Geoffrey Woodcock	University Lecturer (Retired)	University of Liverpool	Since inception.	General committee membership (mainly scrutinising bids)
21	Louise Berritta	Contract Manager	NWDA	November 2009 to present.	Contract Manager on behalf of NWDA.
22	June Hancox	Retired	New Ferry Regeneration Action Group (NFRAG)	From 2006 to date.	As Vice Chair of NFRAG
23	Kevin Cowdall	Community Engagement Officer	Liverpool Youth Offending Service	Several meeting from March 2009, leading to six week programme delivery period – July / August / September 2009	Negotiation of start-up funding for on-going project.
24	Tracy Gibson	Accountant	Merseytravel	Not mentioned	Not mentioned

APPENDIX 9: LIST OF RESPONDENTS [PEOPLE'S PANELS]

Note: The information below is based on the original response from the survey.

No.	Name	Current Profession / Occupation	Organisation	Experience with MW Programme	Type of Involvement
1	Bruce Preen	Retired	Not related	Possibly over the last 4 years	Attending forums and a work shop at the Marriot Hotel
2	Terry Maher	Engineer	Railway	2003	People's Panel
3	June Hancox	Retired	New Ferry Regeneration Action Group (NFRAG)	June 2005 to September 2010	Beach Clean Up
4	Julian Collinson	Retired Teacher	Promotional educational tours at Liverpool John Lennon Airport	Last five years	To look at the synergy between Peels waterfront ideas and the airport / Mersey forest developments
5	John Mkoji	Advisor	Citizen Advice Bureau – Wirral	2008-2009	People's Panel
6	Paul Bergin	Director	Valley Field Environmental Services Ltd	7 years	People's Panel
7	Jean Woods	RGN Retired	Soroptimist	Since the first meeting following on from being involved with Liverpool Vision	Soroptimist International have Programme Action Projects involving Community Improvements
8	John R Davenport	Retired Managing Partner (Quantity Surveyor)	Davis Langdon	Approx. 2 years	Member of Wirral People's Panel
9	Michael Swerdlow	Corporate video producer	Federation of Liverpool Waterfront Residents Associations	Numerous years	Representing the FLWRA on engagement panels
10	John Edwards	Blue badge tourist guide	Mersey Guides Association	During the life of the programme	Debater at meetings
11	Reg Cox	Photographer / Designer	Riverside Residents Association	2 – 3 years	Member of panel for Otterspool area

APPENDIX 10: ATTRIBUTES FOR ANALYSIS

1	**CONTEXT (SETTING) OF REGIONAL PARK PROGRAMME**	
	a	Background of Programme
		• History of Establishment
		• Location
		• Size of Area / Boundary
		• Park element and surrounding (Physical, Social and Economic Aspects)
		• Nature of development
		• Special Features / Main Attractions
		• Types of projects / Important Projects
		• Transformation of area
	b	Business Plan
	c	Legislation
		• The Park Act
	d	The Aims and Objective
		• Original aims and objectives / Targets
		• Focus of development now and then / Changes of priorities / Shift of emphasis / Transformation of vision overtime
		• Effects of impacts of vision modification
		• Goal achievement
		• Vision for the future
	e	Statutory Body
		• The Park Authority
	f	The Organisation and Management
		• Institutional arrangement / Management
	g	The Partners and Stakeholders
		• Who was / is involved?
	h	The Park Income
		• Generating income / profit
		• Income from the tax payer
		• Maintaining the park
		• The future plan
2	**MECHANISM OR DELIVERY OF PROGRAMME**	
	a	Benchmarking the Delivery of Programme
		• Branding or website for promoting the programme
		• Development Framework or Park Plan
		• Event or activity within the park
		• Financial management
		• Funding
		• Future arrangement
		• Issues and problems
		• Key success factor
		• Learning from others
		• Maintenance
		• Monitoring and evaluation
		• Monitoring the number of visitors to the park
		• Performance measurement
		• Planning and timeline / Delivery period
		• Preliminary work / project appraisal
		• Project performance
		• Project management

Appendix 10- Cont'd.		
		• Public participation / Community engagement
		• Quality / Performance standard
		• Risk and safety management
		• Staff / skill / resources
		• Suggestions
3	**OUTCOME OF PROGRAMME**	
	a	Benchmarking the Outcome of Programmme
		• Achieved intended or anticipated outcome
		• Achieved unintended outcome / Unforeseen outcome / Unexpected benefit
		• Awards achievement
		• Benefits of programme aspect
		• Comments
		• Goal achievement
		• The legacy
		• Who benefited the most
4	**KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BENCHMARKING**	
	a	Can the Park be a Benchmark to others?
	b	Comments About Benchmarking
	c	Experience in Benchmarking
5	**KEY LEARNING POINTS**	
	a	Key Learning Points
6	**THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE REGIONAL PARK**	
	a	The Strengths / Strong Points
	b	The Weak Points
7	**ISSUES AND PROBLEMS**	
	a	The Challenges
8	**EXPECTATION AND CONCLUSION**	
	a	Hope and Expectation
9	**SUGGESTION**	
	a	Future Intervention

APPENDIX 11: REGIONAL PARK EXEMPLAR: EMSCHER LANDSCAPE PARK

Introduction

According to Yin (2003), choosing an exemplary case is not as straightforward as conducting other field work. This researcher agrees with Yin and uses a practical approach to seek a comparison case study of international practice. For this reason, the selected regional park for this review was chosen based on its merits as having an international reputation in terms of a reference to others and similar characteristics to the MW and the LV, i.e., based on its similar initial establishment, to regenerate the area. The idea of including an appendix of an international practice is to gain an insight of Germany's experience with regards to an urban regeneration programme that has also been delivered through a regional park. Not only that, the Emscher Landscape Park was also chosen because of its regeneration experience of more than 20 years and its regeneration outcomes.

This review therefore provides brief information about regional park practice in North Rhine Westphalia (NRW), Germany. The Emscher Landscape Park, widely known as Emscher Park, is nothing new to the UK and has attracted the interest of academicians and policy-makers (see Alden and Morgan, 1974; Percy, 2003; Adams and Pinch, 2011). To Adams and Pinch (2011), the Emscher Landscape Park has the character of an international legacy. In fact, Adam and Pinch (2011) acknowledged the influence of Emscher Landscape Park in sharing its experience with students across the UK. They mentioned too that field trips were organised among built environment and planning students in gaining knowledge exchange.

Also, it was mentioned in this thesis (see Chapter Six) that the Emscher Landscape Park was one of a number of sites for MW field trips as part of its efforts to learn from exemplars during the Commencement Programme through the 'Seeing is Believing' Initiative. Moreover, a few interviewees suggested that any regional park should learn and benchmark the Emscher Landscape Park (see Chapter 6, Section 6.6, page 205). The purpose of this appendix is therefore to share Emscher Park's experience with the suggestion that it could be further explored in benchmarking the UK regional parks. Additionally, it is worth pointing out that the authority responsible for the development of Emscher Landscape Park (the International Building Exhibition or IBA) has been an international reference to the UK in the Thames Gateway Initiative and the study of housing market renewal and growth areas in 2007 (Adam and Pinch, 2011).

Additionally, even though it was not planned to carry out informal interviews for the Germany review, nevertheless, this researcher had the opportunity to conduct an interview with a PhD student from Germany who was also studying regional parks (in February 2012). This was particularly useful as the interviewee works with the Ministry for Protection, Environment, Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Consumer Protection of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany. The interviewee then provided the researcher with some useful information on the Emscher Landscape Park.

The Start of Regional Planning in the Ruhr Region

Emscher Landscape Park is situated within the Ruhr region. The Ruhr region itself covers 4.435km^2 of land (M:AI, 2012a). The region contains 53 cities and districts with important cities like Duisburg in the west and Dortmund in the east. Ruhr's population is 5.3 million with a population density of 1.183 resident per km^2 (M:AI, 2012a). The region is divided into three administrative regions: (1) the State of NRW; (2) the Emscher Association; and (3) the Regionalverband Ruhr (RVR). There are two responsible regional authorities for the region, namely, Regional Authority Rhineland (LVR) and Regional Authority Westphalia-Lippe (LWL) (M:AI, 2012a).

Glasson and Marshall (2007) believed that Germany has had almost 100 years' experience of regional planning. Regional planning was introduced in the Ruhr region in 1920 through the founding of the *Siedlungsverband Ruhrkohlenbezirk*, also known as SVR (The Ruhr Coalfield Settlement Association) (Alden and Morgan, 1974). It is believed that the SVR was the first regional planning institution in the world (Alden and Morgan, 1974). Apparently, the SVR was established through a law called the Prussian Law in May 1920.

In relation to this, the economic and social problems in the Ruhr were therefore seen and tackled at a regional level. The advantage of this law was that it enabled the local authorities (referred to as Gemeinden) to transmit their powers to the Verband (association) to deliver development programmes. These were the tasks of producing town plans, transportation planning and funding aid to related local authorities. In the late 1950s, much of the SVR's effort was focused on improving the environmental state and the economic issues as a result of the declining industries (Alden and Morgan, 1974). Sadly, after almost 60 years of responsibilities, the SVR was terminated due to the deteriorating state of the coal and steel industries (Glasson and Marshall, 2007). The SVR was then replaced by the Kommunalverband Ruhr (KVR). However, the organisation "lost its planning function" too (Glasson and Marshall, 2007:p275).

The Emscher Landscape Park

As mentioned earlier, Emscher Landscape Park is located within the Ruhr (also known as Ruhrgebeit) region in the state of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) (see Figure 1.1 which demonstrates the location of the Ruhr region). Emscher Landscape Park however covers 320 square kilometers from east to west. Percy (2003:p151) wrote that in 2003, NRW is a "highly urbanised area with a total population of 18million", while Hall (2002) indicated that the Ruhr district itself was densely populated with 12.7million people in the late 1990s.

Figure 1.1: Location of Ruhr region
(Source: Author)

The Ruhr region became famous for its coal, steel and iron in the 19th century during the industrial revolution (Percy, 2003). It was mentioned that industrialisation started in the 1840s and continued till the early 20th century (RESCUE, 2002). Shaw (2002) claimed that the Ruhr's industries were among the largest industrial activities in the world throughout the 19th century and 20th century. Industries were concentrated along the River Ruhr and River Emscher (Percy, 2003). As a result of these activities, population grew and led to "an uncoordinated growth of the affected cities" (RESCUE, 2002). Unfortunately, the Ruhr was hit by an economic crisis due to the declined demand for coal (Percy, 2003). The interviewee mentioned that it was the issue of declining demand for coal as there was competition from cheaper sources like oil and gas that had caused the problem. This affected the industries and resulted in increased levels of unemployment, environmental degradation and social exclusion (RESCUE, 2002; Percy, 2002).

Percy (2003:p156) described the past planning of the Emscher as "poor" with little consideration of "environmental and social" aspects. Given that the Emscher area consisted of former heavy industrial buildings, Emscher experienced environmental pollution and contaminated land (Percy, 2003). Because of this, industrial activities shifted to "service sector and high-technology industry" (i.e., the current development of Emscher) (Percy, 2003:p149).

The *Internationale Bauausstellung Emscherpark* (IBA) was given the responsibility for regenerating the area. The IBA Emscher Park or International Building Exhibition Emscher Park is a regional development agency initiated by the Minister for Urban Development, Housing and Transport with the intention to deliver development and preservation programme for the park (Furst and Kilper, 1995). According to Seltmann (2007), the term IBA has been used by the Germans to indicate the German traditions of building exhibitions. Apparently, the Germans have been practicing these exhibitions since the 1920s (Seltmann, 2007). The purpose of IBA is to provide a platform for architects and planners in urban planning and development in Germany (Seltmann, 2007).

IBA Emscher Park was established in 1989 by Karl Ganzer who was also the director of IBA from 1989-1999. Knapp *et al.* (2004:p332) regard IBA Emscher Park as a "comprehensive regional development programme or complex renewal strategy". The interviewee stated that the first regeneration framework adopted by IBA Emscher Park was therefore designed for a ten-year programme. The key role of IBA was to promote regeneration and assess proposals of development for the Emscher. Adam and Pinch (2011) regard this as a method of regional regeneration. This effort was also claimed as an approach to urban design and environmental sustainability (Shaw, 2002; Adam and Pinch, 2011).

The aim of creating the Emscher Landscape Park was "to improve the working and living environment" of the area (Lethmate and Spiering, date unknown), while the objectives were:

1. To preserve the remaining leftover landscape;
2. To link up the isolated, separated areas in the agglomeration;
3. To re-zone separate areas as parklands;

4. To reach agreements both regionally and locally on individual projects with a long-term perspective; and
5. To maintain and manage the new open spaces in a permanent regional park association. (Lethmate and Spiering, date unknown)

In 2012, M:AI (2012a) shares the facts about Emscher Landscape Park mentioning the percentage of developed area as 37.6%, while agricultural area covers 40.7% of the total area. Even though almost 80% of land is allocated for development and agriculture, 17.6% of total land remains reserved for forest. In terms of developed area, 22,500 hectares of land are occupied for business and industrial purposes, and 8,500 hectares are commercial and industrial wasteland.

The Projects

Over the 10 year period from 1989 to 1999, almost 120 projects of various types were delivered in the park (Hall, 2002; Percy, 2003). A total of €2.5 billion was spent till 2000 (Seltmann, 2007). These projects comprised large and small scale projects. In general, the park has been transformed from a heavy industrial area into service industries. Such development includes redevelopment of contaminated areas, provision of new commercial buildings and leisure complexes as well as the refurbishment of existing structures and landscaping. Based on the interview, it was understood that through its programme, IBA initiated a framework aimed at resolving the economic growth by redeveloping contaminated sites and therefore provided a place for investors to occupy the land. Seltmann (2007:p3) named the five target-themes that were framed by IBA Emscher Park as:

1. The Emscher Park;
2. The reconstruction of the Emscher system;
3. Working in the park;
4. New uses for old industrial buildings; and
5. New housing projects.

The way IBA Emscher Park functioned was "based on a political census in the region" (Seltmann, 2007:p5). Seltmann (2007) mentioned that the delivery of projects required participation from the municipalities and regional organisation. Knapp *et al*. (2004:p333) mentioned that in delivering the projects, various parties were involved including "local government authorities, enterprises, associations, chambers of commerce, unions, initiatives and citizens". There are 17 councils of the Emscher region local communities which joined the IBA Emscher Park at the time of its formation: Duisburg, Oberhausen, Mülheim an der Ruhr, Bottrop, Essen, Gladbeck, Bochum, Gelsenkirchen, Recklinghausen, Herne, Herten, Castrop-Rauxel, Waltrop, Lünen, Dortmund, Kamen and Bergkamen (Werstatt fur eine Industrieregion, 2012).

However, only quality projects were selected by IBA Emscher Park (Seltmann, 2007). And because of this, projects were selected from international competitions among planners and architects. Additionally, projects were assessed based on their positive impacts towards the surrounding area. According to Hall (2002), the Emscher Park was an experimental urban regeneration initiative. In delivering the regeneration projects, the IBA Emscher Park received funding from the state and federal governments (Glasson and Marshall, 2007). Funding was made available by the European Union.

It was indicated that there were three main projects for IBA Emscher Park which included: (1) Environmental recovery of water resources; (2) Recovery of landscape; and (3) Preservation and re-use of the historical heritage (IBA Emscher Park, 1995). The environmental recovery of water resources included cleaning the water system through gradual separation of different flows. Additionally, a few sewage plants were built where sewage water is directed and where possible, "water is discharged to open surfaces, rain barrels and basins and of possible the soil" (IBA Emscher Park, 1995:p1). Meanwhile, recovery of landscape included the work of improvements for bicycle paths and hiking trails along River Emscher. Such projects also involved improvements to recreational areas, public gardens and nature reserves. The work on preserving and re-using historical heritage involved restoring the existing industrial building and transforming them into "industrial culture and industrial nature" (IBA Emscher Park, 1995). Also, in delivering the programme, a rehabilitation policy was introduced in order to ensure the protection of old industrial building as well as creating public awareness about the importance of preserving the culture and identity of the Ruhr region.

Apart from restoring existing building and incorporating landscape into the area, IBA Emscher Park also encouraged environmental enhancement by improving the sewerage system of the area through redevelopment of the drainage system for the area. This effort includes the work of replacement of drainage canal, provision of underground drainage system and improvement to canal banks (M:AI, 2012b). Other than that, existing buildings were restored and reused for cultural and recreational purposes (Percy, 2003). IBA Emscher Park also encouraged landscape improvement by introducing green space within the area with the purpose of creating "green corridors known as Emscher Landscape Park" (Percy, 2003:p160) (see Figure 1.2 below which illustrates the green area for Emscher Landscape Park).

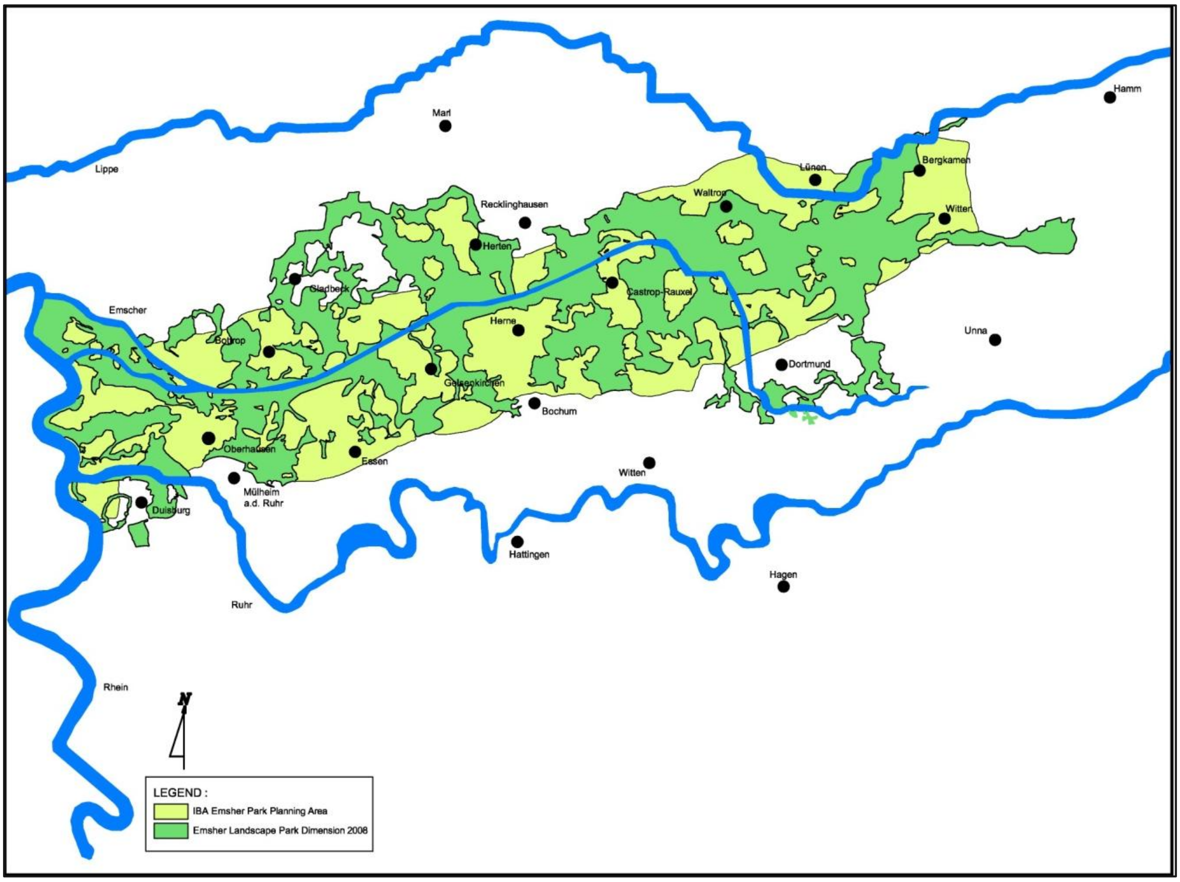

Figure 1.2: Emscher Landscape Park
(Source:TU Dortmund, 2008:p21)

Figure 1.2 above shows the IBA Emscher Park's planned area which covers 800km^2 of land while Emscher Landscape Park takes 457km^2 of the total IBA Emscher Park (M:AI, 2012a).

The projects introduced for Emscher Landscape Park involved the work of rehabilitation of existing industrial sites and buildings. It was apparent that regeneration initiative for the Ruhr region therefore focused on the environmental upgrading and social improvement. Projects included transforming brownfield sites encompassing of old buildings into visitor attractions consisting of leisure, commercial, residential and landscape developments. Abandoned industrial plants were retained and converted to leisure and recreational facilities. Besides restoring existing buildings and structures, new facilities were also provided. The abandoned gas tower in Duisburg North is now used as a diving training centre. A theatre was also introduced at the site. In Oberhausen, a former gasometer was refurbished and converted to new uses which include cultural and art activities, recreational, offices and businesses (Shaw, 2002) (see Figure 1.3). In Essen, the Zeche Zollverein, a past industrial area was converted into an art and industrial park (see Figure 1.4). The park now offers an exhibition hall. It was perceived that one of the most famous projects in the park is the Zollverein coal mine and coking plant (“Zeche und Kokerei Zollverein”) which was listed as a World Cultural Heritage site by the UNESCO in 2001 (RESCUE, 2002). In the effort to solve the issue of social inclusion, IBA introduced “self-build projects for low-income groups” and built new housing within the area, including 3000 new flats (Percy, 2003:p161).

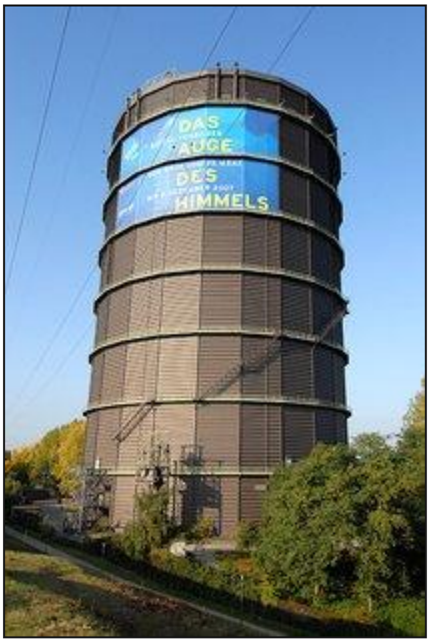

Figure 1.3: Gasometer in Emscher Landscape Park (above)
Source: M:AI (2012d)

Figure 1.4: Zollverein coal mine industrial complex in Emscher Landscape Park
Source: UNESCO(2012)

It was indicated that Emscher Landscape Park has been experiencing three development phases: the first being the IBA Emscher Park (1998-1999); the second was from 2000 to 2010; and currently named as the “3rd Decade” is from 2010 to 2020 which concentrates on rebuilding the River Emscher and provision of new landscape for the Emscher Valley ((Lethmate and Spiering, date unknown:p49). From 1998 to 1999, IBA Company became the representative (mediator) for the development of Emscher Landscape Park while the Kommunalverband Ruhrgebeit (KVR) took over the role in designing the master plan for the park (Lethmate and Spiering, date unknown). The KVR is a public service authority responsible for the Ruhr’s “urban and regional planning, urban construction, industrial settlement, public relation for the Ruhr district” (Lethmate and Spiering, date unknown:p46).

After the ten-year framework, IBA continues to develop the Emscher Landscape Park with assistance from the cities and counties in the area (Seltmann, 2007). A new company was established called “Project Ruhr” (Lethmate and Spiering, date unknown). The purpose of Project Ruhr was to carry out project management for the park as well as producing the 2010 Master Plan. It was understood that in December 2007, Project Ruhr was introduced involving participation from 35 cities and counties to promote “sustainable urban and regional development” of the whole Ruhr region (Seltmann, 2007:p1). It was discovered that this had resulted in the extension of the park area from 320km^2 to 457km^2 (Seltmann, 2007). The difference is that, currently, Emscher Landscape Park is not only focused on the Emscher region but has increased its development towards the south (heading to River Ruhr) and to the northeast (near the Ruhr metropolitan border line) (Seltmann, 2007).

In relation to Project Ruhr, the concept was designed with five major themes, namely:

- Ruhrlines: the east-west development axes;
- Ruhrcities: the quality of city centres and city districts;
- Ruhrexcellence: the development of high quality industrial and estate locations;
- Ruhrinvest: framework conditions for private investment in development areas; and
- Ruhrevents: high quality events to enhance the regions profile.

(Seltmann, 2007:p7)

According to Seltmann (2007), the idea of *Ruhrlines* is to highlight River Ruhr and the valley as a destination for tourism and leisure attractions. In 2007, Seltmann indicated that 90 projects were involved for Ruhrlines. The *Ruhrcities* in contrast targets urban renewal in the city centres and districts. For this matter, 120 projects were included as part of the programme. Meanwhile, *Ruhrexcellence* incorporates 35 projects aiming to distribute commercial and industrial activities within the region. Such projects include “Ruhrbania” in Mulheim, “Thyssen-Krupp Site” in Essen, “Arean-Park” in Gelsenkirchen, “House Aden” in Bergkamen, “Marina” in Essen and “Sports Park” in Oberhausen. The *Ruhrinvest* encourages investors to invest in the region. This involves attracting private investors to convert former industrial buildings for their own purposes such as small businesses or property development. In relation to Ruhrinvest, 100 projects were included for the purpose. Finally, the *Ruhrevents* intends to attract staging events of international status in the area. Seltmann (2007) sees 40 projects were identified for this purpose.

Emscher Landscape Park’s development, however, is still ongoing and currently concentrating more on maintaining the park. At present, the Emscher Landscape Park has 93 projects, with a total of 119 ongoing projects (M:AI, 2012a). It was noted that such projects like the Zolleverein in Essen and the Westpark in Bochum are currently under development (M:AI, 2012c).

Ever since the area has been successful regenerated, it had become an exemplar to others, including the MW for the purpose of learning from their experience. Currently, “Project Ruhr” is expected to be completed in 2014 (Danish Architecture Centre, 2012). In 2010, 180 projects were successfully delivered, while approximately 250 new projects were planned (Technical University of Darmstadt, 2010). Besides *Project Ruhr*, Emscher Landscape Park is also experiencing the changing of the *Emscher System*. Emscher System was initiated in 2006 under the “Emscher Future” masterplan aiming to channel waste water into tubes and redevelopment of a new river (from the surface along River Emscher) complete with riverbanks and trails (Seltmann, 2007). These two initiatives are headed separately by Emscher Cooperative (for Emscher System) and Association of the Ruhr Municipalities (for Emscher Landscape Park). This transformation (changing the Emscher System) will see an investment of €4.4 billion.

Conclusions

From 1988 to 1999, IBA Emscher Park has been an important organisation for the regeneration of the Ruhr region especially for Emscher. The achievements of IBA Emscher Park indicates successful urban regeneration programme of a regional scale. Throughout the IBA Emscher Park programme, the park has been experiencing almost 120 projects of various scales. The development of Emscher Landscape Park however does not stop there. Currently, redevelopment continues with *Project Ruhr* and *Emscher System*. In relation to this, it is no surprise that Emscher Landscape Park will continue to attract attention for others in learning about its experience and planning frameworks.

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