

role does not conflict with the goal to achieve a sustainable future by increasing the ecological balance between the city and its bioregion. This is not advocating a return to some glorious past when the town

was an appendage of the countryside simply serving the main function of marketplace: the bio-city is a vital component set in overlapping regional ecosystems.

THE URBAN PARK

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INTRODUCTION

Land use is fundamental to nature conservation, urban environmental management and sustainable development. Since cities first developed provision has been made for formal and informal open spaces, either for the privileged classes or for the mass of the people. In the United Kingdom, the rapid growth of towns and cities in the nineteenth century soon led to calls for parks to be provided for the health of factory workers. An early example, perhaps, of what we now call sustainable development, with benefits to the economy (healthier, happier and therefore more productive workers), social life (people relaxing and meeting in the parks) and the environment (as open spaces were created amongst the streets, mines and factories).

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the development of the science of ecology and the growth of the nature conservation movement. Three main phases in the development of nature conservation in Britain may be identified. First, it was almost exclusively about land use and management,

although the land concerned was rarely in towns. The National Trust was formed in 1895, and its remit included the promotion and protection of ‘places of natural beauty and historic interest for the benefit of the nation’. Most wildlife trusts came into existence to acquire and manage land: by the 1990s the nation’s forty-seven wildlife trusts owned or managed over 2500 nature reserves. Second, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, these and other organizations expanded their work to include substantial education, interpretation and advocacy programmes. This combination of conservation management and engagement with people and policy-makers put the conservation organizations in an ideal position to contribute to sustainable development. As this concept took root, they were ideally placed to demonstrate the links between the natural world, social equity and economic development, thus entering the third, and current phase.

In the 1990s the nature conservation organizations were also able to embrace and promote the new idea of ‘biodiversity’. This is defined as the variety of species,