

An Analysis of Internal Structural Organisation of UK's Urban Fringe Management Initiatives and Its Roles

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The purpose of this research was to investigate and analyse the internal structural organisation of UK's urban fringe management initiatives and its roles. Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service and Thames Chase Community Forest Initiatives were investigated. The Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Initiative operates through a tiered structure consisting of the Caerphilly Mountain Joint Committee, the Officers' Working Party, and the management team. The Thames Chase Community Forest Initiative is operated through a tiered structure comprising the Thames Chase Joint Committee and the management team. Although the role of each management initiative is invested differently in certain internal organisational bodies, such as the governance body and the management body, what is common to all the urban fringe management initiatives is that the governance body within each management initiative tries to speak with one voice to bring about an effective operation process, and the management team employs a variety of devices to secure the enrolment of a variety of interest groups in its operational processes.

Key Words : Urban Fringe, Land Use Planning, Property Rights, Informal Recreation Activities, Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Initiative, Thames Chase Community Forest Initiative

1. Introduction

'Fringe', 'countryside around towns', 'city's countryside', 'inner fringe', 'rural-urban fringe', 'peri-urban fringe' and 'exurban fringe' have all been terms employed to describe the urban fringe^{1~4)}. Furthermore, numerous studies have documented the amount and rate of urban fringe land conversion and have examined and explored the pattern and process of urbanisation into the urban fringe^{5~7)}. However, the urban fringe concept is a comparatively untouched area of research, and land use management issues in the urban fringe have largely remained unconsidered. The reason is that it is difficult to define the urban fringe using a specific geographical designation in the physical planning system and the urban fringe is the

geographical manifestation of socio-economic and physical reflexive links between urban and rural areas. Furthermore, what today may be urban fringe, may tomorrow be entering its final phases as an urban area. More importantly, the urban fringe area is contested by actors who have invested both financially and conceptionally in the construction of their interests, and who seek to define these against alternative constructions of their interests. Such constructions occur not only at the personal level but also at the institutional level. For example, landowners are understandably anxious to retain their property rights because the ownership of their land is validated by the amount of its productivity, and they are often unable to separate their land from the meaning they attach to it in their lives. As a result, landowners can use reasonable force to eject trespassers who decline to leave, sue them for damages and even secure court injunctions against persistent transgressors.

In contrast, local residents enjoy rural life in a manner consistent with the rural idyll idea because they view land primarily as an amenity to be protected on account of its recreational or inherent values, a beautiful place to be, rightfully enjoyed by them. For example, Gold⁸⁾ found open space in the urban fringe provided a place where people could experience freedom, diversity, self-expression, challenge or enrichment in his research on the relationship between outdoor recreation and open space and human biological and psychological needs. Abercrombie⁹⁾ stated that the urban fringe not only served the purpose of providing a variety of outdoor pursuits but also was a means of linking the city with the countryside so that all sections of the population could benefit. Similarly, Bryant et al.²⁾ indicated that recreation in the urban fringe embraced a considerably wide range of outdoor activities which took place in a wide variety of environments and social settings.

As a result, it is clear that the conflicts surrounding the urban fringe are complex, and any physical land use planning system will encounter difficulties when seeking to resolve them.

Whilst the urban fringe has manifest land use management issues there are, nevertheless, approaches to planning and managing it in the UK, for example, Countryside Management Service Initiatives and Community Forest Initiatives. These urban fringe management initiatives build a coalition of interest groups and public and non-government organisations in the management processes in order to improve the physical, economic and social environments and facilitate the management mechanism. Hence a study is necessary to identify how public and non-government organisations and a variety of interest groups are involved in the operational processes of the urban fringe management initiatives. For this reason, this research primarily analyses the internal structural organisation of urban fringe management initiatives and its roles.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Case Study Areas

In order to investigate and analyse the internal structural organisation of urban fringe management initiatives and its roles, two urban fringe management initiatives were selected: Caerphilly Mountain Coun-

tryside Service and Thames Chase Community Forest Initiatives(See Fig. 1).

The operating area of Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Initiative includes 100 km² of countryside on the border of the three local authorities of the County of Cardiff, and Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Boroughs. This is an area essentially of farmland and forestry. For example, dairy herds and the raising of cattle for beef are important, and bulk milk collection is common. Many species have been introduced but it still maintains in parts a ground flora indicative of its ancient nature, including Wood Horsetail, Butchers Broom and Drooping Sedge. However, with regard to the increasing population of the three local authorities, access to this countryside creates environmental pressures resulting from intensive usage by horse riders, cyclists and walkers. For example, according to a Cardiff City and County Council survey¹⁰⁾ 51.2% of respondents visited this countryside, 8.1% visited this countryside on a daily basis, and 50% of visits were by foot as part of daily leisure activities.

Thames Chase Community Forest Initiative's area of operation includes a 97 km² area of greenbelt on the five local authorities of Havering, Brentwood, Thurrock, Barking and Dagenham Boroughs. This is an area essentially of farmland and forestry within which there are strict regulations on building development, and an implementation of the Green Belt policy.

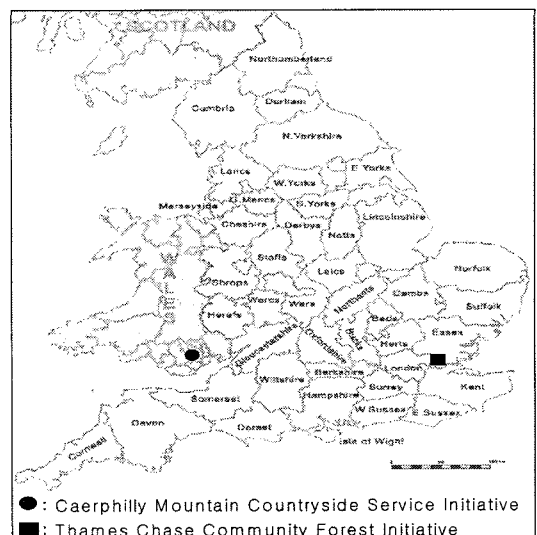


Fig. 1. Location of the Case Study Areas.

Oak is one of the main species in all of the woodlands, with varying amounts of ash and hawthorn. However, this countryside is the nearest available open countryside to a significant catchment area of London and is easily accessible by train, tube and bus¹¹). As a result, some farmers in the operation area have adopted a farming-to-quit attitude and have abandoned their farmland, producing a neglected landscape of overgrown fields, unmanaged hedges and woodland since abandoned farmland is likely to be released more quickly for development than land which is better farmed and more attractive in appearance. Moreover, the extraction of sand, gravel and clay from Thames Terraces and Dagenham has had a degrading effect on the landscape of the countryside. These mineral sites are also used as landfill sites for London's rubbish with little land being returned to productive agriculture.

2.2. Interview Method

The interview method provided the main form of data collection in this research in order to go beyond the confines of documents to ascertain, in more depth and detail, the processes involved in each of the management initiatives, and to gain an insight into the way they work. The personal interview was used instead of a postal questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were judged to be most appropriate for this research because structured interviews would not

have allowed interviewees sufficient scope to express their thoughts and feelings. Further, a structured interview is bounded by a pre-conceived schedule of possible answers, does not allow conversation to flow naturally, and does not offer interviewees the opportunity to develop ideas which may be vital to the study, and of which the interviewer may not have been previously aware. Interviews were carried out between September, 1999 and July, 2000. Interviewees were the project officer(countryside officer), project director, local authorities' officers and members of the governance body responsible for the operation of management initiatives.

3. Research Findings

3.1. Internal structural organisation of Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Initiative and its roles

In 1996, the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service (CMCS) initiative was proposed to deal with the protection of farmers' interests from the encroachment of urban development as well as meeting the recreational demands of local residents in the urban fringe. The CMCS initiative operates through a tiered structure consisting of the Caerphilly Mountain Joint Committee (CMJC), Officers' Working Party (OWP) and the management team. Fig. 2 illustrates the

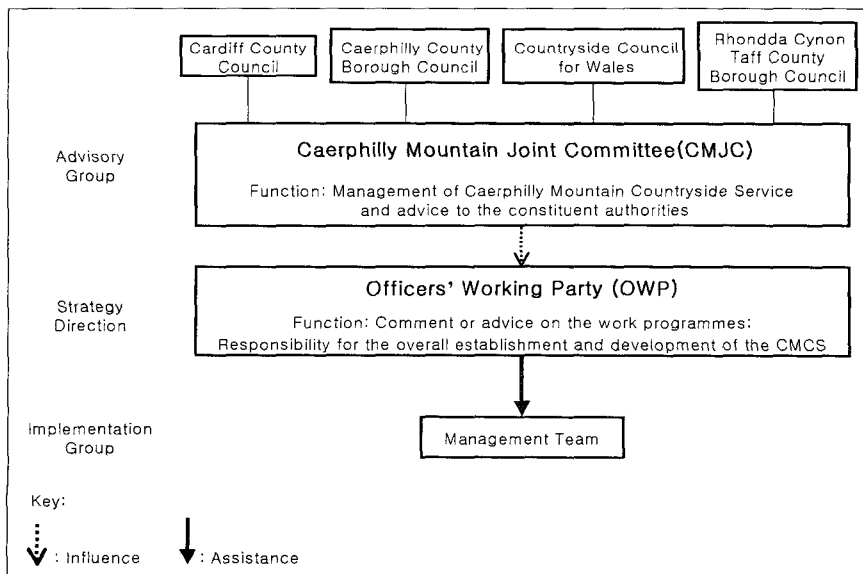


Fig. 2. Internal Structural Organisation of CMCS Initiative.

formal structure of the internal organisation of the CMCS initiative in 2000.

As Fig. 2 shows, The CMJC consists of twelve members from the three sponsoring local authorities, i.e. four councillors from each local authority and one representative from the Countryside Council for Wales. The CMJC states that the position of chairman is open for election every year and chairmanship of the Committee is rotated between the respective authorities annually. Initially, the CMJC establishes the formula for funding proportion and prepares a draft budget for each year which it submits to each of the three local authorities for approval in advance¹². Furthermore, the CMJC advises the constituent authorities, within the constraints of the approved budget, on:

1. the maintenance, administration and development of the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service initiative area and certain outreach areas as agreed upon;
2. the acquisition of land, where necessary for the carrying out of such policies, and the disposal of any land that becomes surplus to requirements;
3. the preservation and development of complementary facilities, including access to and through the countryside, by way of footpaths, bridleways and roads, and the conservation of its wildlife and amenities;
4. general management of the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service initiative area, taking into account advice from the Officers' Working Party¹³.

The CMJC is supported by the OWP, consisting of one officer from each of the three local authorities' Countryside and Landscape Section/Planning Departments, as well as the Countryside Officer. Normally, the OWP meets less than three times a year. Its purpose is to receive the Countryside Officer's monthly reports, to approve the forward work programme, and to co-ordinate the involvement of government agencies and of the different departments within the local authorities so that their activities mutually support the work of the management team. Of note, it acts as a pre-agenda setting body with responsibility for preparing the 'Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Plan' for subsequent years. The 'Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service Plan' is the management tool for focussing effort and for pro-

viding a very clear view of what the CMCS should do.

The management team of the CMCS initiative consists of four core members, the Countryside Officer, Assistant Countryside Officer and two Countryside Rangers. Table 1 illustrates the general roles and responsibilities of the members of the CMCS initiative's management team.

3.2. Internal structural organisation of Thames Chase Community Forest Initiative and its roles

In 1990, the Thames Chase Community Forest (TCCF) initiative was proposed to improve and protect the unique characteristics of the countryside landscape in the greenbelt area in the five local authorities of Havering, Brentwood, Thurrock, Barking and Dagenham Boroughs from urban developments, such as mineral extraction and inevitable urban encroachments.

The TCCF initiative is operated through a tiered structure comprising the Thames Chase Joint Committee (TCJC) and the management team. Fig. 3 illustrates the formal structure of the internal organisation of the TCCF initiative in 2000.

As Fig. 3 illustrates, the TCJC enrolls three councillors from each local authority which have a statutory responsibility for land use planning and representatives from the Country Landowners Association (CLA), National Farmers Union (NFU), Confederation of British Industry, Countryside Agency, and Forest Enterprise which have an economic interest in the management and development of that land. Some of the TCJC members owe their appointments to an existing position on a local authority committee, for example, the Environmental Services Committee and Planning Board. The enrolment of the CLA and the NFU in the TCCF initiative's operational process, through membership of the TCJC, encourages and sustains the enrolment of private landowners and farmers in the initiative's management process since farmers and private landowners are more likely to think that an initiative is worth supporting because the CLA have given it its implicit blessing by being involved in the TCJC.

The TCJC sets up the funding formula and prepares a draft budget that it submits to each of the parties for approval in advance. Furthermore, the TCJC also reviews the progress of schemes agreed to

Table 1. Roles and Responsibilities of the CMCS Initiative's Management Team

Area of Role and Responsibility	Countryside Officer	Assistant Countryside Officer	Countryside Rangers
Programme Development			
Strategic liaison			
Setting up project work and programme			
Fieldwork Survey			
The control of users and visitors in the use of specific recreation facilities			
Carrying out practical work			
Wardening and the supervision of volunteers and their training			
Monitoring management work			
Negotiating details of tasks with landowners			
Site Management Plan			
Marketing and Public Relations			
Organising activities and giving lectures			
Promotion and Publicity			
Resource and Administration			
Provision of existing Grant-aid			
Investigating and Attracting New funding Sources			
Management staff and other administrative work			

Key:

 : Primary role and responsibility  : Secondary role and responsibility

Source: Compiled from an interview with the Countryside Officer in the CMCS initiative, November, 1999; Countryside Ranger in the CMCS initiative, October, 1999

within the framework of the Thames Chase Community Forest Plan and the allocation of resources. More specifically the TCJC's role is to:

1. make executive decisions;
2. set budget priorities;
3. represent partner organisations in budget discussions;
4. recommend actions suggested by the funding partners to the management team;
5. represent Thames Chase Community Forest initiative's interests and put forward actions proposed by non-funding partners to the management team;
6. ensure community projects are delivered within the framework of the community plan;
7. set and monitor Business Plan priorities;
8. receive reports for decision and endorsement from the Project team;
9. represent Thames Chase Community Forest initiative's interests to a wider public.

10. elect a chair person.

Source: Compiled from an interview with the Project Director of Thames Chase Community Forest Initiative, October, 1999; Councillor on Brentwood Borough Council, March, 2000; Councillor on Thurrock Borough Council, March, 2000; A Planning Department Officer on Brentwood Borough Council, March, 2000.

A number of groups, such as the Planning Group and Forest Forum, have influenced the TCJC and the TCCF initiative's management team since 1994. The Thames Chase Planning Group is comprised of senior local authority planning officers and representatives of the Countryside Agency and Forest Enterprise who act as the TCCF initiative's strategic 'think tank'. The Forest Forum consists of local residents groups, special interest groups and other organisations with an active interest in the TCCF initiative's area of

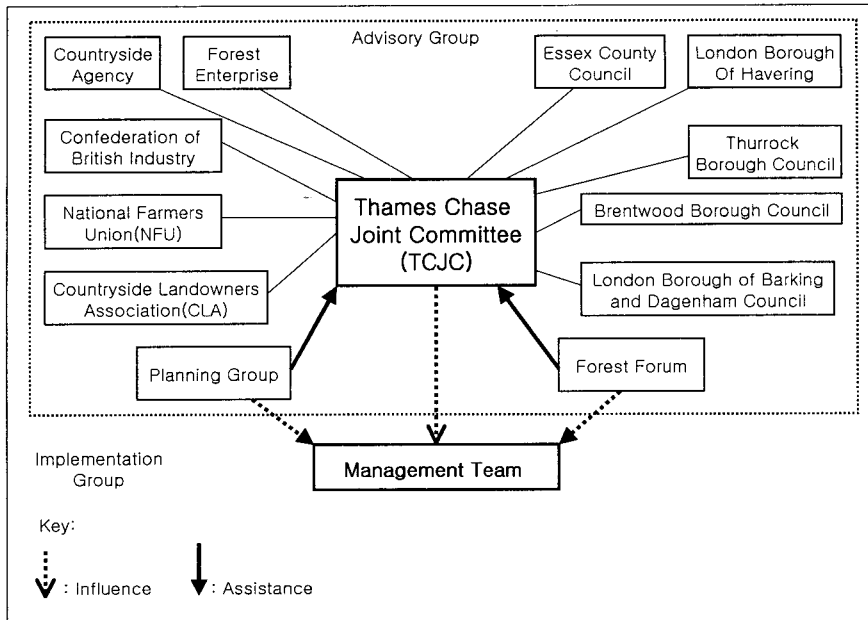


Fig. 3. Internal Structural Organisation of TCCF Initiative.

operation.

The management team consists of 4 core staff and 4 secondments. Core staff members are supported by local authorities and the Countryside Agency, namely, the Project Director, Project Co-ordinator, and part-time Project and Clerical Assistants. Secondment staff include a Community Forester from Forest Enterprise, a Community Project Officer from the Countryside Agency, a School Co-ordinator from Learning through Landscape (LTL) and the Countryside Agency, a Countryside Sports and Recreation Officer from the Sports Council. The employment of secondment staff reflects the involvement of public agencies and non-government organisations, such as the Countryside Agency, Sports Council, Forestry Enterprise and LTL into the initiative's operational process. Table 2 illustrates the general roles and responsibilities of the members of the TCCT initiative's management team.

4. Summary

The main objectives of this research were to investigate and analyse the internal structural organisation of UK's urban fringe management initiatives and its roles. Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service and Thames Chase Community Forest Initiatives were investigated. The role of each management initiative

is invested in certain internal organisational bodies, such as the governance body and management team, for example, Caerphilly Mountain Joint Committee (CMJC) and the management team in the case of Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service initiative, and Thames Chase Joint Committee (TCJC) and the management team in the case of Thames Chase Community Forest initiative.

The purpose of the governance body is to gain and maintain the interests of public and non-government organisations, and to ensure enrolment in each management initiative's operational process. For example, local authorities are enrolled into the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service initiative's operational process as members of the CMJC. This ensures that the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service initiative's work takes into account local authority strategies with regard to the countryside, and resources allocated are spent cost effectively. The TCJC illustrates the enrolment together of those organisations which have a statutory responsibility for land use planning, and those which have an economic interest in the management and development of that land. The enrolment of those organisations which have a statutory responsibility for land use planning is reflected in the TCJC membership of councillors from each local authority. The enrolment

Table 2. Roles and Responsibilities of the TCCF Initiative's Management Team

Area of Role and Responsibility	Project Director	Project Co-ordinator	Project and Clerical Assistants (P/T)	Secondment Staff
Programme Development				
Strategic liaison	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Setting up project work and programme	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Fieldwork Survey	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
The control of users and visitors in the use of specific recreation facilities	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Carrying out practical work	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Wardening and the supervision of volunteers and their training	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Monitoring management work	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Negotiating details of tasks with landowners	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Site Management Plan	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Secondary
Marketing and Public Relations				
Organising activities and giving lectures	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Promotion and Publicity	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Resource and Administration				
Provision of existing Grant-aid	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Investigating and Attracting New funding Sources	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
Management staff and other administrative work	Primary	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary

Key:

 : Primary role and responsibility  : Secondary role and responsibility

Source: Compiled from an interview with the Project Director of Thames Chase Community Forest Initiative, October, 1999; Community Forester from Forest Enterprise, July, 2000.

of those organisations, which have an economic interest in the management and development of that land is reflected in the TCJC membership of representatives from the CLA, NFU, Countryside Agency, and Forest Enterprise. The TCJC reviews the progress of schemes agreed within the framework of the Thames Chase Community Forest Plan and the allocation of resources.

However, although the governance body within each management initiative tries to speak with one voice to bring about an effective operational process, governance membership does not always reflect the views and opinions of all interested groups, such as local residents and farmers who actually live in the initiatives area of operation, because members are appointed, not elected. Accordingly, the management bodies employ a variety of devices to secure the enrolment of a variety of groups in the management

process, because the operational process of each management initiative is dependent on capturing the interests of these groups and enrolling them in the initiative's management process.

Consequently, to achieve better effective and efficient urban fringe management local councillors and representatives from public and non-government organisations should be more representative to local communities' views and needs. Moreover, better understanding and communication between local authorities' officers and management teams is essential to avoid duplication of work.

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