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Countryside Recreation



This issue... 'Water Recreation'

- Coastal and Marine National Parks in Scotland • Developing Canoe Trails in Northern Ireland • Swimming in the City
- Scottish Access Rights on Inland Waterways • Canoe Access - How to get access to new stretches of water • Where Do All The Walkers Go?
- How Can Land Managers Reconcile Conservation with Recreation • An Environmentally Sustainable Visitor Centre
- Agency Profile - Scottish Executive • Response Section • News • Summary of Latest CRN Events • Forthcoming CRN Events • Publications



Countryside Recreation Network



Countryside Recreation Network

Countryside Recreation Network (CRN)

CRN is a network which:

- covers the UK and the Republic of Ireland
- gives easy access to information on countryside and related recreation matters
- reaches organisations and individuals in the public, private and voluntary sectors networks thousands of interested people

The Network helps the work of agencies and individuals in three areas:

Research:

to encourage co-operation between members in identifying and promoting the need for research related to countryside recreation, to encourage joint ventures in undertaking research, and to disseminate information about members' recreation programmes.

Liaison:

to promote information exchange relating to countryside recreation, and to foster general debate about relevant trends and issues.

Good Practice:

to share information to develop best practice through training and professional development in provision for and management of countryside recreation.

Chair: Geoff Hughes

Vice-chair: John Watkins, Countryside Council for Wales

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Visit CRN on the Internet!

See our home page at:

www.countryside recreation.org.uk

Countryside Recreation Editorial Policy

Countryside Recreation is the journal of the Countryside Recreation Network. The purpose of the journal is to act as an exchange for sharing information, ideas and practical solutions that promotes best policy and practice in countryside recreation across the UK and Ireland. Countryside Recreation is free and is published three times a year. We welcome articles and letters from all readers. The editorial policy for the journal is to provide a platform for a fair and honest discussion on issues relating countryside recreation.

Articles will be accepted from anyone from the Network organisations and other organisations and individuals who wish to share their knowledge, research findings, practical experiences or promote policies and strategies in the provision and management of access, recreation, sport and active tourism.

The Journal is not a lobbying or campaigning platform. We will not accept articles that are defamatory and potentially libellous. Rights of reply will be offered when organisations' actions are brought into question.

The Response section is used to enable comments to be made on specific articles. Articles offered for this section may be edited for length.

The journal is managed by the CRN Network Manager and guided by an editorial panel made up of representatives from organisations in the Network. The editorial panel and CRN Network Manager reserve the right to reject articles; and curtail discussion on specific subjects if the panel feels that the issues have been appropriately and satisfactorily dealt with. We will always discuss with authors the reason for rejecting articles.

The CRN Network Manager will commission articles related to the specific themes that are part of each journal. We will also accept articles on a range of subjects for each issue but they must be related to the business of the Network members' remits.

The Summer journal will be based on the theme of 'Consuming the Countryside'.

If you would like to submit an article or a news item for consideration by the Editorial Board, please email the document in word format to the Network Manager (cm@shu.ac.uk).

Please note the following submission deadline dates:

Articles for editorial board consideration to be submitted by 20th April 2007.

Commissioned articles to be submitted by 18th May 2007.

News items to be submitted by 8th June 2007,

Chair of Editorial Panel: Jo Burgon, The National Trust



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Countryside Recreation goes out to over 2900 individuals working in the field of countryside recreation, tourism and leisure. If you would like to have a flier or advert distributed with the journal, please contact the Network Manager for further details and pricing policy.

Editorial

Glenn Millar, British Waterways

Welcome to the Spring 2007 issue of the CRN Journal. The main theme of this issue is water recreation, with a particular focus on canoeing, coastal and marine national parks and swimming in cities.

Graham Neville and Ashleigh Tooth outline the challenges in developing coastal and marine National Parks and the approach being taken in Scotland, which has led to the identification of five areas as strong candidates for designation. Research undertaken in conjunction with the designation process emphasises the strong links between recreational activity and the marine environment. However the paucity of research in this important sector is emphasised.

The articles by Roger Goulding and Mike Dales outline the contrasting approaches being taken in England and Scotland respectively to open up more access to rivers for canoeing. In England the way forward is seen to be through voluntary agreements. Roger Goulding discusses the conclusions of pilot work on four rivers to secure voluntary access agreements, although an alternative vision of access, based on statutory rights, is put forward in the response section by Stuart Fisher of Paddlers International. In Scotland such a statutory approach has existed since 2003, based on rights and responsibilities. Mike Dales explains how access opportunities are being developed and how responsible attitudes and behaviour is being promoted. Matt Peach, in his article on the development of canoe trails in Northern Ireland, outlines a positive approach to developing canoeing and the associated economic benefits that arise. By encouraging canoeists to follow particular routes, environmental damage can be minimised, while the opportunity can be taken to promote responsible canoeing.

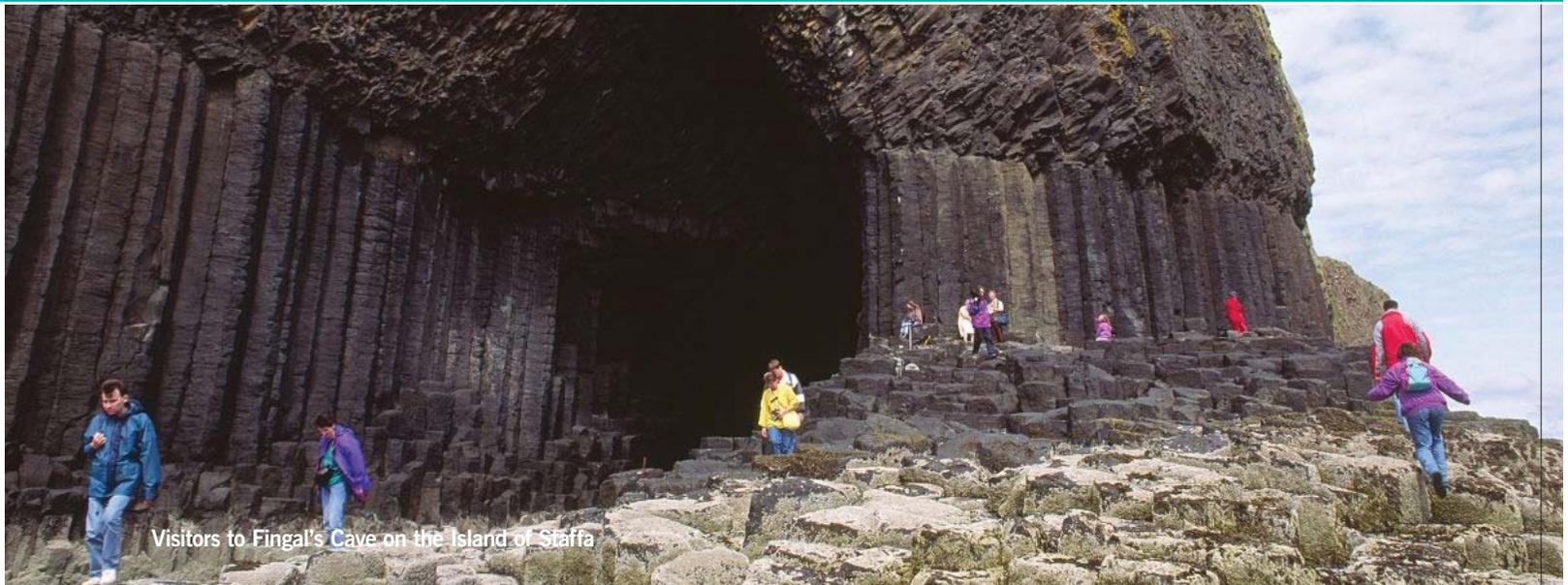
Swimming in waters such as rivers and canals is often actively discouraged for safety reasons. However Terry Eakin explains the delights of outdoor swimming in Winter (brrrrr!) and shows that opportunities exist for swimming in safe outdoor environments even within our largest cities.

This issue is rounded off by a few of articles of more general interest. Nic Bullivant describes a new approach to visitor monitoring, using satellite tracking to plot the routes people take across the wide open spaces of the Cairngorms. The approach shows that people tend to keep to recognised routes and don't wander off into the trackless wastes. It would be interesting to see if a similar situation holds in other areas, particularly in moorlands opened up by the access legislation in England and Wales. Then Rachel Datlen describes the creation of a sustainable visitor centre in Worcestershire. Of particular interest is the process to select catering tenants to meet the ethical standards set by the County Council. Finally Martin Fitton and Emma Stevens explain the benefits of trans-national working to develop new techniques for managing the relationship between recreation and nature conservation in forests.

Glenn Millar
British Waterways

Coastal and Marine National Parks in Scotland: A Recreational Perspective

Graham Neville and Ashleigh Tooth, Scottish Natural Heritage



Visitors to Fingal's Cave on the Island of Staffa

Introduction

In June 2005, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) was asked by the Scottish Executive Minister for the Environment and Rural Affairs to provide advice on the development of coastal and marine National Parks in Scotland. This paper will outline the process SNH has undergone to develop our advice to Ministers, the primary research we undertook to support our advice, and future steps.

Background

Scotland has nearly one-tenth of Europe's coastline: it has a world-class coastal and marine environment. As one of a range of measures proposed by the Scottish Executive to manage our coasts and seas, a National Park could showcase, enhance and protect some of the most valued wildlife and landscapes, and promote sustainable development in these areas.

National Parks in Scotland have four aims¹:

- conserve and enhance the natural and cultural

- heritage of the area;
- promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area;
- promote the sustainable social and economic development of the area's communities.

The integrated purpose of these aims distinguishes Scotland's National Parks from the original purposes of most others throughout the world, but ensures the conservation of the natural heritage by ensuring that there is a long-term commitment to the proper care of the Park's special qualities. As with our two National Parks on Land – Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and the Cairngorms, these aims are equally applicable to the coastal and marine environment. At the same time, there are some differences which SNH considered carefully during the development of our advice. Of key importance is the fact that the physical nature of the marine environment means that boundaries are often less easy to draw. Natural processes, habitats, and marine use are dynamic and difficult to map – a lesson learned during research into the recreational activities undertaken on our coastal and marine resource. Pressures on the coastal and marine resource, from shipping, fishing, aquaculture, oil and gas production, renewable energy development, military use and active recreational pursuits

have increased. A National Park must address these pressures whilst promoting the sustainable development of the area and its economic resources.

Providing advice on coastal and marine recreational activities: Process

A three-stage assessment process was undertaken by SNH in order to determine which areas of Scotland's coast would be most suitable for Ministerial designation as a Coastal and Marine National Park. It is important to stress that the development of SNH's advice to Ministers involved a process of stakeholder engagement, but it was not itself based on a formal consultation. This separate process has recently been led by the Scottish Executive:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Countryside/16131/Marine-National-Park>

Stage One of the process involved a strategic assessment of all of Scotland's coastal and marine environment in terms of its importance for the natural heritage, historic environment and importance for enjoyment and recreation. Sixteen geographical divisions were created based on a previous analysis of coastal seascapes. From a recreational perspective, this stage required the consideration of the relative importance of each area for a diverse range of coastal and marine recreational activities - from coastal walking, climbing and bouldering, to diving, angling, sailing, canoeing and other active watersports.

Staff involved in this stage used their own broad experience of the coast and of the types of recreational activities carried out, and were able to quickly identify key sites in each area for a range of activities.

Stage Two of the process was particularly concerned with the generation of more specific geographic proposals, focusing on the legislative requirement for any National Park to be made of an area with a coherent and collective identity, both from a heritage and environmental perspective. Stakeholders (made up of scientists, area and policy staff from within SNH and representatives from other relevant organisations) made expert judgements based on questions relating to the distinctive character of the area, the presence (or not) of a coherent identity, and whether the area could realistically be managed by a single Authority. Two national seminars also provided further information and views from a range of other interested parties.

From this second stage, a long-list of ten indicative areas emerged, as illustrated in *Map 1*. These were accompanied by detailed area profiles, assembled from the collective experience of key stakeholders and expert and local staff.

Stage Three of the development of our advice made use of SNH expertise and experience to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the case for National Park status in each of the ten long-listed areas identified at stage two. At this stage,

attention focused on the ability of a National Park to bring 'added value' to the area, its accessibility, and social and economic benefit. There were eleven key criteria set for this judgement, scored by the expert and stakeholder group for each of the areas as High, Medium or Low. These criteria were as outlined in *Table 1* below.

What is the distinctive character of the area?	1. Landscape character, seascape and historic landuse and marine assessments 2. Historical and artistic associations 3. Local traditions and language
Does the area have a coherent identity?	4. 'Working' coastal and sea units e.g. Firths and larger scale marine processes 5. Administrative boundaries, community links or 'building blocks' 6. Existing initiatives bringing together a range of partners in the area
Can the area be effectively managed by a single Park authority?	7. Common range of activities and pressures throughout the area 8. Transport links within area 9. Scale of area proposed

Table 1

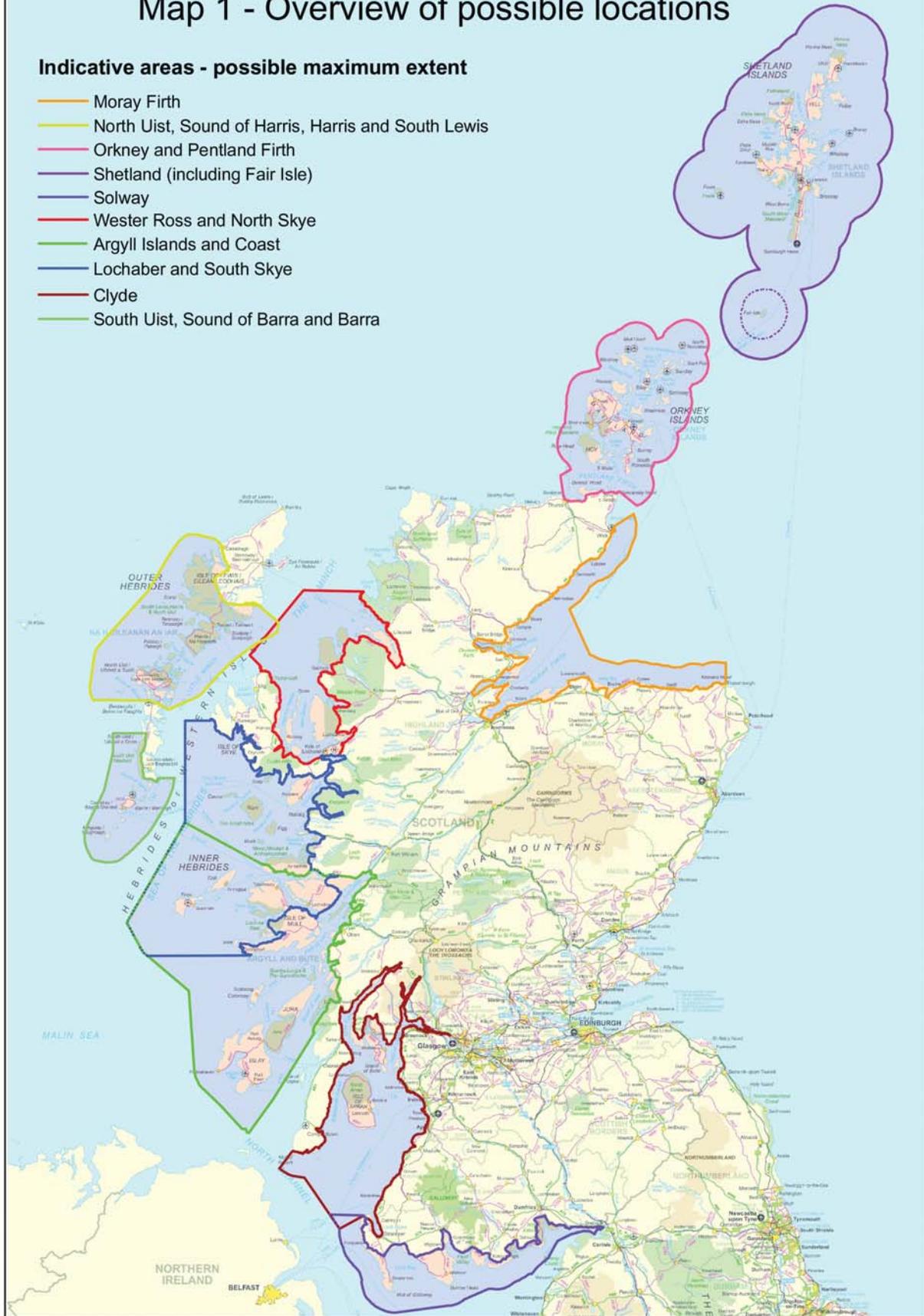
This process led to the development of SNH's advice and the preparation of specific proposals. These proposals are the first steps in the much longer process required to establish a Coastal and Marine National Park in Scotland. The Scottish Ministers will consider options for boundaries, powers and governance. SNH made recommendations based on a shortlist identifying the following areas as the five strongest candidates:

- The Solway Firth;
- Argyll Islands and Coast;
- Lochaber and South Skye coast (including Ardnamurchan and the Small Isles);
- North Skye coast and Wester Ross; and
- North Uist, Sound of Harris, Harris and South

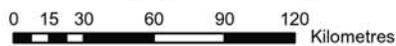
Map 1 - Overview of possible locations

Indicative areas - possible maximum extent

- Moray Firth
- North Uist, Sound of Harris, Harris and South Lewis
- Orkney and Pentland Firth
- Shetland (including Fair Isle)
- Solway
- Wester Ross and North Skye
- Argyll Islands and Coast
- Lochaber and South Skye
- Clyde
- South Uist, Sound of Barra and Barra



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Providing advice on coastal and marine recreational activity: Research

Throughout the process outlined above, and as part of an ongoing coastal and marine recreation research action plan, some research work into participation in coastal and marine recreation was undertaken. In 2005 SNH commissioned Land Use Consultants to carry out this first preliminary research. The six month project comprised three distinct stages. Stage one involved a data gathering exercise, collating available information on sites, participation rates and trends. From a wide web-search and desk study it became obvious that there was a dearth of research into marine and coastal recreation activities in Scotland and that much of the information currently available was mainly anecdotal.

Stage two of the project sought to capture information that would help us identify important recreation sites and give an idea of numbers of people using them. Much of this data was gleaned from guidebooks and websites. Using this approach, LUC were able to plot important sites for activities such as sea kayaking, kiting and scuba-diving. In total some seven activities were examined although it was recognised that this methodology had significant limitations. Viewing the recorded sites on one map allowed SNH to gain a snapshot view of some of the most intensively used areas of our coastline and to use these activity patterns to inform its assessment of the ten indicative areas.

The final stage of this initial research used a web-based survey to collect and assess user information. The online questionnaire was contained within its own website and tried to capture data on specialist recreational activities (those requiring expensive equipment, or considerable intent and pre-planning) such as diving, sailing or walking more than five miles. Web-users were also invited to record their informal coastal and marine activities to help SNH assess levels of participation and demand for coastal and marine recreation. The site gave visitors access to maps allowing them to plot exactly where they go with their activities. It is worth noting that a limitation of this process was that some systems could not support the map plug-in. Over a period of a month, some 1500 entries were logged but only 500 surveys were actually completed. Although limited, this feedback provided some interesting findings:-

- People are engaged in a wide range of informal and more specialist recreation activities. The most popular specialist activities are walking (more than five miles), sea fishing, shoreline fishing, sailing, kayaking and canoeing, and wildlife and bird watching.
- The quality of the coastal environment is one of the most important factors attracting people to the Scottish coast and influencing their choice of location.
- Around 87% of all reported visits to the coast were day trips. Above average proportions of short-breaks or

weekend visits were made by horse-riders, sea and shoreline anglers, and divers and snorkellers. Above average numbers of longer break visits were made by people who were cycling, metal detecting and sailing.

- The survey found the reported spending on specialist activities averaged at around £724 per annum, though amounts varied significantly between activities.
- Just over half of respondents reported being aware of a relevant code of conduct whilst 40% were members of a club or association.

Future steps

SNH has opted not to repeat the online survey approach for this subject. Primary reasons for this are the fact that participants had been self-selecting and so a representative sample was impossible to achieve, and access to a computer limited the number of possible responses. Furthermore, the survey was open to multiple submissions and the survey required extensive promotion to improve the completed sample size. However the research did provide SNH with some useful data to support the information used in the assessment process outlined above, but did highlight the paucity of research on marine and coastal recreation in Scotland.

Recently SNH has returned to the mapping data and is working to augment its internal GIS system. By the summer of 2007 SNH expects to have mapped a wide range of recreational data about marinas, harbours, sailing clubs, dive sites, caves, beaches, surf sites and others. This is a first major step in understanding and recording our favourite sites for specialist and informal activities on Scotland's coasts and in our seas. We expect this mapping work to improve our planning capabilities when we support others in managing the marine resource whether within or without our first marine and coastal national park.

Links:

Scottish Executive consultation:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Environment/Countryside/16131/Marine-National-Park>

SNH advice to ministers:

<http://www.snh.org.uk/strategy/CMNP/sr-adnp01advice.asp>

References

¹ National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, Section 1.

All photographs credited to Scottish Natural Heritage

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Canoe Access - How to get access to new stretches of water

Roger Goulding, Environment Agency



Public rights of navigation exist on 4,700km of major river and canals in England and Wales according to the Government commissioned report "Water-Based Sport and Recreation - the facts" (produced by the University of Brighton and published in December 2001).

One of the report's conclusions was that there are imbalances between demand and supply across regions, with 'hotspots' of high demand - for white water and touring routes for example. Also, the economic and social benefits of canoeing can be significant to a region. To increase participation and maximise these benefits, new and sustainable opportunities are needed.

The Mersey, Teme, Waveney and Wear were selected as part of an initial feasibility study undertaken by the Countryside Agency to establish whether it would be possible to provide additional access to rivers via voluntary agreement. These four rivers were selected across England as they provided opportunities to test provision under different conditions, in urban, rural and socially deprived areas, where there were high environmental constraints or important fish populations.

This initial study, which was carried out by University of Brighton, concluded that additional access could be provided but that more advice and guidance was needed.

In 2004, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) asked the Environment Agency to go one stage further with these four rivers and to test whether voluntary canoe access agreements could be secured.

The main findings of this second study were:

- Voluntary access agreements can work. The Environment Agency secured more than 70 kilometres (43 miles) of canoe access on the four pilot rivers.
- Landowners supported this approach - 396 of 400 landowners contacted during the study were willing to consider voluntary arrangements. Some were also prepared to dedicate land for public access under section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW).
- Agreements can increase access to water in areas where it is most needed.

What are the benefits of these agreements?

For all:

- Canoeing is managed and fits in with, rather than

disrupts, other activities such as fishing or boating and everyone is clear about their rights and responsibilities.

- Opening up rivers can spark regeneration and boost local economies.



For canoeists:

- Greater opportunities for people to go canoeing
- A chance to paddle new sections of river
- Improved facilities and better maintained routes - with formal agreements in place the pilot studies show that local organisations can be encouraged to help develop safe access points and provide links with other local facilities such as parking, showers, boat hire and camping. This "added value" encourages participation.

For landowners:

- More certainty about where, when and who may be using their water
- Reduced potential for trespass if agreed access points are respected
- Improved confidence that health and safety issues will be dealt with by others, so that the burden of liability or duty of care is not increased on their part.
- Legal clarity on their role

For other interests:

- Knowing when and where canoeists will be using the water
- Increased confidence that canoeists will be aware of habitat issues - the new agreements provide canoeists with expert guidance on how to minimise their impact on the environment.

- An ability to promote waters that are assessable and supported by codes of conduct to ensure responsible use.
- An opportunity for other recreational interests to work with canoeists to agree shared use whilst respecting each other's activities and the environment.

Highlights

Waveney

Over 33 new kilometres of river access were opened up on the River Waveney, largely due to the efforts of the local British Canoe Union officer. He generated widespread trust and confidence, promising as far as he could to deal with any unauthorised use of sections of the river not subject to the agreement. Many of the restrictions suggested in the early stages of the negotiations were relaxed as he built a sound rapport with all the parties involved. There is little doubt that if a similar level of support and positive involvement had been experienced on other pilot rivers, far more could have been achieved.

Mersey

On the Mersey, canoeists were broadly supportive, and although they may not have championed the development of the route with other stakeholders, they provided essential advice on their requirements around access points and the scale of hazards associated with a number of significant weirs along the route.

Due to the urban context, the pro-active involvement of local authorities (particularly Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council), public utilities and community leisure facilities were key in resolving many of the access and health and safety issues.

A number of landowners used section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act for the first time to dedicate access for unpowered craft over the riverbed and banks on some sections of the route.

On other rivers where canoeing representatives were less keen to engage positively in the development of the agreements the Environment Agency worked with community organisations, local authorities and land-owning interests to determine terms and conditions under which use would be permitted.

Wear and Teme

On the Wear and Teme there was uncertainty as to whether users would respect the terms and conditions of the agreements developed. Even so, on both rivers limited trial arrangements were agreed in the hope that if it could be demonstrated that such agreements could be respected and adhered to, further consideration could be given to making them more permanent or extending them.



Conclusions

The actual access agreements that have been put in place as a result of the second study did not cost much but they did require time and good leadership, which local canoe clubs often have. They also showed that hard work and patience is often rewarded. The Environment Agency invested a lot of time on the four pilot rivers and made significant headway.

However, if more is to be achieved, particularly where existing arrangements are being reviewed or where growing number of new opportunities across England & Wales are now being offered, positive engagement by all parties is needed. This may require more realistic expectations over the extent of access, particularly in areas of new opportunities. There is also a need for a commitment to respect wildlife, heritage features, the concerns of land-owning interests and greater respect between the different users of water space.

This initiative has shown that local agreements provide a focus for developing opportunities to:

- widen participation
- deal with health and safety concerns
- encourage local investment in developing facilities that will deliver a broad range of local social and economic benefits.

Fundamentally it is the delivery of these benefits that were key in positively influencing most landowners to consider the merits of access against their concerns.

Notes

The summary report is available at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/recreation/345720/1467794/?lang=e and the full report is available from <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/chelsea/newsevents/canoeaccess.htm?lang=e>. The findings of the report were presented to Barry Gardiner, Minister for Landscape, Biodiversity and Rural Affairs and Richard Caborn, Minister for Sport on the 16th October, 2006 on the Waveney in Suffolk.

The Environment Agency's involvement and interest will

continue and, where possible, they will try and provide groups and organisations with guidance and support in developing new voluntary access agreements.

As part of the project the Environment Agency have developed guidance on how to negotiate voluntary agreements. This 'toolkit' that contains model terms and conditions that can be applied to many situations, is available on their website:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/recreation.

Their aim over the next five years is to increase opportunities for more people to enjoy and take part in water-related activities. Some 250 million leisure trips are made to water venues each year, with a combined spend of £2.5 billion. In the following five years it is hoped that an extra two million people will take part in water-related activities. This would be great news for the nation's fitness figures and regeneration.

To help develop opportunities for people to participate in water-related sport and recreation the Environment Agency have been asked by Defra to explore the benefits of providing a regional focus for future provision. Initially this strategic planning approach will be piloted over the next 12-months in two English regions, the South West and East of England. As a separate project the Environment Agency has also been asked to develop a similar initiative in Wales.

Across all of these areas, they aim to establish and prioritise future water-related sport and recreational needs, identifying sustainable and responsible approaches for better provision and management.

This information will help guide decision-makers, such as local authorities, planners and governing bodies to take an informed view when they come to improve or develop new sport and leisure opportunities. It may also assist funding bodies in deciding where funding for new or improved facilities may bring the best social and economic benefits.

Photographic References

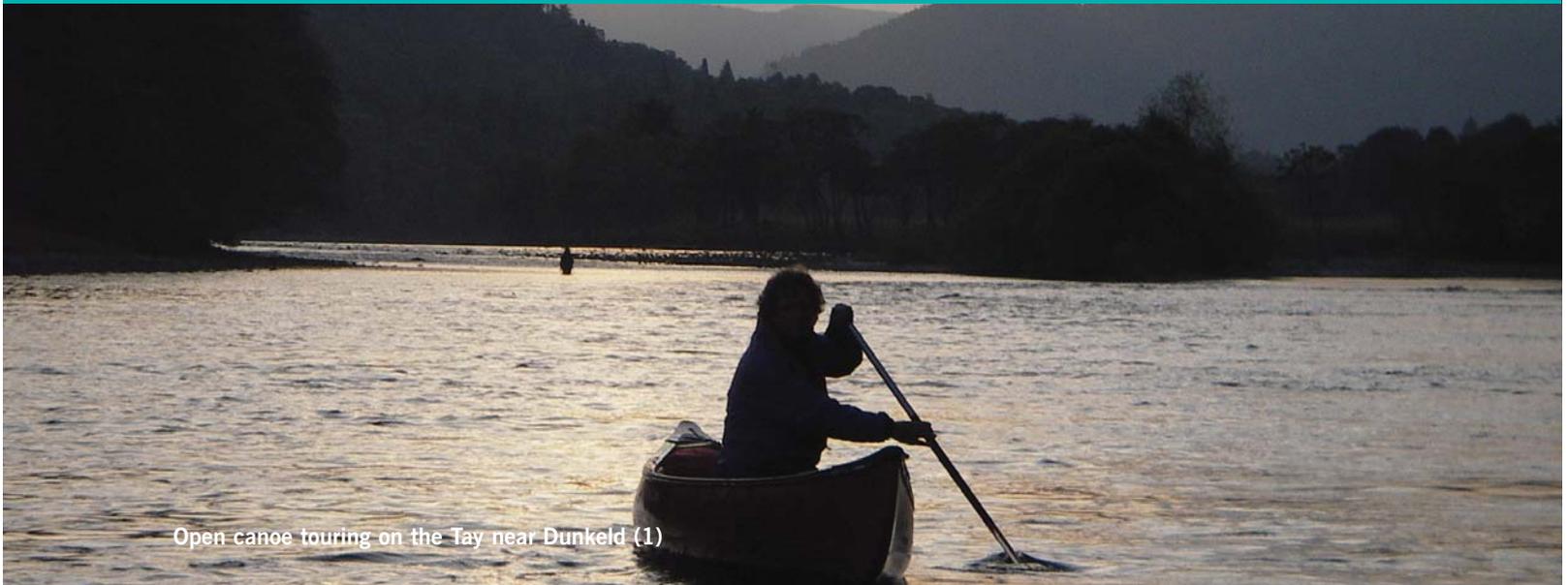
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Scottish Access Rights on Inland Water A Box Ticked or a Long Term Commitment

Mike Dales, Scottish Canoe Association



Open canoe touring on the Tay near Dunkeld (1)

Introduction

During the late nineties as the debate about access legislation for Scotland gathered momentum Scottish Natural Heritage brought at least two speakers over from Norway to explain their version of statutory access rights known as Allemansretten. A translation of Allemansretten into English would be "All men's rights".

The message from these Norwegian speakers was that after 50 years their access laws worked for everyone, and nobody (recreationist, land manager and agency staff) would change anything. They had occasional problems, but they worked to resolve them within the bounds of the law and, we were informed, an understanding of Allemansretten was something every Norwegian child had from a very early age.

The Norwegian system is based on a presumption in favour of access with an emphasis on responsibility and education. The subsequent legislation that was passed by the Scottish

Parliament in 2003 followed that basic concept, so the lessons learned from our Norwegian speakers were of immense value and had a significant impact on the thinking of so many people involved in the Scottish debate at the time.

A Modern Statutory Right of Access for Scotland

After the seemingly endless debate on access laws in Scotland the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, accompanied by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, finally came into force on 9th February 2005. Whilst it could be claimed that the legislation has not been an overnight success in making every visitor to the countryside a well educated follower of every code of conduct, it is also true that not every, now illegal, "Keep Out" sign has been removed. However, the point is that the passing of the legislation has enabled us to move on from the petty arguments about whether or not we have a right to take access for our recreation, to a far more constructive one of how we work with a modern statutory right to achieve benefits for the whole of Scottish society. The overnight miracle was never a realistic aim, but a Norwegian type position of being 50 years into an access system and having a situation where it works and nobody would want to change it is a very good aim for Scotland to have. This legislation should be seen as a long term means of bringing the public back into touch with their country and encouraging land managing and recreational interests to work together for the benefit of the nation as a whole.



SCA sign on the River Blackwater

During the passage of the Bill through Parliament those of us working in access occasionally dared to cast our minds forward far enough to "implementation". Well, we are now in 2007 and the implementation process is in full swing. New path networks are springing up wherever you look, core path planning is happening in every local and national park authority area, and educational initiatives are being targeted at dog walkers, winter mountaineers, arable farmers and every other group you can think of. Scotland has only had its new access system for two years, but we are all learning to use it, and we are moving on from the lengthy debate that was necessary to bring us to where we are today. Whereas at one time we hardly dared to look too far forward, now we hardly have time to think back to the old system.

Inland Water in the Act

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act is very different to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act in England and Wales. There is insufficient space here to go into all of those differences, but the one that is relevant to this article is that the Scottish legislation includes inland water within the statutory rights. Canoeing and other forms of non-motorised activities are treated the same way as land based activities such as walking, climbing, cycling and horse riding. Essentially, the presumption in favour of access treats land and water the same.

My own role in the Access field is via my full-time position as Access and Environment Officer with the Scottish Canoe Association (SCA), a remit which is part-funded by Scottish Natural Heritage. Part of that role is to represent the water-sports interest via the places the SCA holds on the National Access Forum and the Paths for All Partnership. Another

vital aspect of my work is to recruit and coordinate a network of volunteers who sit on Local Access Forums across Scotland. The National Access Forum, Local Access Forums and Paths for All Partnership demonstrate the scale of the structure of access management and delivery in Scotland and they all provide important means of exchanging ideas and building relationships across the various sectors. Canoeing and the other watersports are regarded as legitimate members of the access community in Scotland and those who take their recreation on water are able to share and enjoy the same benefits from the new legislation that access takers on land enjoy.

Many of the existing problems faced by canoeists in Scotland were experienced by white water paddlers seeking access to moving water. Whilst many rivers were freely available without statutory rights, others were not, and it is these existing access problems that we are now able to work on with the involvement of the access authorities to seek to resolve. Every access authority (Local Authority or National Park Authority) employs at least one Access Officer, and they, with the assistance of their Local Access Forum if necessary, are now able to play a vital role in resolving access disputes. Compare this to the situation fifteen years ago when local authorities, if they employed anyone at all to deal with access, were reluctant to become involved in any issue beyond a right of way dispute.

If the statutory rights are helping to resolve niggly problems on some rivers, on flat water they are opening up water that was previously denied to the public by a combination of bylaws and an anti-access attitude. Some of our lochs that act as reservoirs had bylaws banning public use of the water for swimming or boating, on the basis that it was the water supply for one of our cities, yet these lochs would often be full of fishing boats with outboard motors. Such bylaws are now recognised as blatant means of restricting access under some other guise, so the Land Reform Act stipulated that any bylaws containing access restrictions had to be reviewed within two years of the introduction of the Act. As a result of this many bylaws have been dissolved now and one of the outcomes is an increase in opportunities for flat water access for canoeing and other watersports.

The statutory rights are providing benefits way beyond resolving a few disputes and opening up some reservoirs. The political commitment to access in Scotland is leading to fairly significant investment in access facilities and as a result of this there is a great deal of work going into providing the infrastructure that makes taking access easier and more enjoyable for all areas of society.

Not only are canoeing, rowing and sailing Olympic sports, but they are ones in which we already win medals. But access to water in Scotland is not just about providing facilities for top class athletes. It is also about providing facilities for future champions and for the millions who will never compete, but who just want to take exercise, relax in

the outdoors and connect with their own local landscapes. Better car parks and informative signage are important at all of these levels. The provision of such facilities is being encouraged by the post Land Reform commitment to access and evidence of this elevation up the political agenda is all around, and being noticed on the sides of rivers and lochs as well as in the hills and beside old railway lines.

Not All Plain Sailing

A word of caution should be sounded at this point however. It is unfortunate that a checker board pattern appears to be emerging across Scotland of local authorities that are spending their non-ring-fenced access money from the Scottish Executive on access, whilst evidence suggests others are diverting these funds into other areas of authority funding. Just when much welcome funds are being earmarked for access spending, a policy against ring-fencing threatens to leave certain areas of Scotland short of access opportunities and facilities. This could have a significant impact on the people who live in those areas, as well as on visitors from outside the authority area.

Another way in which a checker board pattern is emerging is in access authorities' willingness to challenge a landowner who transgresses their obligations under the new Act. Whilst some local authorities are prepared to serve Section 14(2) Orders requiring an owner to remove a barrier to access, others seem to lack the political will to enforce the law for one reason or another. Not surprisingly, it is the authorities who are spending their access money on access and challenging rogue owners that are delivering the best access opportunities for their residents and visitors alike.



Open canoe touring on the Tay near Dunkeld (2)

More Benefits

The benefits of including inland water access in the new rights are at times less apparent, but nevertheless incredibly important. Because canoeists are now indisputable and legitimate users of the rivers, the SCA has been included in the highly influential discussions about preventing the *Gyrodactylus salaris* (Gs) salmon parasite getting into the UK. The SCA is taking this issue very seriously and we have detailed advice for canoeists, especially those travelling overseas, on our website. Had we been disputed users of the rivers without a clear right, and perhaps in conflict with other river users, then we would probably have been excluded from these discussions and therefore unable to appreciate the scale of the issue and incapable of putting out relevant advice. Instead, we have that clear right now and are determined to work with our fellow users of the rivers to do all we can to keep this terrible parasite out of this country, for the sake of everyone who gains their livelihood from Scotland's rivers or who simply gains their enjoyment from them.

Part of Scotland's new access arrangements involves access authorities in developing Core Path Networks and an issue that we are currently grappling with is "what is a core path on water?" Access authorities are in their core path planning phase and coming up with planned networks of paths on land, but those networks can, and we would say should, include water. The SCA is working with access practitioners in access authorities and the agencies to provide better advice in terms of how to incorporate water in core path networks. We feel that a number of our longer rivers, like the Tay and Spey for instance, could be included in core path networks. The rise in popularity of open canoe touring in particular is leading to increasing demand for a form of long distance routes on water and for the availability of information and facilities. The work carried out by Matt Peach and others on the canoe trails of Loch Erne in Northern Ireland provides an excellent model to emulate in terms of the work on the ground and provision of information.

Core path planning could also be used to secure extra resources for short but important stretches of rivers and lochs, or for providing facilities at a particularly popular watersports site. There is also the opportunity for adopting the whole river corridor into the core path plan, thereby treating the river and riverside paths as being important for the area's access provision. With many path networks based on circular routes designed to bring the walker back to the place where they parked in order to spend their cash there, it is necessary to have some paths that enable you to walk from one town or village to another, even if walkers spend their money there afterwards. It's a two way exercise and others will walk in the opposite direction, so it's nothing to be afraid of. Rivers tend to flow from one settlement to another anyway, so riverside walks are an ideal means of

developing linear, rather than circular walks.

So far I have concentrated on the provision of access opportunities and facilities, but the SCA is devoting a lot of resources to increasing responsible attitudes and behaviour through education. We produced a "Paddlers' Access Code" leaflet in 2006, which is also available on our website (click on Access & Environment) and we are currently working with the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA) Access Officer to produce a joint Best Practice Guidance note for helping all parties to share the water. We are also in the final stages of producing access guidelines for organisers of canoeing events and we have worked with the Paths for All Partnership to deliver a "Watersports Access" training course for access practitioners.



Pre-Land Reform sign now outlawed in Scotland

To the Future – A 50 Year Vision

This article hopefully encapsulates a feeling for the work that is being carried out in Scotland, as well as describing the benefits of including inland water in our statutory access rights and therefore enabling activities like canoeing to play a full part in the access community. The intention has not been to make it sound as if everything has worked the moment the law changed. That has not happened, nor was it likely to, but the Scottish experience has demonstrated that the voluntary principle does not work when it comes to access. Our wide ranging access legislation has set us on a course to deliver massive benefits for the people of Scotland way into the future and by the time we have had this legislation for 50 years I believe that, like those Norwegian speakers, we will be saying that it works for Scotland and nobody would want to change it. Indeed, many people believe that Scotland now stands alongside Norway in having the best access legislation in Europe.

The biggest danger in the meantime is that politicians hear good reports, claim they have ticked the access box and give themselves a pat on the back. Many people wish to congratulate the politicians that delivered this legislation, but the message to them is that they have to make a long term commitment to access funding, and they need to stay the course and ensure the legislation is given their ongoing

support. Access practitioners, assisted by voluntary help around the country, can deliver if the Scottish Executive remains focused on the benefits to the nation's health and economy, plus the sense of pride in our country and increase in public confidence in the countryside that investment in access provision can deliver.

A final thought worth considering is that our new legislation is much easier to understand than what went before it. It is therefore easier to teach. The greater involvement of the educational sector in conveying the message of responsible access is vital in achieving that other Norwegian goal of learning about your nation's access traditions at a very early age. Outdoor Education, Outdoor Education, Outdoor Education.

Photographic References

Open canoe touring on the Tay (1) credited to Mike Dales
SCA sign on the River Blackwater credited to Mike Dales
Open canoe touring on the Tay (2) credited to Dave Lee
Pre-Land Reform sign credited to Scottish Natural Heritage
Whitewater paddler on the River Braan credited to Mike Dales

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Whitewater paddler on the River Braan near Dunkeld

Developing Canoe Trails in Northern Ireland

Matt Peach, Countryside Access and Activities Network (NI)



Background

Northern Ireland's (NI) extensive natural resource base already provides excellent opportunities for all levels of ability and for all canoe disciplines including white water kayaking, placid water canoeing, sea kayaking, placid water kayaking and kayak surfing (Jonny Bingham, kayak surfing world champion is from NI).

A recent audit has shown that there are currently 237 sites across the Province where canoe access takes place. At present there are 19 canoe clubs and over 1,000 paddlers in Northern Ireland affiliated to Northern Ireland's canoe governing body of sport - the Canoe Association of Northern Ireland (CANI). In addition, there are many more paddlers across Northern Ireland not affiliated to CANI who paddle for recreational purposes only.

In 2002, 'A Strategic Review of Canoeing in Northern Ireland' undertaken by the Countryside Access and Activities Network for Northern Ireland (CAAN) (NI) identified the

potential benefits **of developing a network of canoe trails** across Northern Ireland for both the local population and tourists.

To implement this proposal, a Canoe Development Officer was appointed in 2000 on a 28 month contract funded by Environment and Heritage Service, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland and Inland Waterways of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. This post has subsequently been extended for a further three years and is now seen as a core post within the overall staffing structure of CAAN, and funded by Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Sports Council for Northern Ireland and Inland Waterways.

Partnership Working

Creating a canoe trail involves a significant amount of partnership working, with partners coming in a variety of disguises. This includes funding partners, delivery partners and support partners and involves working with central and local government organisations, youth and community groups and recreational users. A key element of developing each canoe trail has been clear communication channels among all partners with a single vision to which all can subscribe.

What is a canoe trail?

A canoe trail, by definition, is a scenically attractive route along a stretch of water suitable for paddlers in kayaks or canoes, with facilities on-shore that allow for overnight stops.

A canoe trail is not necessarily an A-B trip. If the flow of water is gentle then the trail can be started or finished at any point. On faster flowing rivers a trail can be started at any access point along its length and can be finished at any point further down stream. In both cases, a trail can be tailored to suit the needs of the user.

Where possible, use is made of the river or lough's existing facilities such as car parking, toilet facilities, jetties/slipways and public access to the water. When necessary, additional facilities are constructed such as canoe steps, floating jetties, parking and turning facilities.

An important element of any canoe trail is the erection of interpretation panels installed at strategic access points along the route. These panels display a map of the trail and include information on environmental and historical points of interest e.g. flora and fauna, safety information and a general code of conduct.



Each canoe trail is also accompanied by the publication of a detailed canoe trail guide, which is used predominantly to educate trail users about the local, natural and built environments, areas to avoid and why, where and where not to camp and safety considerations.

Benefits of developing canoe trails

Canoe trails bring the following benefits:

- Economic - Increasing tourism expenditure in Northern Ireland and specifically in rural areas. Supporting rural businesses such as accommodation and food providers. Supporting existing canoe businesses and increasing the potential for new canoe businesses providing canoe sales, hire and other support services within Northern Ireland
- Social - Creating new opportunities for canoeists to paddle regardless of age or ability. Providing venues for canoeists to train and compete
- Environmental - Encouraging the responsible use of the countryside thereby developing environmental awareness

and promoting stewardship of local environments

- Health – Canoeing is an activity sport which can be enjoyed and participated by all irrespective of age or ability.
- Management of water users – By agreeing specific public access points and then marketing/distributing the information, canoeists are less likely to access the water on an ad hoc basis which may lead to bank damage and conflict.

Product Focus – The Lough Erne Canoe Trail

Northern Ireland's first canoe trail was launched on Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh in May 2005 at a cost of £49,000. Funding was received from Fermanagh District Council, Environment and Heritage Service, Inland Waterways of DCAL and Fermanagh Local Strategy Partnership through the Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative.

The 50km trail runs from Lower Lough Erne with its rugged shoreline and open water, to Upper Lough Erne with its sheltered maze of bays, narrow channels, innumerable islands and peninsulas. Upper and Lower Lough MacNean, located to the west of the Erne system and in full view of the breathtaking Cuilcagh Mountains, flow into the Erne system via the River Arney and offer a fantastic touring venue. Whilst the Erne is very slow moving flat water the Arney is much faster.

The trail features five official campsites, rough camping on two small islands and overnight camping (on grass / beach at public access points) at eleven sites. There are also ten interpretation panels sited along the trail's length.

Management and maintenance of the canoe trail panels are undertaken by the local authority whilst Waterways Ireland (the navigation authority for Lough Erne) manages and maintains the slipways and launch points.



For those who wish to paddle the trail but don't have their own equipment, there are six canoe hire companies along its length. Since the launch of the trail over 2000 trail guides have been purchased and the website www.nicanoeing.com has had over 10,000 visitors, of which more than 86% were international.

A Steering Group which has been set up to deal with any issues that arise from the development of the trail meets twice a year.

Future Development of the Northern Ireland Canoe Trails' Product

The Lagan, Foyle System and Upper Bann were all earmarked for canoe trail development, however, due to funding constraints and problems with formal agreements the development of these trails are on hold.

At present work is progressing to develop 4 more canoe trails in Northern Ireland.

- Strangford Lough Canoe Trail – 20km sea trail with the refurbishment of a building on 'Salt Island' – for camping
- Blackwater Canoe Trail – a 20km flat river trail

- Lower Bann Canoe Trail – a 48km moving water trail with 2 campsites.
- Lough Neagh Canoe Trail – a 30km strategic link between the Blackwater and the Lower Bann

It is envisaged that by the end of 2008, Northern Ireland will have 170 kms of canoe trails which can be marketed confidently to both the domestic and international markets.

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Swimming in the City

Terry Eakin



Swimming in the Serpentine - photograph by Nick Adams

Swimming in the Serpentine

Just after sunrise on Saturday mornings a group of swimmers take to the waters of the Serpentine in Hyde Park, London. This has happened every single weekend, regardless of minor inconveniences such as snow and ice, for nearly 150 years and will probably continue beyond all our lifetimes.

Who is involved?

Members of the Serpentine Swimming Club - a happy group of individuals with no apparent common link, other than a wish to become wet and cold once each week. There are no social restrictions on joining the Club and people of any age or ability are welcome to apply for membership. Not that far away at Hampstead Heath Ponds, there are reports of a ninety-year-old who swam twice every day in winter and three times a day in summer.

The Serpentine will become the focus of world attention in 2012 when the Olympic triathlon is held in Hyde Park – the

swimming discipline will be held in the lake. The Serpentine Club also has a competitive element. The novelist Sir James Barrie was a member and since 1904 the winner of the Christmas Day race has been awarded the *Peter Pan Cup* which he originally presented. Last year Sally Kelly became the first ever female winner and was quoted as saying that the water (around 4°C) was not in the slightest cold.

I have distant memories of watching BBC News on Christmas Day when the last item always seemed to be Serpentine swimmers, armed with sledgehammers, breaking the ice prior to their morning race. It definitely was colder in those winters of the 1950s.

Is it Countryside Recreation?

I take great delight in trying to identify how close to the centre of the London metropolis countryside recreation has now penetrated. The Westminster Sailing Club, with a clubhouse on Thames and yachts anchored off Millbank, is a good attempt but their normal backdrop is undoubtedly urban.

Hyde Park at 8:00am on a foggy, icy Saturday in January is a fairly remote spot and even in summer there is a good feel to the place due to the wooded lake edges.

It's always difficult for us to define where the *urban* ends and the *countryside* begins. In a way it's almost as simple as being able to see a couple of trees and having a sense of

a relaxed attitude amongst the people in the area. The Serpentine scores on both points.



Photograph by Robin Hunter-Coddington

Is it Healthy?

Many people would perceive that there were two possible ways of meeting a quick death by swimming in a park the middle of London in winter – freezing and/or being poisoned by mouthfuls of polluted water .

Surprisingly, it would appear that neither of these is that likely.

The water in the Serpentine has passed EC Bathing Water Directive (76/160/EEC)² for each of the past two years and part of the lake water supply is derived from underground springs.

The health benefits of swimming in cold water are well documented in other countries – really cold places like Russia, Germany and China are more into this than we are. Research in Germany has shown that winter swimming increases resistance to diseases, particularly respiratory illness³.

Even more interesting is Chinese scientist Lieping Ren's study into the use of winter swimming to fight Aids. His belief is that exposure to cold water enhances the immune system's ability to counter the HIV virus.

It is important to note that all scientists stress that medical advice should be sought before jumping into the nearest lake on your way home from work in December. Generally the secret seems to be to start on a warm day in the summer and keep doing it every day.

Not many of us will repeat Lewis Pugh's 2005 achievement of swimming a mile in the Antarctic Ocean but it is possible to acclimatise to the cold. Lewis, who amazingly wore only normal swimming trunks, completed his swim in 0°C water

and had to use a Norwegian ice-breaker ship to reach a suitable area. Not all countryside recreation comes cheap!

I'd be mad to recommend winter swimming and you would be mad to try it but those who do it certainly seem to benefit. They also appear to get great enjoyment from the social side of the sport and many legendary tales that are associated with this.

My winter-swimming friend takes great delight in telling me about his son-in-law who suffered hypothermia and had to be taken to the doctor following the 1998 Christmas Day charity sea-swim at Bangor in Northern Ireland – the funny thing is that he was only a spectator!

Footnotes

¹ www.serpentineswimmingclub.com

² Defra press release 481/06 of 9 November 2006.

³ Siemes et al. 1999 'Improved anti-oxidative protection in winter swimmers'.

Photographic References

Photos by kind permission of The Serpentine Swimming Club.

Photographs credited to Nick Adams and Robin Hunter-Coddington

See www.serpentineswimmingclub.com for some amazing historic photographs of their events.

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Photograph by Nick Adams

Where Do All The Walkers Go?

Nic Bullivant, Cairngorm Ranger Service



Upper Raibert

Introduction

The Cairngorms, in Scotland, are some of the highest and most accessible mountains, in Britain, receiving over 120,000 visits by walkers taking walks of over an hour in length annually. (SNH, McGregor 1999). The high-level access road at Cairngorm and the broad plateaux make for easy access and easy walking terrain. Other attractions include the arctic-alpine assemblage of wild plants and animals and the reliable winter conditions for climbing and snow sports. The building of the mountain railway in Coire Cas to replace established ski-uplift facilities in 2001 was very controversial and was subject to several important planning conditions. These included the need for a Visitor Management Plan, and within it measures to prevent damage to the adjacent European designated sites, and the attached monitoring scheme to make sure the provisions of the VMP were working, and reporting on any failures.

The monitoring scheme has introduced several means of monitoring visitors over the years, principally counting vehicles entering the car park, recording sales of tickets, reporting any breaches of the management system, counting walkers with automatic people counters buried in footpaths, observing visitor behaviour during summer months, and administering a visitor questionnaire. There are concerns that the visitors to Cairngorm are suffering from survey fatigue, and that the effort involved in carrying out this monitoring, especially the visitor observation and visitor questionnaire, are expensive on time and resources.

The annual report of the year's monitoring is reviewed by an independent Reporting Officer, currently Northern Ecological Services, who report on its competence to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Highland Council, the two statutory signatories of the original planning agreement. SNH and Highland Council then tell Cairngorm Mountain Limited of any changes required to the Visitor Management Plan or Monitoring Scheme, after suitable discussion.

The open terrain of the high Cairngorms would seem a natural place for diffuse recreation and diffuse pressure on fragile mountain habitats, but in practice this is not always the case, with two routes to Ben Macdui, and others in the Northern Corries of Cairn Gorm seeing most of the activity. The area is too large to be observed from one point, and questionnaires have failed to provide accurate information on where people walk. The use of satellite tracking gives a new tool to consider.

Yet Another Monitoring Method

The availability of a grant from Care International made possible the purchase of nine GPS units and waterproof, shockproof containers to allow a further technique to be developed, which might replace some of the time spent on existing techniques. This was trialed in 2006 with some success, which is reported on here.

Nine Garmin Etrex GPS units were used, each in Peli 1020 cases and secured with standard cable ties to reduce the temptation to interfere with the contents of the cases. Between 20th August and 15th October 2006, these were lent to walkers setting out from the car park at Cairngorm, with a request to return them at the end of the day. The routes were downloaded onto computers through an interface cable and could be displayed on Memory Map software.



Two Peli-cases, GPS units and rechargeable AA batteries.

The sampling policy at a site where people arrive for a variety of activities was critical in achieving a broad cross-section of walkers. The basic criteria were that people were willing and able to carry the boxes, and they agreed to hand them back at the end of their walk. Understanding the instructions (in English) and concern about the weight of the box were the only reasons given for 7 of the 184 parties approached refusing.

Public reaction was generally overwhelmingly positive and interested. This was despite not knowing the outcome until later. There were several requests for print-outs of the route recorded, and many others wished to see the route displayed on the computer screen back at the Ranger Base. All units were successfully returned, using the box on the outside of the Ranger Base after the Rangers had gone home for the evening.

People volunteering to carry a box and those calling in to the Ranger Base at Cairngorm were not selectively targeted as samples, as this could influence the results. Those known to be carrying out very specialised activities (such as fieldwork

studies) were also omitted.



Returning the box to the Ranger Base after hours was achieved using a small posting box at the front door.

Errors in GPS Use

The GPS units worked well 95% of the time, but some errors were inevitable. These occurred when the unit had insufficient time to acquire satellite signal before being packed into a rucksack, and when the unit was taken indoors. Occasionally a spurious reading would arise as a result of poor satellite signal indoors or near cliffs, apparently placing the unit some miles away. One error placed the unit in the vicinity of Rockall! These errors were easily accounted for.

On four occasions, the unit appeared to go haywire, and although a general impression of the route taken can be gained, there is considerable scope for misinterpretation, and these sections of the routes recorded are omitted from the analysis. The total number of errors has not compromised the accuracy of the remainder of the survey, nor introduced a bias to the results.

There does not appear to have been any influence upon walkers' behaviour by carrying the units. Indeed, one party infringed their railway ticket conditions by travelling on the train and walking to Coire Raibert, then demanded a return ride down the railway on account of a disputed injury, despite knowing that their route was being recorded.

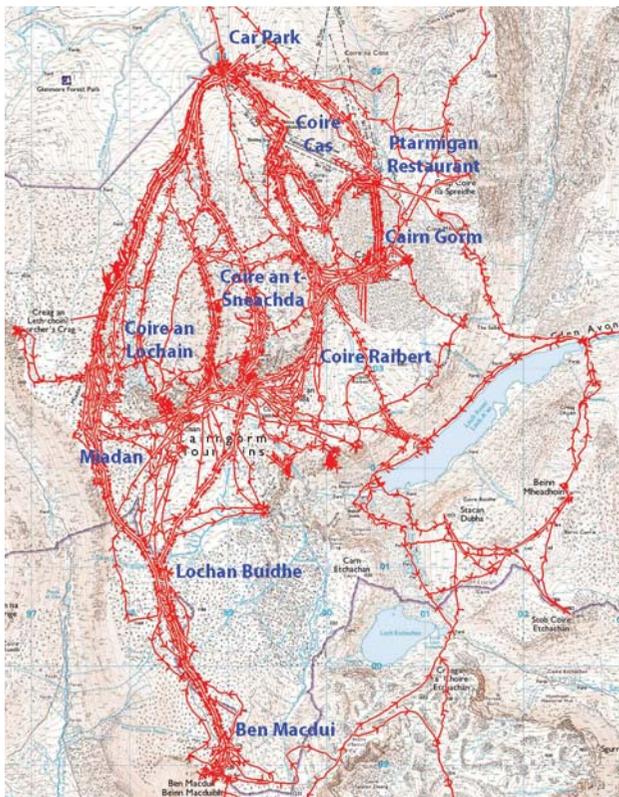
In normal use, the routes were very accurately recorded. This allowed analysis of routes even on Fiacail Coire an t-Sneachda where it was possible to distinguish between a route on the rocky crest from one on the eroded hillside some 10 metres away.

So, Where Do They Go?

The main map shows the routes recorded by GPS units carried by 160 parties.

Each red line on the map represents the route taken by one walker, but each walker carrying a GPS unit was

accompanied by on average 1.5 other people and every eighth walker was accompanied by a dog.



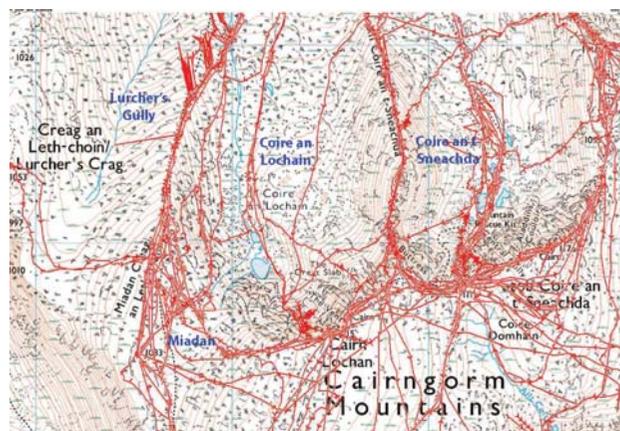
Map 1 Routes followed by 160 parties on Cairngorm plateau, August and September 2006.

Cairngorm car park is at the North of the map, Ben Macdui towards the south. Between them a very clearly defined route demonstrates the importance of this way of walking to Ben Macdui and back. It is complicated by the attraction of Cairn Gorm to the east side of the map. The heavily used routes to Cairn Gorm and between Cairn Gorm and Ben Macdui along the rim of the corries then across the plateau join the first route near the final climb to the higher summit. The main access routes to and through Coire an t-Sneachda, Fiacail Coire an t-Sneachda and Coire an Lochain also show up as major routes on a cursory glance.

Although fascinating, the occasional route going off the map is not significant in terms of volume and pressure on natural resources. At the north, walkers went to the other car park at Coire na Ciste, and to the old Summit Path still shown on some maps. To the west, one walker went to Beinn Bhreac above Deeside and back one September day, an 11-hour round trip. Derry Cairngorm and Carn a'Mhaim were visited beyond the southern edge of the map on another big day in September.

Of some concern are the areas of diffuse recreation and consequent damage along the rim of the Northern Corries of Cairn Gorm. This is shown in more detail in map 2. At this scale, some of the errors are visible which have not been

deleted, as part of the route was of particular interest.



Map 2. Routes followed by parties near the heads of Coire an t-Sneachda, Coire Domhain and Coire an Lochain in August and September 2006.

Although the rim of the Northern Corries is heavily used, a significant number of parties diverged onto the plateau around the top incorrectly labelled Stob Coire an t-Sneachda. From observation, it is known that these are almost all in the same direction, seeking to avoid the climb to this subsidiary summit and losing the path in the boulders on the climb.

Another area where recreation is seen to diverge is the Miadan Creag an Leth-choin, at the west of the map. This is an area of potential interest to the Schedule 1 breeding bird, the dotterel, and the level of diffuse recreation may be having a depressing effect on population recruitment. The routes shown were followed too late in the season for them to have any effect on the dotterel.

Also of interest is the area of high ground and Northern Corries where apparently nobody goes. The findings of the satellite-based trial bear out observations made over the years by Cairngorm Rangers.



The biggest gaps are on the south side of Cairn Gorm, where dotterel have returned to breed since the introduction of access restrictions with the railway, and the enormous area of plateau between Feith Buidhe, Loch Etchachan and the Northern approach to Ben Macdui. No routes were recorded in this area (approximately 6 square kilometres) despite the sample of those carrying GPS devices clearly including people who were able to seek out these places.

Within the ski area, no routes crossed the rough hillside east of the railway, and none across the west slope of Cairn Gorm's summit. The bouldery western slopes of both Coire an t-Sneachda and Coire an Lochain were virtually untouched. Lurcher's Gully and Crag received only one visit.

Discussion

This technique is very revealing of the variety of routes – and the lack of variety – followed by walkers on the Northern Cairngorms in August, September and October 2006. In comparing it with existing techniques, consideration would be made of the effort involved in collecting and analysing the data and the time of day when this effort is made, as well as the nature of the data.

On the face of it, giving out nine boxes and sitting back to wait for them to return is much easier than standing for hours on a mountain side watching and reporting on everything that happens. The effect on surveyors of repeatedly canvassing strangers to do something for them with no guarantee of reward is one with which visitor questionnaire surveyors will be familiar. The survey effort comes at a time of day when the Rangers are also busy opening the Ranger Base, making climate observations and dealing with enquiries from members of the public setting out for the day. It does, however, allow the Rangers to make contact with a group who have often found little reason to call in to the Ranger Base in the past, as they are generally well-prepared for what they have planned.

Downloading the data can happen at any time after giving out the boxes, usually between 3 pm and 5 pm on the same day. If walkers returning are wishing to see the result of their efforts on a map, this can be displayed to them on a computer screen, and even printed out if required. The route has also been e-mailed to some who have requested this. These features are different from and additional to the handling of the data arising from questionnaire, counter and observation surveys.

The nature of the data arising from the GPS trial is also different, being predominantly spatial, though also containing temporal information. As well as the route on the map, each route file has time information attached, so the speed of the party can be shown as a graph and the time taken to reach certain points analysed as the basis for advising other parties of how long to expect to take. The information has allowed Rangers to discuss with returning walkers their progress during the day, and enquire about certain route choices and comment on others. It has allowed groups to find answers to their questions about where they went wrong, or got lost. Presenting the data is much more immediately achieved on a map, which will be very readily understood by a non-technical audience. Data from other techniques can be transferred to GIS but this is an additional burden on those analysing it. The data from the GPS survey can be readily understood at a small scale (map 1) and at a more detailed

level (map 2). There is a small disadvantage that subsequent data traces obscure previous ones, and if they are on exactly the same line, the use of a route by five parties appears no different from the use by only one.

Some of the most appealing features of this technique are that it can be done in any weather, day and night, winter and summer. It is all-seeing without the perennial problems for the observer of "dead" ground, lack of attention, meal breaks or general boredom from light traffic or panic induced by heavy traffic.

It does not need to be restricted to walkers on or off paths, and can be used to discover routes used by ski-tourers. It does not need to be restricted to mountains, where, in fact, the opportunities for observation can be ideal, it can be used where landform or vegetation make observation impossible, and even the memory of participants unreliable, such as for sailing.

The drawback of risking nearly £1000-worth of investment has not been exposed, and in future it should be possible to be honest with participants about what is in the boxes, possibly to do away with the boxes altogether. In fact, the GPS units were deliberately selected to be as simple as possible, simpler than the units already carried by participants themselves.

This leads on to consider that the participants' own units could be used and downloaded, providing the surveying organisation invested in the variety of software and hardware required. This would remove an element of the risk involved, but would sample only those units which were returning to the car park before the time the surveyors left in the evening. A lap-top or PDA would be suitable for these downloads as well.

Future Plans

Plans for 2007 are to run the GPS-based survey through the first ten months of the year. It is expected that data from a month when ski touring is possible will contrast with data from a month when birdwatchers are active, and both will contrast with the maps presented here. Restricting the maps to a standardised number of routes will also allow comparison of "blank" areas, which would be expected to get smaller as more routes are added.

Photographic References

All Photographs credited to the Cairngorm Ranger Service

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An Environmentally Sustainable Visitor Centre **Selling Ethical Food**

Rachel Datlen, Worcestershire County Council



Fancy Building an environmentally sustainable visitor centre selling ethical food?

Real and worthwhile change is something few countryside organisations get the chance to deliver. Working within the countryside and urban greenspace industry, most of us are switched on to the wider sustainability agenda. Managing sites for nature conservation and encouraging people to visit them these days is perhaps not all we should be doing to 'save the planet'.

At the Green Flag award-winning Worcester Woods Country Park, with its 38 hectares of woodland and meadows, Worcestershire County Council has been working hard to promote ethical messages in a variety of different ways.

The existing Countryside Centre was built in the late 1980s and had always been very popular with visitors. However, our needs had outgrown the building; our visitors wanted more seating in the café and outside by the play area,

increased shade in the summer and more community meeting space. Countryside Service staff had been housed in portacabins for several years, which were unlikely to be re-awarded planning consent and we were short of secure storage space for our work vehicles, timber and tools.

We were lucky enough to secure several grants from the Liveability Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, Environment Agency and our own County Council capital programme to develop an extension to the existing visitor centre. With the help of our own Property Services team, who are becoming nationally renowned for their development of sustainable buildings, including schools, an environmental education centre and new library and history centre, we came up with a design to suit our needs.

Our visitors had been involved in this exercise through focus groups, comments cards, visitor surveys and open days, so their ideas were all put into the melting pot as well.

What we came up with was a new eco-building alongside the existing refurbished visitor centre. This houses Countryside Service staff, the reception and enquiries office and two new community meeting rooms. The design includes a sedum (green) roof, sustainable timber, a woodfuel boiler, and recycled newspaper insulation. The two buildings are connected by a shady pergola over a large sun terrace. Part of the development also included the creation of the 'Worcestershire Garden', a quiet, enclosed area for community and event use which has been

landscaped with features and species distinctive of the county, such as fruit trees, an old fashioned apple press, a pond and wildflower area.



The existing visitor centre was given a revamp with improved lighting, a larger indoor seating area and state of the art touch-screen interpretation and information.

An innovative approach was used for the new furniture, which was not actually new at all! Through the 'Green Chair' project, we asked people to donate their old wooden chairs which were restored where necessary by our own staff and volunteers, and all painted in the same shade of green. This was the answer to our lack of funds for purchasing new furniture, but it also had an important recycling and anti-landfill message. A new leaflet rack and two breakfast bars were made in-house from oak milled ourselves from the woodland on site; again, another message about sustainable sourcing of what you need, for little money.

All we needed now was ethical food. The visitor centre cafés at both our Country Parks are run on a tenancy basis, each with a tenancy of five years. We had recently been successful in securing a new café tenant at our other Country Park, Waseley Hills, near Birmingham, and from that we had been able to gain some useful experience of trialling a more specific visitor and sustainability focussed lease.

Our café tenant at Worcester Woods had been with us for many years, but felt it was time to move on to pastures new. This gave us an opportunity to push our sustainable food agenda even further than before. Of course, a normal business lease is usually quite standard and stems from a profit making point of view. With our visitor centre leases, whilst the income we receive for them is vital to our work, they exist to enable a high quality service to be given to our visitors. It is in the interests of both us as a County Council and our tenant to work together in partnership to deliver this. A good relationship and understanding the same values are key.

With this in mind, we aimed to attract a certain type of business from the start. We have learnt many lessons on how to secure a tenant from the past. Standard newspaper or catering magazine ads are very expensive and generate little interest, so we opted for displaying a large banner at the roadside, combined with press coverage and placing an eye-catching half-page colour advert in the local paper. We aimed high, suggesting that we wanted our new Orchard Café to become the place in Worcestershire to come for ethical food. By ethical, we mean offering Fair Trade, free range (meat and eggs), local and organic where possible. We also included strict conditions about packaging and waste and that any gifts and other merchandise sold in the visitor centre were to be sustainably sourced, such as crafts that are Fair Trade or made by local people.

The response was very positive and we shortlisted twelve potential tenants. We then took them through a rigorous selection process, more akin to a job interview than a commercial transaction. But it proved its worth, our new tenants, Guy and Nett Ward, have a wealth of experience in the catering industry, from cooking, to restaurant management and staff training for companies such as Frankie and Bennies and Prêt a Manger. They also have a love of the countryside and the part it has to play in producing good quality wholesome food.

What is so valuable about Country Parks is the combination of things they offer. People have come to expect certain facilities to be available on their visit; a visitor centre with a café, toilets, information and interpretation, children's play area and way marked trails – all set in a pleasant 'natural' environment. What this offers us as practitioners is the ability to get across important messages and showcase examples of good practice in sustainability.

Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Service is offering opportunities for people to come and learn from their experiences through a one-day conference "Developing a New Country Park Visitor Centre" being run in May 2007. The Countryside Service is also able to accommodate visits from other organisations that want to find out more about initiatives such as these, and other subjects such as working with volunteers, health and safety management, business development, community engagement, income generation. If you would like to know more about the conference or would like to discuss a package tailored to your needs, then please contact:

Rachel Datlen, Countryside Greenspace Manager
on 01905 766493 or
rdatlen@worcestershire.gov.uk

How can land managers reconcile Conservation with Recreation?

Martin Fitton, PROGRESS Project and Emma Stevens, Forestry Commission



Photograph credited to Forestry Commission.

Thirty years ago Michael Dower worried all land managers by suggesting that a "Fourth Wave" of leisure was about to break and damage Britain's countryside and forests. His concern was, in fact, a little premature, as leisure use of the countryside has been largely static since.

However, things are now changing in this new millennium. The countryside is now promoted as a way for everyone to improve their health and fitness, and major efforts are being made to aid the deprived, disabled and disinclined to discover and enjoy the natural health benefits it can offer. Whilst these new agendas are exciting, they do bring new obligations for land managers to ensure that increased use is not achieved at the expense of biodiversity and other land uses.

During the last three years the Forestry Commission and the Office National des Forêts, along with three other partners across Europe, have been brought together to form the PROGRESS Project. With INTERREG funding the project, teams have been jointly exploring new ways to closely monitor recreational use in the New Forest and Fontainebleau and how much of an impact it has on nature.

One of the ways in which the project could assess the impact was through an innovative computer modelling

system, which used extensive GPS data and detailed habitat information to predict recreational use and its effect on biodiversity across both forests. This allowed the teams to 'trial' pilot actions to ease pressure through the model before testing them on the ground.

Another key part of PROGRESS has involved exploring ways of involving the public in management decisions. Through local stakeholder groups – consisting of users, conservationists, statutory agencies, etc. – as well as the public who regularly use the forests, they have investigated if empowering the public to have a greater role in decision-making increases awareness and commitment to conserving the forests.

The results of this joint work will be presented at a final conference in Fontainebleau when the project ends in October 2007. The aim of the event is for project partners and delegates to consider whether the new recreation agendas are appropriate and achievable, and how PROGRESS has overcome (or been challenged) by some of the issues they raise.

If you are interested in finding out more about the conference, please contact the PROGRESS team based in the New Forest on 023 8028 6841 or email grace.ford@forestry.gsi.gov.uk.

For more information about PROGRESS visit www.progress-eu.info.

Agency Profile

Each issue of *Countryside Recreation* will profile a relevant agency/organisation.

Scottish Executive

Sally Thomas, Head of Countryside and Land Management Team,
Scottish Executive



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

About Scottish Executive

The Scottish Executive is the devolved government for Scotland and is responsible for most of the issues that affect daily life in Scotland including health, education, rural affairs, justice, and transport. Following its establishment in 1999, and most recently since the 2003 Scottish Parliamentary elections, the Executive has been a coalition between the Scottish Labour and the Scottish Liberal Democrat Parties whose plans and priorities are set out in the Partnership Agreement. The next Scottish elections are in May 2007 following which the shape and colour of the next Scottish Parliament will be determined.

Policy matters related to the environment and the public enjoyment of the outdoors are the responsibility of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD). The Department is structured around the five groups detailed below whose policy responsibilities are as follows;

- **Environment:** care of the environment, including biodiversity, urban green space, waste and pollution reduction, air quality, flood risk management, climate change, water services and promoting sustainable development throughout the Executive.
- **Marine:** promoting sustainable, profitable and well managed sea fisheries, freshwater fisheries and aquaculture; and marine management, including marine nature conservation.
- **Rural:** promoting sustainable rural development including agriculture, crofting and food, policy relating to landscape, habitats, national parks, access to the outdoors, animal health and welfare.
- **Science and Analysis:** responsible for robust and timely evidence for development, implementation and monitoring of the Department's policies.
- **Operations:** responsible for implementation and delivery of grants, subsidies and other government policies to the agricultural industry; provision of professional agricultural advice and information.



SEERAD has three Executive Agencies and sponsors a number of other non departmental public bodies which work in partnership towards the delivery of the overall aims of the Department.

The work of SEERAD, is shaped by the Partnership Agreement which puts sustainable development and environmental concerns at the heart of public policy. In taking forward the Partnership Agreement SEERAD is committed to delivering the following 10 outcomes:

All in Scotland acting for sustainable development, with

1. Clean air
2. Safe, affordable drinking water
3. Communities protected from flooding, climate change and other environmental hazards
4. Waste minimised, recycled where possible and otherwise disposed of properly
5. Rivers, lochs and beaches free of unacceptable pollution
6. Well maintained landscapes and biodiversity benefiting people and business
7. Sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, competitive in markets and contributing to local economies
8. Well treated and healthy domestic and farm animals
9. Rural development benefiting communities
10. Access to public services for people in rural areas; and Science fully reflected in planning the future of Scotland's environment, marine and rural affairs.

The Scottish Executive recognises that Scotland's countryside and natural environment are precious assets, both in terms of their intrinsic natural and landscape qualities and in economic terms through their contribution to tourism. Natural heritage issues are fully integrated into policy on the major land uses in the countryside, such as farming and forestry and SEERAD is working to further develop the range of funding options available to land managers through agricultural support mechanisms.

The Scottish Executive is also committed to encouraging the preservation and enhancement of green spaces in and around towns and to promoting the enjoyment of the outdoors by all who visit it.

One of the flagship pieces of legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament since 1999 has been the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The passing of this Act modernised Scotland's

ancient land ownership laws and established a new right of responsible public access to most land and inland water. These rights make it easier for people to enjoy the many beautiful and remote parts of Scotland, and also to take access and exercise closer to home. Part 1 of the Act places both rights and responsibilities on access takers and land managers which combine to make a package of measures encompassing:

- a clearer legal basis for access;
- responsibility as the key principle for using access rights and managing land;
- safeguards for privacy, land management and conservation;
- new duties and powers for local authorities and other public bodies

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code sets out more detailed guidance on rights and responsibilities when taking access and managing land for access. The Access Code has been prepared by Scottish Natural Heritage and approved by the Scottish Parliament



As with all Executive departments, the work of SEERAD is cross cutting in nature and this means we work with a wide range of partners across Scotland and beyond. The access agenda in particular is seen as a shared agenda and we work closely with a range of partners including Scottish Natural Heritage, the National Access Forum, local access forums, Historic Scotland, Public agencies, Sheriff Courts, the police, membership organisations, Paths for All Partnership, and network organisations. All these bodies and many more in the voluntary sector are involved in delivery of the access agenda.

You can find out more about the work of the Scottish Executive by visiting our website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Home>

Response



A different way forward needed for river access.

The Autumn/Winter issue of Countryside Recreation carried a news item suggesting that voluntary agreements are the way forward for river access for canoeists. In particular, it referred to the latest work on the subject by Brighton University, which attempted to obtain access agreements on four English rivers to show how it could be done.

Two of those four agreements, for the Teme and Wear, were rejected out of hand by the British Canoe Union as the terms and constraints were totally unacceptable.

The agreement for the Waveney was able to benefit from massive funding not available to canoeists. It followed a less thorough but longer agreement by canoeists in 2001. The section in the new agreement now leaves out the upper river and has a 3km no-go section downstream, preventing continuing to the legal tidal bottom half of the river and the Broads. While the new agreement has tracked down more of the landowners, it has still failed to locate all of them. Whatever its shortcomings, the previous agreement did not result in the problems which are predicted by the study for the present agreement.

The only new water is on the Mersey, mostly in public ownership, flat and previously too polluted for fish. Brighton University workers were surprised that canoeists have shown little interest in their achievements here, despite being the people who advised the Government what canoeists do and do not want.

The Countryside Recreation article says 'Over 30% of the major rivers and canals in England provide access for various canoeing activities such as canoe touring and white-water paddling'. It should be noted that canals account for most of this 30% and deep water navigations shared with powered craft largely round off the 30%. White water paddling is mostly confined to the occasional weir pool. Looking at the paddlable rivers of England and Wales as a whole, however,

less than 2% have any legal or permissive access at any time. This study covered just a tenth of 1% of those paddlable rivers in England and Wales but took two years to undertake. Contrast this with the Land Reform Act, a swift and early piece of legislation by the new Scottish Parliament which confirmed that Scotland has 100% public river access, as is usual in most other countries in the world.

Hundreds of canoeing officials have had no more success at negotiating access over the last half century than the ramblers have. They are now to be told how to set about it and their problems solved by a new online toolkit, replacing an Environment Agency booklet solving canoeists' problems, replacing a National Rivers Authority booklet solving canoeists' problems.

The latest Brighton University study has picked four easy rivers, mostly with probable previous rights of use, but has produced agreements for less than 25% of the distance available on those four, backing away from intransigence by opponents. In every case the agreements achieved have been found unacceptable to a greater or lesser extent by canoeists. Where this leaves other boaters and swimmers is less than clear.

The only contribution this study makes to the way forward is in showing that satisfactory agreements cannot be reached even with massive funding and Government pressure and that changing the law on river access to meet the needs of a civilised modern society is long overdue.

Stuart Fisher
 Paddlers International
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The views in this section are not necessarily those of the Countryside Recreation Network member agencies. To submit any comments on articles in this journal, please email crn@shu.ac.uk

News



BARROW HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (BHDA), IRELAND

BHDA is a voluntary organisation which has set about coordinating the existing annual events on the river Barrow and has also organised special events for the Year.

This organisation has been built from the ground upwards, enlisting the help of the most active groups concerned with the river's promotion. Groups include the Heritage Boat Association (restored working barges) and the Inland Waterways Association of Ireland (Barrow Branch) and Waterways Ireland.

President Mary McAleese officially launched the Year of the Barrow in New Ross, Co Wexford (the mouth of the river) on 23 January 2007. This event has instilled interest in and respect for the wonderful natural asset which flows through 3 counties in Ireland's South East.

The river Barrow is Ireland's second longest (after the more famous Shannon) and we seek simply to promote its charms to a domestic and international audience. We have barges coming from Northern Ireland and Canoeists from England so we already have an international audience for 2007.

Waterways Ireland have made a strong commitment to promote the river Barrow and their state of the art dredger has been busily working away improving the navigation for river traffic in anticipation of the large number of boats heading this way next season. The largest ever flotilla of Heritage Barges is coming, so there will be wide interest in the working past of the river.

We are hoping that many more individuals and organisations will think up their own special events to help make the Year of the Barrow a truly momentous year. Coillte were approached and have kindly donated 8 oak trees, so one will

be planted in each town to mark the year. It is hoped that the tree planting will help create links between the various riverside towns and their own events.

Full details of the events for the Year of the Barrow can be found on our dedicated website: www.barrowvalley.org

For further information, please contact: James Burke, PRO Barrow Heritage & Development Association by email: barrow2007@eircom.net or tel: 00353 5997 26024

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY AND BTCV

Volunteer Cairngorms - Are you young, keen and green?

An exciting new project is underway in the Cairngorms National Park. BTCV Scotland and the Cairngorms National Park Authority have established a new partnership and designed a volunteering programme especially for the Cairngorms area.

Working with ProjectScotland the revolutionary new volunteering organisation for young people in Scotland we aim to develop a diverse, flexible and innovative volunteering package for young people aged 16-25 within the Cairngorms park area. The project will allow young people to gain experience from a number of different sectors involved in the Park, including ranger services, conservation, estate management and tourism. Each volunteer will have the opportunity to gain practical hands on experience within the environmental sector by participating on a full-time three-month volunteering programme as well as the opportunity to participate on the accredited John Muir Award Scheme. All ProjectScotland volunteers receive training, support and a subsistence allowance of £55 per week plus travel expenses. Jenny Biggart, Volunteer Development Co-ordinator said; "BTCV Scotland has been investing in volunteers for over 50 years. Our involvement with ProjectScotland has allowed us

to support young people to make a positive change to their lives and their environment. We look forward to developing more opportunities for young people living within the Cairngorms National Park."

Vicki Tough, 22 from Ballater, is our first volunteer about to embark on a placement with the Glen Tanar Estate. She wants more young people to take that first step towards making a difference and to sign up to this unique programme, *"It's exciting to be able to have the opportunity to expand my career prospect."*

Claire Ross, the CNPA's Education and Inclusion Manager, said: *"Volunteer Cairngorms is part of our wider efforts to secure better employment opportunities for the young people of the Cairngorms who are interested in rural affairs and working outdoors. This is an exciting project that can help all young people, from school leavers, youngsters looking for a career change, to the long-term unemployed. It will give them vital skills in rural employment, as well as teach them about the working environment. The areas they can train in are of great importance to the Park. It means young people can learn more about the Park, how it works and play their part in its long-term future and success. The CNPA is committed to improving the educational and employment opportunities of the young people living here and we are delighted we are able to tie that in with a project that not only deals with the Park's environmental and land based issues but works with many of our partners as well."*

BTCV is the UK's largest practical conservation charity and aims to create a sustainable future through inspiring people and improving places.

For further information on the Volunteer Cairngorms programme please contact Jenny Biggart the Volunteer Development Co-ordinator on 01786479697 or email J.biggart@btcv.org.uk or Stephanie Bungay 01479 870534 or email stephaniebungay@cairngorms.co.uk or visit the website www.cairngorms.co.uk

For more information about ProjectScotland visit www.projectscotland.co.uk or call 08458 4 16 2 25.

CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cwmcarn was made for walking!

Cwmcarn Fforest in the Nantcarn Valley, South East Wales is renowned for attracting walkers and cyclists nationwide; with its stunning scenery and variety of walking routes it is becoming even more popular with visitors. Recent figures from the Forestry Commission Wales have shown a 33% increase in the use of walking trails, this has been tracked using counters at styles and passing gates on some of the

many walking routes. Walkers are heading for the hills and forest any time of year, even though April to October are the busiest times for walkers, the winter months are becoming increasingly popular.

For those who haven't sampled the splendour and tranquillity of this stunning forest, it really is worth a visit. Families will enjoy the forest woodcarvings, adventure playground and picnic spots, all hidden away on the forest drive. For the more adventurous walker there is a selection of longer more challenging walks including a 6.5 mile Twmbarlwm walk, once experienced many will share the view of the Welsh Ramblers Association, that Twmbarlwm Hillfort provides one of the best walks in Wales. This magical walk takes you to an Iron Age Hill Fort, originally a Bronze Age burial mound where the Iron Age community was thought to have settled between 500BC and 150BC. The 3600 views across South East Wales and the Severn Estuary are truly breathtaking.

Over the past 5 years Cwmcarn Fforest has established itself as a major mountain biking venue, with a free to ride Twrch Trail, featuring almost 15.5km of pure single track, it's a mountain bikers paradise. The newly opened downhill is also proving to be a hit with experienced riders. Over 54,000 riders now use the trails, a 27% rise between 2005 and 2006.

Cwmcarn Fforest is undergoing a major transformation as a new £2 million Visitor Centre is constructed. The new two-storey Centre will boast a café, gift shop, shower and changing facilities, children's play area and outside viewing area. Open in the Autumn 2007, the Centre will provide improved facilities and annual events programme to suit the growing number of visitors. This has been made possible with funding from The European Union Objective One Fund, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency Wales. During the building works, there is a temporary visitor centre on site providing information along with a takeaway snack and refreshment area.

COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS AND ACTIVITIES NETWORK (CAAN) NI

The definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland
www.walkni.com

CAAN has just completed the definitive guide to walking in Northern Ireland: www.walkni.com. The new website is due to be officially launched in March 2007 to the general public, but the website is now live and available to view online.

Before the development of the new website, it was widely

recognised that although a large volume of information on where to walk in Northern Ireland existed, the information provided varied considerably in terms of quality and accessibility as well as being provided in numerous formats (including leaflets, websites, maps and books). Information on walking was therefore very disjointed and the website's primary objective was to address this issue.

Walkni.com now provides a comprehensive guide to walking in Northern Ireland in a coherent and accessible manner. The website is targeted at residents of Northern Ireland and tourists alike and is suitable for the serious walker as well as those who want to take the occasional stroll.

In order to populate the website, CAAN has worked with a wide range of partners, and in particular, the Countryside Officers whom we thank for their collaboration and hard work. Work on the website is ongoing as CAAN continues to populate the site with further walks, but work will be complete in time for the consumer launch in March 2007.

The second stage of the website development will be the inclusion of a dedicated section on the Ulster Way. Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) and CAAN continue to work on the development of the Ulster Way route and once this is finalised (first half of 2007), the website will be developed accordingly.

Through consumer research, it was established that a key success criteria was the development of a powerful, yet simple, search mechanism. There are several different ways to perform a search.

1. Quick Search

Enter a word or phrase and bring up matching walks with a single click.

2. Area Search

For people who don't know the name of the walk or the area, there is a facility to browse by area. A map of Northern Ireland is located on the home page - by clicking on a county on the map, a list of walks within the area will be listed. These results can then be filtered by selecting the desired 'Walk Length'.

3. Walk Length

Another method of searching is by choosing a 'Walk Length' from the home page. CAAN has classified 3 lengths of walks. These are long distance walks (over 20 miles), medium distance walks (5-20 miles) and short distance walks (0-5 miles).

4. Advanced Search

Through a series of tick boxes, the users can define precise criteria to find the appropriate walk that meets their needs. As well as the search facility, the website also boasts some key features:

Image Gallery

A picture paints a thousand words, so every walk has its

own image gallery. Users can browse the pictures to see exactly what is on the walk and get a flavour of what to expect along the way. Visitors to the site can also download maps and walks information that can be used when on the walk.

Events

For those wanting to go on a guided walk the site contains an events section containing details of walking related events and festivals for the year ahead.

Tourist Information

There is also a wide range of useful information for tourists to Northern Ireland. These include the best areas to walk in Northern Ireland, a journey planner, information on how to get to Northern Ireland and links with Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) to enable the booking of accommodation on-line.

The site has been developed with input from NITB and the design principles and colours of the website mirrors the popular NITB 'Walk' brochure which can be ordered or downloaded from the website. The use of a walking brand ensures a consistent message to the walking public and boasts a clear and professional approach. The project was jointly funded by EHS and NITB.

Plans are in place for the promotion of the website to the general public in March and April 2007 through various related websites, print pieces, direct mail and media promotion.

We look forward to your feedback on the website, and any additional walks and photography are always welcome. Please send your comments or information to aideen@countrysiderecreation.com.

New mountain bike venue planned for Tyrone.

Mountain biking is the fastest growing section of recreational cycling in the United Kingdom with 22 million adults thought to own a mountain bike. In Northern Ireland however the figures are lower with only 1% of trips in Northern Ireland taking place using a bike (Study of Cycle Usage, 1997, DRD). This compares to 2% in Great Britain, 15% in Switzerland and 18% in Denmark.

So why isn't Northern Ireland a hotbed of hot wheels? Whilst the climate may have something to answer for, there is a distinct lack of facilities in comparison to the rest of the UK.

Although Sustrans has been hard at work developing sustainable transport cycle routes across Northern Ireland, these routes unfortunately don't meet the needs of those cyclists wishing to test their fitness and seek an adrenaline filled experience off-road. But things are looking up for those

wishing to ride off-road through the development of a new project in Fivemiletown. Fivemiletown in Co.Tyrone isn't the first place one would think of going mountain biking, but hopefully by 2008, Blessingbourne Estate will be firmly on the map as a place to ride.

The project is the result of collaboration between CAAN and the privately owned 'Blessingbourne Estate'. The overall aim of the project is to create a sustainable off-road cycling venue within the Estate. The project involves the development of up to 10kms of off-road cycling trails utilising existing trails and creating sections of new, purpose built single-track trail. As well as the construction of the trails, the project includes a new car park, bike wash, interpretation and waymarking and a trail card for users.

Located approximately 600m from the village of Fivemiletown in Co.Tyrone, the Estate, owned by Nick & Colleen Lowry, is a working farm of 550 acres of farmland and mature woodland. The Estate already has a strong commitment to tourism, centred around the provision of 4 self-catering apartments which previously won 'Rural Cottage of the Year'. The apartments are complemented by a 20-acre fishing lake, a range of walking trails, bike hire and pony riding for residents, tennis courts and a newly established barn complex, offering a space for events or entertainment.

The existing product at Blessingbourne will provide a sound base for the development of off-road cycling and is ideally suited to cater for the activity tourism market. Following an initial site visit from Dafydd Davis (internationally renowned trail designer) and Andy Beavis (IMBA) it was agreed that the site has huge potential to become a top mountain biking venue. The overall cost of the project is estimated at £286,870, the cost based on an initial site evaluation completed by Dafydd Davis in November 2006.

Applications have been submitted to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board under its Tourism Development Scheme (TDS) and to the Sports Lottery, under the Building Sport Programme. In addition, £25,000 has been secured from Dungannon and South Tyrone Council towards the project. In the long-term, Dungannon and South Tyrone Council will lease the trails for 25 years from Blessingbourne and will be responsible for trail management and maintenance.

For more information contact Clare at CAAN on 028 9030 3930 or email Clare@countrysiderecreation.com

COUNTRYSIDE JOBS SERVICE

www.countryside-jobs.com

Have you seen the new re-launched CJS website yet?

It's been streamlined, but lost none of its content – in fact

it's grown with the links page now developed into a full section and now CJS has it's own blog at:

http://www.countryside-jobs.com/CJS_Stuff/CJSNews.htm

Read the blog to keep up to date with developments at CJS, check when the latest editions have been published, find out if we've had any problems and also read our 'nature notes' and weather diary which had some lovely pictures of the snow around the CJS Office during the early part of February.

Everything should be easier to find and with less 'waffle' - we hope. Other new additions include:

- a daily email update of the vacancies posted online;
- volunteer vacancies page - all adverts for voluntary posts which are placed in CJS Weekly are included online at no extra charge
- new options for advertising in the Training Section which is also expanded;
- email reminder service to check CJS Weekly online;
- improved email reminder of CJS Monthly online (and you get it earlier than the paper edition);
- lots of areas where you can post content e.g. training courses, adverts in CJS Weekly, links suggestions all now have submission forms to make it easier for you to send things to CJS.

We are also delighted to announce that costs for advertising remain at the same rates as 2006, starting from £40 for recruitment linage. If you find a broken link or are directed to an old style page please let us know using the contact form. Any suggestions for additions / improvements / upgrades etc. gratefully received.

For further information please contact CJS by email: ranger@countryside-jobs.com or tel: 01947 896007

DEFRA

Natural England agrees advice on improving access to the English Coast

On 14 February Natural England (NE) published a summary of its proposals for improving access to the English coast, together with a press release. These can be seen on NE's website at:

http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about/board/feb07/210207_coastal_access_NEB_P07_03.pdf
and

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/press/releases2007/140207.htm>

At its meeting on 21 February the NE Board agreed the proposals, and is now expected to advise the Government to introduce legislation to create a new right of public access to England's coastline. NE will submit its advice to Defra by the end of February.

Defra will then issue a public consultation setting out the options to improve access to the coast and giving everyone 12 weeks to comment. This is expected to be issued in the Spring.

New Regulations governing local access forums

On 19 March new Regulations come into effect governing the operation of local access forums in England. Parts 1 and 2 of the Regulations largely re-enact the previous provisions concerning the establishment, administration and conduct of forums. Part 3 introduces new powers for appointing authorities to change the organisational structure and geographical coverage of forums to better suit changing local needs. Part 4 requires authorities to supply Natural England with information on their forum(s). It also prescribes additional bodies (Sport England, parish councils and AONB Conservation Boards) to which it is the function of forums to give advice, and prescribes an additional matter on which forums may advise. The Regulations can be viewed at <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2007/20070268.htm>.

In addition to recreational access, forums will now be able to advise on 'functional' and 'utility' access (e.g. access to schools, shops and places of work). *Further information from Geoff Audcent (geoff.audcent@defra.gsi.gov.uk).*

New guidance for local access forums

Defra has published revised guidance on how the Secretary of State expects forums to contribute to the decision-making process in respect of public access to land, open air recreation and the rights of way network. The guidance, which has been produced with assistance from forum members, disseminates good practice and highlights how forums can most effectively "make a difference". The guidance is primarily intended for forum members but will also be especially useful to forum secretaries and officers in appointing authorities.

The revised guidance is on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/cl/local-access-forums.htm>.

Copies of the guidance are currently being printed and will be sent to all local authorities and to every forum member and secretary. An audio version will also be available.

Further information is available from Geoff Audcent (geoff.audcent@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

Quantifying the socio and economic value of rights of way

Public Rights of Way (PROW) in England and Wales provide important social and economic benefits for people and communities. Because these benefits are hard to quantify, local authorities have found it difficult to justify and prioritise current and future spending on PROW.

Defra recently funded Cranfield University to undertake research to develop a decision support tool to help local authorities manage their expenditure on PROW in line with the achievement of desired social and economic outcomes.

The research and tool can be accessed at www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/public/index.htm

If you would like further information please contact Karen Lee-Bapty at Defra on 0117 372 8211 or email her at Karen.Lee-Bapty@Defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Freedom to choose

In line with the Government's agenda to reduce the burdens placed on local authorities, those authorities in England whose overall performance is judged to be the strongest can choose whether to prepare a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP).

The Local Authorities' Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) Order 2005, which came into force on 1 February 2005, introduced these freedoms. It removed seven statutory plan requirements for authorities that were rated as "excellent" under Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). This included ROWIPs.

The CPA rating system for first tier authorities, who are the ones which have the statutory duty to prepare a ROWIP, has now been changed. These are now scored from zero to four, with four being the highest. Following a public consultation last year the Government announced its intention to make current freedoms available to all "4 star" authorities. Any authorities who were previously rated "excellent", whose performance is not rated as "4 star", will be given a period to improve before the freedom not to prepare a ROWIP is withdrawn.

The Government is currently preparing legislation which will be put before Parliament in the next month or so. If approved these changes should come into effect in May.

Further information and updates are available on the Defra website at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/issues/public/index.htm>

ENGLAND LEISURE VISITS SURVEY 2005

Background Information

The survey was commissioned by a consortium led by the Countryside Agency (now part of Natural England), and including Defra, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency and 8 of the 9 National Parks in England. The New Forest National Park was not in existence when the survey was commissioned.

This type of household survey has been commissioned every few years, since the early 1980s, to provide information on the volume and value of trips to the countryside and other leisure destinations. The data helps Natural England and other organisations involved in promoting and providing outdoor recreation to plan and prioritise work.

A telephone survey of 23,500 households in England took place between February 2005 and February 2006. Interviews were undertaken with a randomly selected person living in the house aged 16 or over. A Leisure visit is defined as a round trip from home for leisure purposes (self-defined). There is no lower time limit or minimum distance, so brief trips close to home are included. Leisure visits from a work address, for example a visit to a gym after work, are also included as long as the respondent started out from and returned home that day.

Too busy to go out?

Over a third of adults (37%) surveyed hadn't made a leisure trip in the last week, according to the England Leisure Visit Survey published today, with 40% saying that they were too busy working or studying to go out. Poor health was cited as the second most common reason (22%).

Dr Helen Phillips, Chief Executive of Natural England, the body which led the consortium that commissioned the research said: *"People are missing out on the wide range of benefits that the natural environment offers, particularly to their health and wellbeing. This is why we have launched our health campaign to encourage more people to enjoy the health benefits that the natural environment provides."*

There were an estimated 3.6 billion leisure trips in England in 2005, down from 5.4 billion in 2002/03, although some of this reduction may have been caused by changes in survey methodology. Trip numbers were growing modestly in the early 1990s, but since 1998 there appears to be an underlying downward trend for all visits, including trips to the countryside.

Despite fewer visits overall, the value of trips is growing with people spending more money per outing. The average spend per trip is £25.09 with higher levels of spend in towns and cities and at seaside resorts. The estimated total

value was £90 billion with £9.4 billion of this in the countryside where the average spend per trip was £13.38. Although fewer people are going out overall the ones who do are more likely to be walking than leisure shopping! 18% said this was the main reason for their trip compared to 12% in 2002/03. The other most popular activities were eating/drinking 18%, leisure shopping 13% and visiting friends/relatives 11%.

For the first time the 2005 survey measured trips to land mapped by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The right to access this land was rolled out across England throughout the twelve-month survey period and during this time 21.2 million visits by people living in England were recorded.

'England Leisure Visits – report of the 2005 survey' is available from the Natural England web site at <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/press/news2007/090107.htm>

FORESTRY COMMISSION

New Forest - 'Yes' to Trial Car Park Closures

On 10th January 2007 delegates agreed to support plans for the seasonal closure of four out of 134 New Forest car parks.

The 'stakeholder forum' meeting, in Lyndhurst, voted by 19 to two in favour of the proposals from the Forestry Commission PROGRESS team.

The scheme is aimed at protecting endangered ground-nesting bird populations by trialling the temporary closure of car parks in especially sensitive areas.

Monitoring of the effects of the March to June closures, due to begin this spring, will be carried out over the five year life of the trial.

The affected car parks are at Clayhill (Burley), Hincheslea Wood, Crockford and Crockford Clump.

By reducing the number of people visiting and crossing the sensitive wildlife areas the organisers hope to increase the total area of relatively secluded high-quality habitat in the forest by around 600 hectares.

Opponents of the proposals said they were in favour of improving the scale and quality of the habitat to encourage an increase in the numbers of endangered birds.

But they told the meeting that there was insufficient scientific data to prove that the scheme would have any, or the right, effect. They called for a delay in action until enough information had been gathered.

Those for the scheme said that all the evidence showed an urgent need for action to begin as soon as possible.

Mr. Ian Taylor, representing the New Forest Mountain Bike Club, said: *"What we heard in the meeting was violent agreement. People are rightly passionate about this issue. But in fact we are all in favour of the same thing. The situation with the bird populations is critical. We have to take pragmatic action now on the basis of the data we do have. But it is also essential that proper scientific studies are carried out as the trials progress so we can prove that we are taking the right steps."*

RSPB spokesman Drew McVey, told the meeting that species like curlew, lapwing and redshank were in serious decline across the country. Snipe in particular were endangered having suffered a 90 per cent decline in numbers.

He said that the New Forest was one of only a few vital strongholds left for some species. Steps needed to be taken to ensure the area remained a safe haven for them.

PROGRESS project co-ordinator Peter Thaxter, said: *"We're delighted that the proposals have received such a large measure of support. The studies we have carried out as part of this project have been the most extensive the forest has ever seen. We do not have sufficient information to prove definitively that our trials will deliver precisely the effects we all want and expect. But the trials themselves are experimental and will be hugely important in providing data that will make our efforts ever more effective."*

For further information on the car park closures please telephone 023 8028 3141. Details can also be found on the www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest website.

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

Clare Balding encourages the UK to Walk Tall, Walk Small, Walk Wonders for Macmillan

BBC broadcaster and Macmillan supporter Clare Balding is encouraging everyone to pull on their walking shoes and get out in the fresh air this springtime to hold an event for Walk Wonders, powered by npower.

Walking enthusiast Clare comments:

"Join me and thousands of others this May and hold your own Walk Wonders event in your local area, to help us to raise £1 million for Macmillan Cancer Support. It's a great excuse to spend time with friends and family of all ages on a springtime stroll, whilst helping improve the lives of people living with cancer. Register now - together we can make a million for Macmillan!"

It couldn't be simpler as it doesn't matter which date in May, or where people choose to stroll - a nearby beauty spot,

along a coastal path, an historic city tour, or in a local country park - now's the time to get out and enjoy the outdoors to raise money for people affected by cancer.

Registering is easy and everyone will receive a free npower pedometer. Supporters can either call the hotline on 0845 602 1490, or register online at www.macmillan.org.uk/walk, and for inspiration, 50 free walking routes can be downloaded from www.go4awalk.com

MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP

Restoration of Peak paths

Seriously eroded upland paths in the Peak District have been given a 'makeover,' making them easier to negotiate and protecting the internationally-important moorland habitats from further damage. Restoration works on key footpaths across the summit of the popular Win Hill near Bamford and from Shining Tor to Cat's Tor near Cheshire's famous Cat and Fiddle pub have recently been completed. These public footpaths are the latest in the Peak District National Park to receive vital restoration work from the Moors for the Future partnership.

"The erosion on these routes had reached a point where doing nothing was no longer an option" said Moors for the Future conservation works manager, Matt Buckler. "We are pleased with the results which should benefit both people and wildlife. By working to create sustainable routes, reverse erosion and regenerate vegetation we should see long term improvements to the land surrounding these paths, which are of international importance."

These popular paths differed in the work required, Win Hill is a steep route that had an erosion scar of up to six metres wide in places, visible from the other side of the valley. Shining Tor is much flatter and wetter with damage of up to 40 metres wide, as walkers skirt the wettest areas.

Stone pitching and gritstone aggregate were used on the steeper areas of Win Hill, with flagstone causeway path laid on the flatter blanket peat of Shining Tor. Significant drainage work was also done to reduce the water on the routes. Eroded path edges have been landscaped to the edge of the newly-laid path and re-seeded to encourage native moorland vegetation.

A further 10 kilometres of pathworks are currently underway, together with the restoration of approximately 500 hectares of bare fire-damaged peat. The Moors for the Future project also supports moorland research and innovative awareness raising projects.

For details on the research, conference reports, restoration work and more, see the project's website www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Access All Areas – NCVO launches new guide for ‘rural friendly’ voluntary organisations

The Chair of the Commission for Rural Communities, Stuart Burgess, will launch a new free guide on how voluntary sector organisations can make their work more accessible to rural communities at the National Council for Voluntary Organisation’s (NCVO) rural conference on 1 February 2007. The guide, ‘Access all areas – meeting the needs of rural communities’, is aimed at frontline voluntary and community organisations and infrastructure bodies that work in both urban and rural areas, and is available at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/ruralproofing.

The guide explains why organisations should ‘rural proof’ their work and provides advice and guidance on how to do it. While rural communities, and the voluntary organisations that work in them, have much in common with urban communities, there are some differences that are important to recognise:

- Proportionally more charities are located in rural areas than urban areas
- People need to travel further to access services
- Rural voluntary organisations rely more heavily on the support of volunteers
- People are more likely to volunteer in rural areas than in urban areas

Key points to consider when ‘rural proofing’ your organisation’s work include:

- Ensuring your organisation’s staff and volunteers have an understanding of rural needs
- Giving rural communities a say on how services should be delivered
- Making sure that your organisation isn’t perceived as an ‘urban organisation’
- Ensuring that you have data on the rural areas you serve

Stuart Burgess, Chair of the Commission for Rural Communities said: *“Much of national and rural policy is developed with the needs of the majority of the population in mind. In England, this is overwhelmingly in towns and cities. This means that policy makers and legislators need to be encouraged to pay particular attention to rural needs and circumstances. The ‘Access all Areas’ guide will encourage and promote the importance of rural proofing to the Third Sector and beyond.”*

Jemma Grieve, from NCVO’s Rural Policy team, and author of the report said: *“Many voluntary and community organisations are already aware of the needs of people in rural areas, and adapt their work to make sure they are accessible to rural communities. The guide brings this good practice together for the first time, to enable all voluntary*

and community organisations to become ‘rural friendly.’” NCVO’s rural conference, ‘Standing Up, Taking Part: Participation and Rural Voluntary Action’, will look at how voluntary and community organisations can involve rural communities.

For further information please contact Siobhan Wakely in NCVO’s Media Office on 020 7520 2569 or email: Siobhan.wakely@ncvo-vol.org.uk.

NATIONAL TRUST

Exposed! Climate Change in Britain’s Backyard

We’re really pleased to announce that after a fantastic year of commissioning photography and capturing climate change as it happens across the UK, we have a beautiful exhibition that is set to open in April and travel the UK over the coming year - **Exposed! Climate Change in Britain’s Backyard.**

What does climate change mean for life in Britain? We challenged ten of the UK’s top photographers to answer this question by capturing climate change through the lens. The result is the stunning new exhibition ‘Exposed!’ - a series of beautiful, thought-provoking and intimate images taken on location at National Trust’s gardens, historic houses, countryside and coastline, coupled with stories from the people who care for these special places. Already our seasons are increasingly unpredictable and our weather often seems extreme. We invite you to discover how our climate is touching every aspect of life on our island, often in surprising ways.

National tour venues and dates include:

Hoopers Gallery, London: 12 April – 11 May 2007
 Nottingham Castle, Nottingham: 19 May - 1 July 2007
 Penrhyn Castle National Trust, Wales: 7 July – 2 September 2007
 Bristol Museum and Arts Gallery, Bristol: November 2007
 Waterfront Hall, Belfast: January 2008

*Entry to the exhibition is free, although there may be admission prices to some venues, check website for details. *For a full list of tour dates, venues and public lectures visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/exposed. Exposed! is supported by the Defra fund ‘Tomorrow’s Climate, Today’s Challenge’.*

NATURAL ENGLAND

A ‘Natural’ Health Service

Natural England launched its health campaign on 8th November 2006, the first of its four national campaigns to reconnect people with the natural environment.

Natural England’s health campaign will encourage:

- More people to get more health benefit from regular contact with the natural environment wherever they live.
- Health professionals to make more use of the natural environment as part of the total health care they give to their patients.
- Professionals who manage public open spaces to improve the amount and quality of green space near where people live.

Natural England will do this by building a coalition of environmental, educational, scientific, health and community organisations to bring the environment to the forefront of the health agenda.

Helen Phillips, Natural England's Chief Executive, said: *"Prevention is better than cure, but up to 97 per cent of NHS spend goes on treating people after they have become ill. We are working with the NHS to plan ways in which the environment is used as a 'natural' health service that gets, and keeps, more people healthy."*

Dr Fiona Adshead, the Government's Deputy Chief Medical Officer, said: *"I welcome Natural England's commitment to encourage and enable people to make use of the country's outdoor space for physical activity."*

Dr William Bird, Natural England's health adviser, added: *"Increasing evidence suggests that both physical and mental health are improved through contact with nature. Yet people are having less contact with nature than at any other time in the past. This has to change!"*

Natural England is working closely with the BBC and over 300 other partners to help deliver Breathing Places, a campaign to mobilise more than a million people, who are not currently active in the environment sector, to get involved at thousands of wildlife friendly green spaces across the country.

Liz Cleaver, Controller of Learning at the BBC stressed the importance of Natural England's health campaign. She said: *"These two campaigns now provide the public with the opportunity for people to get outside and to get actively involved with nature close to where they live. That's great for wildlife – but it's also fantastic for everyone's health and well being."*

For further information visit Natural England website <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk>

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (SEEDA)

From Coalfield to Country Park - Transformed Fowlmead prepares for summer opening to the public

A country park and nature reserve which has risen from the

ashes of an old Kent Coalfield will be opened to the public this summer, marking the completion of one of the most visually dramatic regeneration projects by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).

The £18.8 million Fowlmead Country Park scheme at the former Betteshanger Colliery between Canterbury and Deal has seen a bleak landscape of shale and coaldust transformed into a rolling panorama of woodland, country walks, small lakes, top class cycling and horse riding facilities and open-air terraces for arts exhibitions, all with sweeping views over the East Kent coastal plain.

Fowlmead Country Park will be formally opened to the public at a Bank Holiday weekend celebration on 27th and 28th May 2007.

Among those most eagerly awaiting the event will be Britain's top cyclists, as Fowlmead includes a national standard, 3.5km high specification track, described by enthusiasts as *"the best in the country"*.

Regeneration at Fowlmead has been painstakingly undertaken since 1999 when SEEDA was first handed control of the site.

After establishing the Betteshanger Regeneration Team, involving members from the former mining community and local authorities, who have been consulted every step of the way, it was agreed that one half of the site – divided by the A258 road – should become a business park generating new jobs, while the other should be devoted to public open space.

Infrastructure at the 40-hectare business park, which was formerly the site of the pithead, is now complete to top level, environmentally friendly standards, with sustainable drainage and biomass district heating. Negotiations are underway for new tenants to move in, bringing the first of up to 500 jobs.

Across the road, regeneration of the 120-hectare Fowlmead Country Park has been altogether more complex. Milestone achievements have included:

- Taking shale from the two million cubic metre, flat-topped slagheaps, mixing it with recycled green waste and fertiliser to create a uniquely rich topsoil
- Hand-planting 130,000 new shrubs and trees, including silver birch and hawthorn, amongst many other indigenous varieties.
- Encouraging plant life and the growth of Holm oak and birch trees in a woodland area which had been partly re-vegetated by the old National Coal Board in conjunction with the world-famous Wye Agricultural College and Christ Church College, Canterbury.
- Working with Natural England (formerly English Nature), the Environment Agency and the Kent Wildlife Trust to create protected areas for indigenous birds such as long-eared owls, lapwings, ringer plovers, no fewer than six different species

of bat and protecting spiders, which are uniquely found in shale-rich environments.

- Translocating the reptiles from the pit site to the country park, which included new homes for the lizards, slow worms, grass snakes and other wildlife.
- Building a tunnel underneath the A258 so that the resident badgers and bats can migrate from and between the neighbouring pithead site.
- Opening up an overgrown area alongside the old mine rail track to create a wetland and reed beds, which is already home to moorhens and coots.
- Putting an area of blocks of shale, rich in plant fossils, at the disposal of the Natural History Museum and the Kent Geological Society for school parties to discover the secrets of the ancient marshland.

Says Gordon Harris, SEEDA's Senior Project Manager for Fowlmead: *"Everything we have done since we took charge of the site has been informed by the need to meet the social, economic and environmental challenges for an area facing social deprivation and high unemployment."*

"While the business park is now ready for tenants to move in, Fowlmead will continue to evolve and develop, and will take another ten years before it has matured."

"But the challenge of creating a country park from a spoil tip has worked, it is growing and everyone is amazed at the quality of the planning and the features within the whole site. And everyone – from the Betteshanger Regeneration Team to the contractors, local authority planners to Government agencies – can be proud of what we have created."

For further information please contact Jayne McLaughlan, SEEDA PR Manager, Tel: 01634 899956, by email: jaynemclaughlan@seeda.co.uk, Website: www.seeda.co.uk

YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY AND YORKSHIRE DALES MILLENIUM TRUST

Memorandum of Understanding between National Park Authority and Trust

Two organisations that work together to look after the beautiful Yorkshire Dales have cemented their partnership with a formal agreement. Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) Chairman Carl Lis and Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) new Chairman of Trustees, His Honour Peter Charlesworth met on Thursday 8th February to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between their respective organisations and to plant a commemorative tree at the YDMT's donor woodland, Pasture Wood, Grassington.

YDNPA helped to set up YDMT in 1996 as an independent

charity that aims to support the well-being of this special area. Since 1997 the Trust has undertaken more than 600 conservation, heritage and education projects worth over £15 million and recruited over 30,000 supporters. This year the Trust will be celebrating its tenth anniversary.

Although separate organisations, the Trust and the YDNPA have worked very closely together. Current jointly-run schemes include Donate to the Dales, Learning in Limestone Country, Hay Time and Dales Woodland Restoration.

The Trust is also currently contracted to manage the Authority's Sustainable Development Fund, which was launched in October 2002, and challenges organisations, individuals, and businesses to come forward with new ideas for achieving a more sustainable way of living in the countryside.

Both organisations aim to continue this collaboration into the future, and the Memorandum of Understanding has been drawn up to set out clearly respective responsibilities – how the two organisations interact, monitor, report and review arrangements.

Mr Lis, praised the work of YDMT and welcomed the formal document. *"Since it was conceived by the YDNPA in 1996, the Millennium Trust has achieved so much for the Dales through the many successful projects it has run and the funding it has brought in,"* he said.

"The YDMT understands fully the purpose of the National Park Authority and uses that knowledge to obtain and place funding to help the Dales communities and the National Park as a whole."

"This Memorandum of Understanding puts our partnership on a formal footing and lays out a clear direction for the future."

Mr Charlesworth said: *"Our relationship with the National Park Authority has always been close and is important to ensure that our work is beneficial to the Dales, its landscape, inhabitants and visitors."*

"This Understanding formalises and clarifies our relationship so that our work and projects in the future will continue to advance our mutual objectives of promoting the best interests and well-being of the Dales."

For more information please contact Wendy Lawson at Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust on 015242 51002. Alternatively email wendy.lawson@ydmtd.org.

If you would like to send items for inclusion in the news section, please forward it to crn@shu.ac.uk.

Usual editorial policy rules apply.

Summary of CRN Seminars

Why?How?Who? Community Engagement in Urban and Rural Greenspace Management - 22/11/2006 Priory Rooms, Birmingham

This seminar attracted 49 delegates and was chaired by Andy Maginnis from Worcestershire County Council. The seminar aimed to provide an insight into the benefits of involving the community in countryside and urban greenspace management; to suggest a number of mechanisms for facilitating community engagement; and to help identify which methods of engagement will help to meet which objectives.

The morning session included presentations from Elaine Gibb, Greenspace Scotland, who focused her presentation on why it is worth bothering with community engagement; Rachel Datlen from Worcestershire County Council, discussed how to involve communities in the management of a Country Park; Pete Johnstone from Natural England, presented the achievements and lessons learnt from the Doorstep Greens initiative; Edd Moss, British Waterways, gave a case study on how they engaged the communities on the Droitwich Canal restoration project. In the afternoon session John Hole, Caerphilly Borough Council, used a practical exercise to demonstrate how local projects, without the involvement and influence of local people, will have limited success. Dave Morton, National Trust Northern Ireland, focussed on engaging the community around the urban fringe site of Divis and the Black Mountain, Belfast. Max Hislop, Forestry Commission, introduced a toolbox for public involvement in forest and woodland planning; and Donna Carter and Angela Morgan from Groundwork UK, gave a very practical presentation on how to engage the community.

Outdoor Recreation and Nature Conservation - 24/01/07 Centre in the Park, Sheffield

This seminar attracted 57 delegates and was chaired by Geoff Hughes, Chairman of the Countryside Recreation Network. The aims of the event included: To understand today's demands for outdoor pursuits and future trends; to appreciate how different parties can benefit from positive access management agreements, based on first hand experience from case studies; to explore how environmental disputes can be resolved by policy, consensus, and on the ground solutions; to introduce the Best of Both Worlds website (www.bobw.co.uk).

The morning session included an overview from Chris Gordon, Natural England, on the national trends of outdoor recreation; an insight into the concept of Best of Both Worlds from Doug Kennedy; Roger Sidaway focused on how to resolve environmental disputes; Cath Flitcroft, BMC, gave good practice examples of their work with access agreements; and Paul Hawkins, Exmoor National Park, discussed the issue of

managing recreation in a National Park. The afternoon session began with a presentation from David Slater, Natural England, on Reconciling Ground Nesting Birds and how with careful planning birds can be safeguarded without the need for widespread closures. Richard Brooks, MoD, and Lynne Ferrand, Pembrokeshire Coastal National Park Authority, gave a case study outline on the nature conservation and recreation use of Castlemartin Range. The group also broke into three workshops in the afternoon session: Bob Cartwright, Lake District National Park Authority, led a workshop on Sustainable Recreation in Sensitive Environments; Roger Sidaway facilitated a workshop on Unresolved Conflicts; and Andrew Hanson, CCPR, led a workshop entitled Legislation or Education?

Activity Tourism: A Practical Perspective - 7/02/2007 Stranmillis University College, Belfast

This seminar attracted 57 delegates and was chaired by Dr Terry Stevens, Managing Director of the international leisure and tourism consultancy, Stevens and Associates. The aims of the event included: to understand the growth potential for Activity Tourism in the UK and Ireland; to provide insight on how small businesses in the activity tourism industry have achieved success; to explore how key marketing and business approaches can be best utilised in activity tourism; and to look at best practice examples of how to achieve economic, environmental and social sustainability.

The morning session included John Swarbrooke, Sheffield Hallam University, discussing the growth of activity tourism; Willie Loughheed, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, focused on the variety of marketing tools used to promote activity tourism in Northern Ireland; Andy Middleton, TYF Adventure, explored the issues of sustainability; Tristram Mayhew, the Chief Gorilla of Go Ape! discussed the concept of new products and innovative ideas and how Go Ape! has become a successful business; Mandy Whitehead from High Trek Snowdonia focussed on how to market your business on a budget. Amanda Smyth, Visit Britain, commenced the afternoon session with a focus on how they have approached marketing activity tourism including a case study on a recent Outdoor England campaign; following Amanda there were two success stories from Northern Ireland - Chris Scott, Share Holiday Village, discussed international business and Martin McMullen, Highpoint Group, focused on doing the basics well! To conclude the day Terry Stevens presented the "17 Immutable Rules of a Successful Activity Business".

The proceedings from these events are available to purchase from our website:
www.countrysidecreation.org.uk/publications

Countryside Recreation Network Events

Title: Branding the Outdoor Experience
Venue: Birmingham
Date: Thursday 29 March 2007
Cost: £125 (£100 sponsoring agencies)

The seminar is aimed at managers and decision makers who are charged with promoting outdoor activity to people from all parts of society. It will explain why 'one-size' does not fit all. The seminar covers theoretical and practical perspectives on marketing where stakeholder groups are diverse and have different aspirations and needs. The seminar will take modern concepts of branding and discuss how they can be applied by people engaged in countryside management and policy.

Aims of the Event

- To introduce delegates to modern concepts of branding.
- To provide understanding of terms such as "marketing", "social marketing", "advertising", "audience segmentation" and "promotion" and to apply this in the context of outdoor recreation;
- To explore the arguments for and against adopting a branding approach to promoting outdoor recreation;
- To hear practical examples of how branding can be applied at different scales, for different products/ experiences and for different audiences.

For further information on either of these seminars, please email Helen English, CRN Assistant crn@shu.ac.uk or alternatively visit our website: www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk/events

Title: The Changing Funding Environment for Outdoor Recreation
Venue: Southampton
Date: Thursday 23 May 2007
Cost: £125 (£100 sponsoring agencies)

The seminar is aimed at government agency and local authority staff and practitioners involved in securing funding for outdoor recreation and countryside management and development.

Traditionally outdoor recreation organisations and resource managers have received considerable funding support from external sources to supplement their core work programmes. Currently the external funding environment is undergoing significant change. The new EU funding regimes are being implemented from January 1st 2007, while the National Lottery programmes are changing priorities and introducing new programmes, particularly since the formation of the Big Lottery Fund.

At the same time, the amount of money available from many sources is reducing, with a lower allocation of EU funds to the UK and the pressure on Lottery Funds to support the 2012 Olympics. The outdoor recreation (urban and rural) and resource management sector needs to gear up to maximise opportunities from the new funding environment. It needs to become more attuned to the priorities of funders and more stringent in appraising and evaluating projects.

Aims of the Event

This Seminar aims to review these trends and look at the potential implications for countryside recreation, through presentations from:-

- Funders outlining how their programmes are changing;
- Organisations securing funding in the past, outlining their experiences;
- Experts in appraisal and evaluation of projects.

Countryside Recreation Network Publications List

	Price (incl.postage)	Tick
REPORTS		
A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise (2005)	£20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Exclusion in Countryside Leisure in the United Kingdom - the role of the countryside in addressing social exclusion (2001)	£10	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS		
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