



This issue... 'Participation in the Outdoors'.

- Recreation in a Changing Environment • Exploring Strangford • Participation in Sport and Active Recreation in the Countryside •
- 1995-2008: Trends in Outdoor Recreation in Northern Ireland • Participation in Outdoor Recreation in Scotland: Key Results from the Scottish Recreation Survey •
- Preferences or Barriers? Why do Some People not visit the Outdoors? • Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Participation in Forest School •
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Countryside Recreation Network (CRN)

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- 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

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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.

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Editorial

Mike McClure, Sport Northern Ireland

This edition of the journal is focussed on participation and this has always left me wrestling with a conflicting viewpoint. One of my primary motivations for getting out in the outdoors is to experience that feeling of getting away from it all and wildness - yet my job is to promote and encourage more people to go into these places, to gain the according benefits to their health and well being. Wild places and natural environments therefore need careful management so that we don't lose what we value!!

Over the past 5 or 6 years Coillte have been a key driver of participation in Outdoor recreation in the Republic of Ireland. While it would have been relatively easy for Coillte to make their land available for recreation – they have gone much further through a policy framework to promote it, develop facilities and opportunities and educate and support their staff and managers. Bill Murphy's article is an interesting example of how this organisation has embraced a major shift in direction and yet retained its core purpose of being a commercial forestry operator.

When I worked in outdoor education I had the opportunity to travel extensively around many wild places in the UK, Ireland and abroad – but one of my favourite places is still Strangford Lough. Although not dramatic in scenery as it has no large mountains or coastal cliffs adjacent to it - it is nevertheless a very special place which is rich in culture and contains a myriad of wildlife. Strangford is a major, and many think, under used resource for recreation close to a large population centre – the city of Belfast. The article by Lynne Gilmore highlights something that I have believed for a long time – that the best way to ensure the conservation and biodiversity of special places is to get the people who use them for work and play to really value them.

Matt Roebuck's article on the "Active People" research from Sport England and Caro-lyne Ferris' article on the trends in activities in Northern Ireland both highlight the importance of outdoor sports and some interesting information can be gleaned from these. Noticeably both reports show that outdoor sports are generally still very male dominant and that there is a lower level of participation by non-white, limiting disability and lower socio-economic groups. The research that CAAN has done shows that for most sports – the increase in participation is by individuals unaligned to Governing Bodies or formal clubs. Effective communication with these individuals regarding safety issues, best practice and environmental considerations is therefore a major issue as they have no collective forum with which to engage. More creative approaches to this – as highlighted by the "Turn o

the Tide" project are going to be required to reach these individuals.

In Northern Ireland we have just completed a review of the 1998 Countryside Recreation Strategy and are now proceeding with developing a new strategy – which is much more likely to be an "Outdoor" recreation strategy. One of the reasons for this is that outdoor recreation need not be in a rural setting but can make use of urban green spaces and fringe areas. The research by Scottish Natural Heritage has indicated that while the number of people taking outdoor recreation trips has increased the distance travelled and the amount of money spent on these trips has decreased. The latest buzz word among outdoor activity providers is "Staycation" – i.e. vacations near home!!

Sue Williams' article on "Barriers or preferences" takes the question of why people do not participate in outdoor recreation to the next level. Much research has been done on the "barriers to participation" throughout the UK but even if all these structural barriers are removed – the question remains – how much do some people want to participate in Outdoor Recreation? We have a lot of evidence on the fact that the numbers of females participating in sport including outdoor recreation activities is considerable lower than males. While some of this is undoubtedly still due to stereotypical roles in the home – perhaps someone needs to ask – "What do women want?" Now there's a piece of research – for a woman!!

As I write this at the beginning of June - we have been having a particularly good spell of weather and the number of people out walking, cycling and running seems to have exploded. So for all our plans and strategies to increase participation in outdoor recreation, perhaps our other activities that are causing climate change could be the greatest factor in getting people out, being active, enjoying the fresh air and appreciating the natural environment.

Mike McClure

Countryside Recreation Development Officer-
Sport Northern Ireland.

Recreation in a Changing Environment

Bill Murphy, Coillte Teoranta



Our goal: Attracting people to nature, Glenteenassig forrest, Co. Kerry

Coillte Teoranta (the Irish Forestry Board) was founded in 1989 as a commercial state company with the mandate of managing the state's forest resources on a commercial basis.

Coillte's predecessor, the Forest and Wildlife Service, had developed and managed a range of recreation facilities since the 1960's and these facilities were transferred to the new company to be maintained for public use. These are important facilities given that there is no countryside recreation access legislation in the Republic of Ireland that is similar to the CROW or Land Reform Acts in GB and that Coillte's estate accounts for approximately 7% of the national land area. Coillte maintained the open forest policy, developed in the late 60's. In 2003, the need to revisit our open forest policy was recognised. Throughout the early 2000's Coillte embarked on a process that would bring about a major change as to how the company operated and ultimately developed the vision for the future; it also sought certification under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) sustainable forest management (SFM) initiative. The initial consultations held at local and national level revealed a strong interest on the part of the general public in the public good elements of the forest, in particular the recreation potential of the forests. Recreation was recognised as an important element in maintaining Coillte's licence to operate. This change coincided with a period when Ireland was also going through rapid transformation with major urban and economic developments. These developments resulted in an increase in the pace of life and a growing demand of the

need to protect access to the natural world for recreation. As mentioned above there is no outdoor access legislation and there were increasing tension points between recreation users and private landowners over recreation access. Coillte responded to these needs by reviewing its policy on recreation and developing a new recreation policy that would form the basis for the organisation's involvement in this area of national life.

Recreation Policy – The Foundation.

Not only had Coillte to deal with changing society expectations of the forest, but forest management needed a new approach to deal with new activities such as mountain biking, managing forests on the urban fringe and the increasing environmental impacts from growing visitor numbers and anti-social behaviour. Coillte also wanted to improve its performance in the important area of social responsibility which was essential to maintaining the company's licence to operate. Following more than a year of work by a group consisting of both internal and external recreation and forest managers, Coillte published its Recreation Policy – Healthy Forests, Healthy Nation. The group reviewed legislation, best practice and over 200 submissions from organisations responding to the consultation document as part of developing the policy. The policy set out the rationale for a commercial state company's involvement in recreation and covered a range of issues from community involvement in partnerships, volunteerism and outdoor ethics to our position on a broad range of activities and sports. The policy was instrumental in allowing a shift to a new level of recreation engagement by our field staff as it



presented a unified and clearly understood position both in the organisation and to our stakeholders. As a clear statement of our position on a broad range of forest recreation related issues, the policy formed the platform for our involvement with the National Trails Office (NTO), Fáilte Ireland (the national tourism development authority) and with the newly formed Comhairle na Tuaithe (C na T – the Countryside Council). Both the NTO and C na T were setting out to develop a national trails strategy and an outdoor recreation strategy. The policy also allowed forest and district managers across the country to understand, clearly, the role Coillte had in recreation and allowed managers to engage with the increasing numbers of stakeholders on a solid and well informed basis.

Recreation Developments

When recreation was first developed in Irish forests¹, Ireland was largely a rural country with a large proportion of the population living and working in the in the countryside. Irish society has undergone a dramatic change in the last twenty years. Today, following a period of rapid growth and urban development, Coillte as forest managers are expected to provide services that are increasingly focussed on delivering public good. The recreation landscape has changed – people are more active, want newer and more interesting sports and want to be more closely involved in developments.

Funding

A fundamental issue outlined in the policy was the value of recreation for the public good. In order to establish this, a joint study was commissioned with the National Trails Office of the Irish Sports Council on the economic value of forest recreation and trails². This has been used to secure operational funding on a national basis which serves to underpin the provision of the service.

Partnership

The concept of partnership working is now fundamental to the provision of recreation at all levels in the organisation. This can range from the €9 million development of the Lough Key Forest and Adventure Park in partnership with Roscommon County Council to trail construction in partnership with trail conservation clubs like Mountain Meitheal. The recently formed Dublin Mountains Partnership (www.dublinmountains.ie) is an innovative collaboration between Coillte, the local county councils, the National Park and Wildlife Service and the recreation users to improve the recreational experience on public lands close to the capital.

Sustainable Infrastructure

Working with Fáilte Ireland, under the National Development Plan, Coillte has developed recreation infrastructure at over 34 sites across the country including three major mountain bike centres in Wicklow, Cork/Limerick and Galway. As part of this programme Coillte constructed over 200km of new walking and biking trails, improved and developed signage, developed a walkers and cyclists welcome scheme and a new website www.coillteoutdoors.ie, which was designed to improve information that encourages users access to our forests for recreation. The Coillte recreation team has led the way in improving sustainable trail building techniques in Ireland, developing skills in machine trail construction and

water management which are required in response to changing rainfall patterns of recent years and the need to deal with increasing visitor numbers in sensitive areas.

Leave No Trace

Coillte welcomes responsible use and was the first national organisation to adopt the Leave No Trace approach in our policy to encourage an ethos of more responsible use by our visitors. Since then Coillte has been working with other organisations (including CRN members such as Countryside Access Activities Network and the National Trails Office) to promote and develop the message in Ireland.

The future?

Currently, Ireland and indeed the western world are going through a major economic downturn. This will undoubtedly put pressure on resources available to recreation managers. The Coillte Recreation Team are seeking innovative ways in which we can work with others to improve our recreation offering. Information and activity are increasingly required by recreation users. We are attempting, given the resources available, to improve the activity base of our forests. The development of education based trails and the networking of our forests are all designed to increased the attractiveness of our estate for a broader range of users. There has been an over emphasis on walking as an activity at a national level – in order to attract younger visitors the need to move beyond this and mountain biking and similar sports will be essential. We believe that information is essential to encouraging use and care of the countryside. The internet provides a very valuable tool capable of engaging with a much wider audience than heretofore. Through www.coillteoutdoors.ie we are working to build a platform that provides an interesting and informative portal which attracts people to nature and provides them with the resources to take that first step outside. Collaboration with other teams in our organisation, such as the environment team, is essential to unlocking a broader view of forest recreation and its capabilities. Coillte as an organisation has set out a vision for the future of the company under a programme known as DESTINATION 2012. One of the four objectives is that Coillte will be a progressive company “recognised for our role in sustaining the earth’s natural resources, attracting people to nature and supporting local communities.”

Further information:

Coillte’s recreation policy is available online at http://www.coillte.ie/about_coillte/publications/other_publications/other_publications/recreation_policy_healthy_forest_healthy_nation_2005/

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Photographic References:

Photograph credited to Coillte

Footnotes:

¹ The first forest park in the Republic of Ireland was opened in 1966 at Gougane Barra in County Cork. The Northern Ireland Forest Services developed their first forest park in Tollymore, County Down in the 1950s.

² *Economic value of trails and forest recreation in the Republic of Ireland 2005*, Fitzpatrick and Associates Dublin 2.

<http://www.coillte.ie/fileadmin/templates/pdfs/Final%20Economic%20Study%20of%20Trails.pdf>

Exploring Strangford

Dr Lynn Gilmore and Caroline Nolan, Strangford Lough Office



Strangford Lough is the largest marine Lough in the British Isles and a place of striking contrasts, from the aptly named 'Narrows', the channel connecting the Lough to the Irish Sea with its turbulent fast flowing waters, to the vast, calm expanses of its northern sandflats.

Between these two extremes lie a hundred or so islands, countless rocks and pladdies, sheltered bays, a lagoon and shores comprising of boulders, cobbles, pebbles, shingle and areas of deep mud. These shores are backed by rolling hills called drumlins which were left behind by retreating glaciers and characterise the landscape. Good examples of this unusual landscape are rarely found outside the drumlin belt stretching westwards from County Down towards the Atlantic coast.

The 'Narrows' is a deep rock-lined channel that separates the picturesque towns of Strangford and Portaferry. The eight minute trip on the car ferry from Strangford to Portaferry is a favourite with children (and adults) who line the open deck to admire the views and look out for passing seals, porpoises, jellyfish, cormorants and terns on their way to Exploris - Northern Ireland's only aquarium.

The extraordinary variety of habitats and conditions give rise to the Lough's equally varied and abundant wildlife. With

over 2000 recorded marine species, the Lough is tremendously important for biodiversity with huge flocks of over-wintering birds and important summer visitors include nesting terns. Strangford Lough is one of the most important breeding sites in Ireland for common seals, and also has a small number of grey seals present. Otters are widespread and porpoises are regularly seen in the Lough. It is the largest of the three Marine Nature Reserves in the UK and its international importance is recognised through its designation as both a Specially Protected Area (SPA) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Beneath the waves lie equally rich communities. The sides of the Narrows are draped in huge colourful sponges and brilliant soft corals. Elsewhere the seabed is carpeted with brittle stars, anemones, and sea squirts. Horse mussel beds have declined but still provide one of the richest habitats in the Lough. The more eye-catching animals include octopus, conger eels, angler fish and multicoloured wrasse.

Turn O' the Tide

As well as being renowned for its environment, landscape, rich culture and built heritage, Strangford Lough is extensively used by people to enjoy the outdoors through a wide range of activities. These include sailing, kayaking and canoeing, wildlife watching, visiting the huge number of fascinating archaeological sites or just taking a walk along the shores of the Lough and enjoying the sounds of the sea, the wildlife and the atmosphere of this very special place. The Lough's northern tip is only about 6 km from the

outskirts of Belfast and is therefore very accessible to large numbers of people. It provides sheltered and safe moorings among the islands and is home to 10 yacht clubs, 2 outdoor education centres and has recently had a new canoe trail developed which was launched in 2008 and includes a fantastic bothy on Salt Island.

The Strangford Lough Management Advisory Committee (SLMAC) provides advice to government on the strategic management of the Lough. It is comprised of stakeholder organisations and departmental nominees representing the main interests on and around the Lough. While the Committee does not manage the Lough on a day to day basis - it liaises closely with the bodies that do and has helped to initiate and encourage many projects. These include an improved system of aids to navigation and information panels around the Lough. The Strangford Lough Office in Portaferry facilitates the SLMAC, providing administrative support and co-ordinating projects. The Office is funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Ards Borough Council and Down District Council.

Research initiated by the SLMAC had indicated that many local people do not feel engaged with the Lough's heritage nor feel that they can influence its management. The SLMAC recognised that the Lough can bring tremendous mental and physical health benefits to people who engage with it and that the area's tourism economy is based on heritage and an attractive environment. The SLMAC also recognised that the local people and Lough users are the best people to ensure that the future of Lough's wildlife and landscape are secured. Strangford Lough is also an area that is rich in characters, visual artists, wordsmiths and craftspeople who are talented at interpreting and communicating their heritage. A programme of activities called *Turn O' The Tide* was therefore developed by the Strangford Lough Office in association with the users and local people which covers two complementary areas of activity.

- A set of projects that engage people with their heritage in innovative ways (funded primarily by the Heritage Lottery Fund).
- A coordinated approach to Voluntary Management Initiatives to help people using the Lough to manage their activities so that they do not have a negative impact on other users or the environment. This work has been funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Down District and Ards Borough Councils with support from the National Trust and close collaboration with local stakeholder groups.

Turning the Tide towards Voluntary Management in Strangford Lough

Generally people involved in sailing, canoeing, diving and other water based recreation have shown great enthusiasm for finding out more about the Lough's wildlife and the best way to avoid damaging it or the ecosystem of which it is part. The initiative seeks to use creative ideas and innovative

approaches from the people who are already using the Lough for work and play.

So far the work has focussed on water-based recreation and has included a Wildlife Safe Marine Ecotourism (WiSe) Training and Accreditation Course which was held in Portaferry with over 20 local boat operators in attendance. The work has also included co-coordinating the Strangford Lough Spring Clean - which is an annual 2 week event where groups get out on the shore to do a tidy up. In 2008 over 560 volunteers took part in the spring clean.

So – what's next? It has been recognised that contact needs to be made with all the Lough's user groups - people involved in fishing and aquaculture, aerial and terrestrial activities and those using the Lough for educational purposes in order to ensure that no-one is left out of the process.

Plans for the future include activity maps showing the best places to walk, camp, birdwatch, seal watch etc along with information on areas and times to avoid, codes of practice and species spotting guides. A "castaway" evening on a National Trust island is also planned to engage with boat and canoe/kayak users and Strangford Lough Sea Dogs is a programme to get young people out on the water who may not otherwise have an opportunity to do so.

The intention through all these activities is to exchange ideas with people and start to develop a suite of materials that will help people to understand and enjoy the Lough's amazing wildlife and how to avoid damaging or disturbing it. An important part of this is to develop good, informal, interpersonal relationships between Lough users and conservation staff, to foster future collaboration and two way communication. The idea is not to reinvent the wheel but to embrace wider initiatives such as *Leave No Trace* and the *RYA Green Blue Initiative*.

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Children taking part in the Strangford Lough Spring Clean 2009. Every year hundreds of children take part in this 2 week event.

Participation in Sport and Active Recreation in the Countryside

Matt Roebuck, Sport England



How many adults participate in sport and active recreation in a countryside setting, who are these people and where do they come from?

6.2 million adults (16+) have participated in sport or active recreation associated with participation in the countryside within the last month. This rises to 8.95 million when the number who have cycled recreationally within the past month are included. The figure further increases to 24 million when including those who have walked for recreational purposes.

Active People: an introduction

October 2008 saw the fieldwork close on the second Active People Survey (APS), the largest survey of its type in Europe, a survey that sampled over 180,000 individuals including a minimum of 500 people from every local authority in England. Active People is primarily known for providing the figures by which Sport England measures its strategic target of increasing the number of people participating in sport by 1 million by 2012, measuring those that are participating in an average of 3, thirty minute sessions of moderate intensity sport a week. It also provides the source data for the local government sport indicator (NI8)

The breadth of questions asked and demographic information gathered is so great, that the dataset created has the potential to be utilised; in the sports, countryside recreation and other partnering sectors.

This article looks at just some of the information available from the Active People Survey 2 that will benefit those involved in the promotion of countryside recreation. Hopefully it will whet your appetite to investigate the data yourself using the Active People Diagnostic tool. The Active People Diagnostic is an easy to use online resource that can help you produce a wide range of analysis to better understand participation and focus your interventions. It can be found at www.webreport.se/apd

What the numbers show

The statistics provided in this article are based on the number of adults (16+) that reported that they participated at least once in sport within the past 28 days.

The definition of 'countryside sports' is problematic; the Active People Survey does not ask questions on the setting of an individual's sports participation. Therefore the figures in this article are based on the sports that realistically have the potential to be regularly performed in a countryside setting.

The Active People Survey first questions adults on their walking and cycling participation, before specific questions on 'sport and active recreational activities'. For the purposes of this article, we have in focusing on sport excluded recreational walking and cycling from the analysis. Only if an interviewee included a specific form of walking or cycling within their other 'sport or active recreational activities' such as 'Gorge Walking', 'BMX' or 'Rambling' is it be included in this analysis. With the Active People Diagnostic, you can

investigate walking and cycling further.

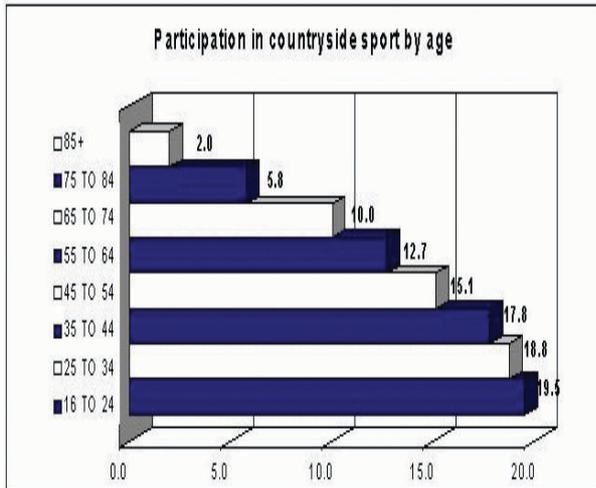
How many?

Just over half the adult population of England do not take part in sport at all. Of the 19.3 million that have taken part in sport; just over 3 in 10 have participated in ‘countryside sport’. This equates to 15% of the English population or 6.2 million people. This compares to the 12% of the adult population that have swum indoors or the 6.2% that have played football outdoors.

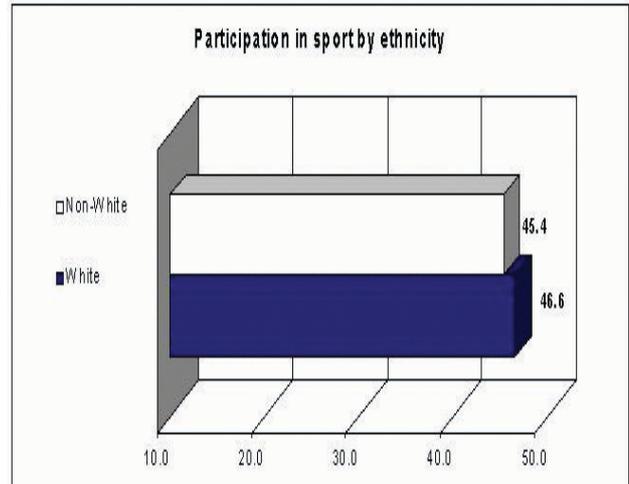
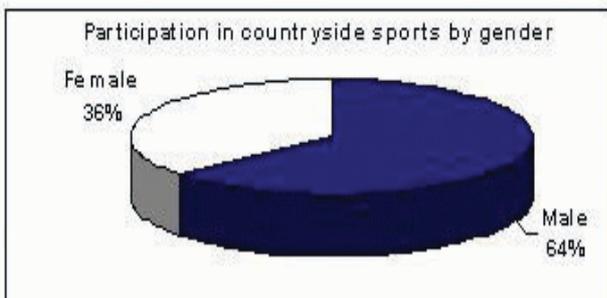
Who is taking part?

Sustaining participation by tackling the drop-off in participation in sport as people age is a key part of Sport England’s 2008-11 Strategy. In general we see a large participatory drop-off in sport in the post-school years; and this steep decline continues as people get older. Participation in countryside sport does not decrease with age as steeply as participation in general sport, with no major decline occurring until the age of 45 years.

Two-thirds of participants in the countryside sports continue to play at least once a month until their mid 60s, whilst only half those participating in all sports combined will continue to do so until this age.



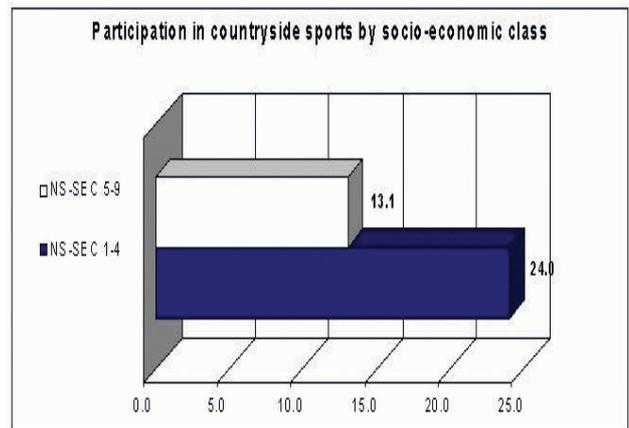
There are two males participating in countryside sports for every female, a similar ratio is found in cyclists, but this is noticeably less equitable than the figures for general sports participants within England.



There is a noticeable difference in the comparative participation rates of white and non-white groups in general sports and countryside sport participation. Those from a white ethnic background are approximately twice as likely to participate in countryside sports as those from a black or Asian background.

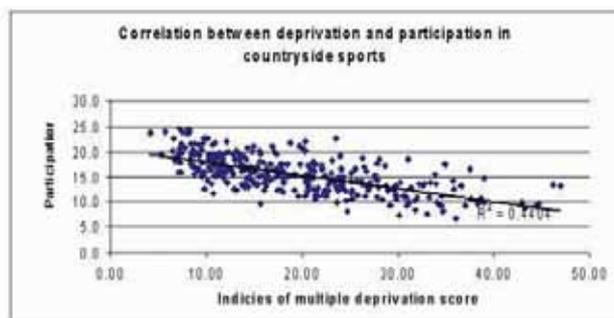
Only one in fifteen individuals with a limiting disability participates in countryside sports in comparison to the one in six of those without such a disability.

Individuals from a lower socio-economic background are less likely to participate in countryside sports than they are in sport in general. Individuals from the NS-SEC 1-4 (equivalent to ABC1) groups are only half as likely to participate in countryside sports as those from NS-SEC 5-9 (C2DE) groups.



Where are countryside participants to be found?

The Index of Multiple Deprivation combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each local authority in England. This allows each area to be ranked relative to one another according to their level of deprivation. The table in figure 5 shows that there is a general and noticeable tendency towards higher participation in less deprived local authority areas although the correlation is not a strong and ultimately determining factor in participation.



Sport England is currently considering the grant applications received as part of its first themed funding round; 'Rural Communities'. This fund aims both to address barriers and create new opportunities for participation in sport in rural communities.

The government has classified local authorities into one of six groups based on their rural or urban nature (Those authorities classified as rural, on average have a noticeably higher participation in countryside sport and recreation (between 16.6 and 17.6%), in comparison to the urban authorities (14 to 14.6%). It is also apparent that in each of the six categories those with the lowest participation rates in countryside sports always have a greater level of deprivation than those authorities with the highest levels of participation. Therefore as we might expect a combination of the rural/urban nature of an area and its level of deprivation do appear to have an influence on participation in countryside sports.

Authorities' Average countryside sports participation rates (%)

Major Urban	14	Large Urban	14.4
Other Urban	14.6		
Significant Rural	16.8	Rural 50	16.6
		Rural 80	17.6

The final map appears to present a south/western to north/eastern split in levels of countryside sports participation across the country and also across the London region. There is a noticeable concentration of low participation rates surrounding the Birmingham area as well as the cities to the North of the Peak District. The only significant area of high participation in the North of England is in the more affluent rural areas close to the Lake District and the two National Parks of Yorkshire. This map also appears to support the suggestion that although there is not a strong correlation across all local authorities within England, those authorities, at the extremes of urbanity and deprivation are amongst those with the lowest levels of countryside sports participation.

Summary of findings

6.2 million (15%) of England's population have participated in countryside sport within the last month.

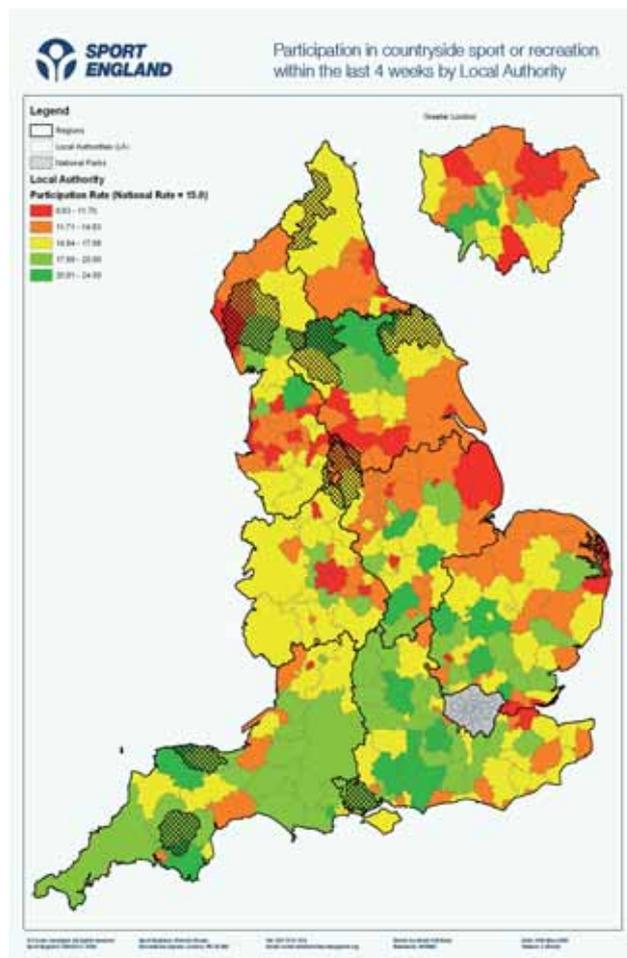
There are 2 male participants in countryside sports for every female.

Those from non-white, limiting disability and lower socio-economic groups are less well represented in countryside

sports than sport participation as a whole.

As people age, participation in countryside sport does not decline as steeply in comparison with sport overall.

Although there is not a strong overall correlation, a combination of the deprivation and urbanity of an area at the extremes; do appear to have an influence in participation in countryside sport.



When can you find out more?

Sport England encourages all those interested in developing and increasing participation in sport to register for our easy to use, online diagnostic tool. In addition – for those interested in carrying out more complex statistical analysis the APS1 data that is available through the UK Data Archive at Essex University with APS 2 data.

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Photographic References:

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1995-2008 Trends in Outdoor Recreation in Northern Ireland

Dr Caro-Lynne Ferris, Countryside Access and Activities Network



In August 2008, Sport NI and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board commissioned the Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) to undertake a research project to assess the trends in 23 outdoor recreation activities during the last 13 years, with a view to informing the preparation of a new Outdoor Recreation Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The study commenced in September 2008 and was completed in January 2009 by an independent consultant, Sarah Noble with assistance from CAAN's Research Officer, Eszter Ballo

The project covered the following activities:

Land based activities: Adventure Racing, Caving, Fell Running, Field Archery, Kite Buggy, Mountain Biking, Mountain Boarding, Orienteering and Rock Climbing
Water based activities: Canoeing, Kite Surfing, Rowing, Sailing, Power Boating and Motor Cruising, Scuba Diving, Surfing, Water Skiing and Wake Boarding,
Air based activities: Aeromodelling, Microlight Flying, Paragliding and Hang gliding.

The activities of walking, cycling and horse riding were not included in the research as they are going to be considered

in a separate piece of research later in 2009. In addition, some of the activities that were considered in the original 1995 research study were omitted because they do not require public access to the natural environment. Angling was initially included within the scope of the project however during the course of the data collection phase it was withdrawn as it clearly merited a more in-depth and detailed report, addressing the specific issues affecting angling within Northern Ireland.

Project methodology

The project involved 2 stages:

- Data collection and collation.
- Plotting of data on a Geographical Information System (GIS) including the preparation of maps showing the location of all facility venues.

Data was collected from a wide range of organisations including:

- National Governing Bodies (NGB's).
- Local Councils.
- Outdoor Education Centres including Tollymore Mountain Centre, Northern Ireland's National Outdoor Centre.
- Commercial outdoor activity providers.
- Statutory authorities including Forest Service, Northern Ireland Water, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).
- Other stakeholders including the National Trust and Private Estates.

Data was collected using a variety of techniques including phone calls, email correspondence and one-to-one meetings. In addition, a range of templates, specifying the data required, was issued to the relevant representatives for completion. The information required to be detailed within the templates included venues, facilities, events, participation levels, trends and factors affecting future development.

As with any research project, it is important to note that the veracity of the data provided and the conclusions drawn from the data, was dependent on the accuracy of the information received from the stakeholders. The data collection phase of the project highlighted significant difficulties in obtaining accurate statistical data on participation levels. In general terms, the greater the participation levels within a sport the smaller the amount of accurate data available. In particular, it was extremely difficult to obtain any accurate information regarding participation levels of disabled individuals, ethnic minorities or those from High Social Need areas. In most cases these statistics are not recorded at club or NGB level.

On occasion there was a limited response from the representatives of some sports and consequently the data made available for the GIS mapping and drafting of this report is incomplete. No information was submitted for the sports of diving, water ski-ing and wake boarding.

Key trends in Outdoor Activities over the past 10 years.

Most activities under consideration in the study have experienced growth in participation levels. This is particularly true for fell running, cross-country mountain biking, adventure racing, orienteering, canoeing and surfing (Fig 1.) In the majority of cases, growth in participation has been greatest amongst those not affiliated to clubs or National Governing Bodies.

In all activities, female participation is significantly lower than that of males. Those activities that do have high female participation levels are caving (45%), rowing (40%) and orienteering (33%).

In all activities disabled participation is low. The exception to this is sailing where it is estimated that because of the introduction of the Sailability Scheme to Northern Ireland in 2001, there are now over 1100 disabled individuals participating in sailing annually. Several NGBs, including orienteering and aeromodelling, are actively working to encourage increased disabled participation through targeted initiatives and events.

In all activities ethnic minority participation is low. Anecdotal evidence suggests a significant number of eastern Europeans participate in rock climbing and increasing numbers of ethnic minorities participate in surfing.

The availability of cheaper equipment has had a positive impact on participation levels in a number of activities including canoeing, surfing and mountain biking whilst the advent of ready-to-fly aircraft has contributed to increased participation in aeromodelling.

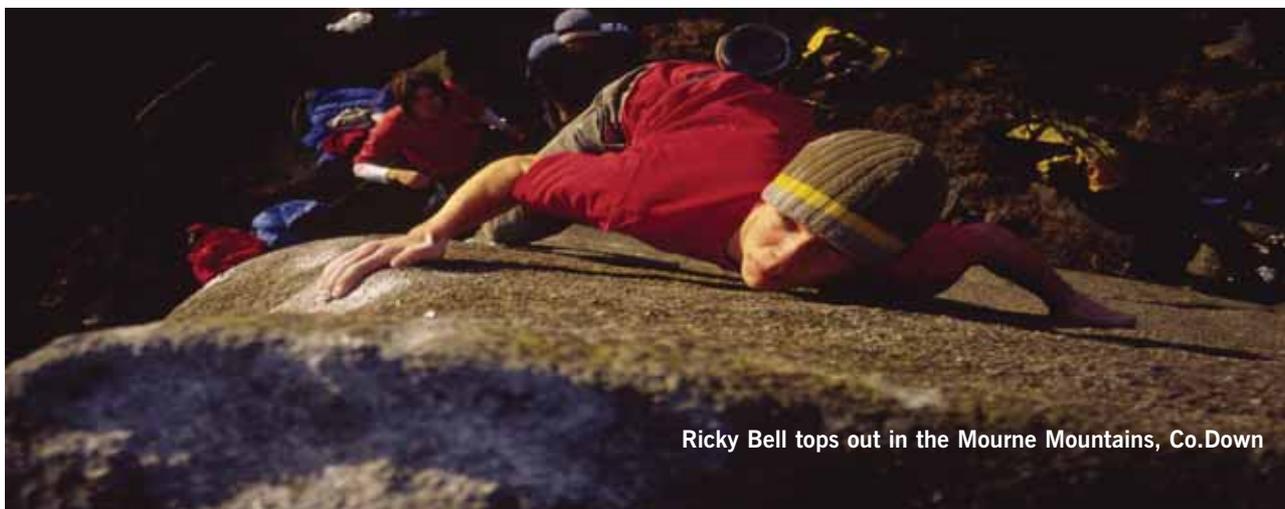
Where statistics allow comparison, it is apparent that the number of venues used by almost every activity has increased.

Where funding has been secured for particular staff roles or initiatives, such as youth development, performance management or disabled participation, these have largely been successful in meeting objectives.

The number and frequency of events has increased for several activities eg adventure racing, fell running and field archery, leading to increased participation from visitors outside Northern Ireland. The significance of international events to the local economy is evident e.g. hosting of the World JetMasters aeromodelling event in 2007 in Enniskillen provided an estimated 7300 tourist bed nights.

The development of new innovative facilities, particularly the canoe trail network, the advent of low cost airlines and the improved road network from the Republic of Ireland to the Northern Ireland have all contributed to increased numbers of visitors from outside Northern Ireland.

A number of activities reported increased numbers of participants travelling to Great Britain, Europe and further afield in order to participate and compete in their chosen



Ricky Bell tops out in the Mourne Mountains, Co.Down



activity. This is particularly true of those wishing to participate in mountain biking given that no purpose built mountain bike facilities exist in Northern Ireland for this activity.

Northern Irish participants in paragliding, canoeing, aeromodelling, fell running, field archery and rock climbing have all gained significant achievements at British, European or worldwide level.

There has been an increase in the number of private estates that encourage use of their land for recreational activities. The incentive is usually commercial and in many cases the established activities are more traditional countryside pursuits (e.g. horse-riding, shooting, etc.), plus some limited team-building activities for corporate groups. However, in recent years a small number of private estates have welcomed more contemporary activities including mountain biking and adventure racing. More than half of the current field archery venues are located on private estates.

There has been a significant increase in the number of commercial outdoor activity providers operating in Northern Ireland over the past 10 years. These are primarily concentrated in Co. Down.

Factors affecting Outdoor activity development

Issues surrounding litigation and public liability are leading to increasing difficulties in securing access for a large number of land-based outdoor activities. Fear of litigation is often used as an excuse to preclude access to land. This is true in the cases of those activities taking place on both public and private land. Another by-product of the litigation issue is the growth of 'clubs' in all but name. Groups of activity enthusiasts choose not to be recognised as a club in order to avoid the financial burden of insurance costs. They are free to organise 'events' without paying public liability insurance.

Cavers and kite buggy enthusiasts are finding it increasingly difficult to secure reasonable insurance cover.

The financial cost of securing access to both public and private land is a major concern for a significant number of sports within the study. In particular, Forest Service has been identified by 4 activities as charging high fees for granting access and activity permits (adventure racing, fell running, field archery, mountain biking). Additionally, it is apparent that there are great disparities in both the fees charged and in the application procedures for different organisations or sports planning to use the forests. High charging levels by Forest Service have resulted in some organisations taking their events out of Northern Ireland and moving them across the border

Representatives from councils, clubs, NGBs and outdoor centres all cite issues surrounding the fulfillment of child protection legislation as having a negative impact on participation levels of young people within outdoor activities. This is particularly evident at club level where volunteers are reluctant to commit the time and finances necessary to the

meet the child protection legislation requirements.

Most activities specify lack of funding as a factor impeding their development. Field archery, adventure racing and kite buggying do not receive any funding from Sport NI. New facilities, improvements to existing facilities, assistance with travel expenses to elite training facilities or competitions, subsidy of instructor qualification fees, funding for staff, and financial backing for hosting events are all areas where funding is sought.

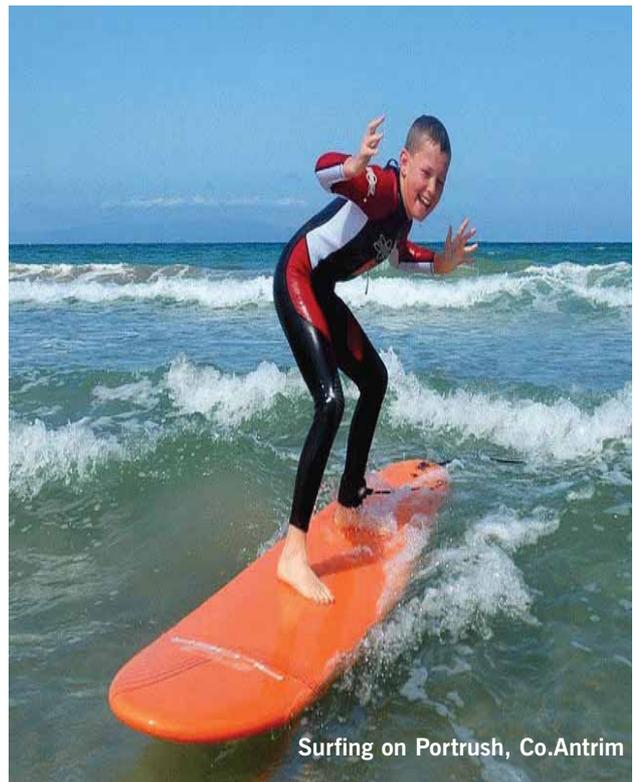
A considerable number of activities cite a shortage of activity specific facilities as a significant factor impeding development eg. kite buggying, mountain biking, mountain boarding, indoor rock climbing, rowing, aeromodelling and microlight flying.

Several activity representatives expressed disappointment concerning the lack of basic facilities at venues on public land e.g. toilets, changing facilities and shelter.

Frustration also exists where public facilities are provided, but remain closed outside of what is considered by those managing the facility as the 'peak season'

A shortage of qualified instructors is cited to be an important factor impeding development within the activities of indoor rock climbing, sailing, microlight flying, paragliding, hang gliding and kite surfing.

In Northern Ireland, the highest concentration of outdoor activity centres and commercial outdoor activity providers is around the Mourne Mountain area of County Down. Within this vicinity, all parties consulted reported problems of overcrowding at popular activity venues.



ACTIVITY	NO. OF VENUES USED		NO. OF CLUBS		NO. OF PARTICIPANTS (AFFILIATED & NON AFFILIATED)	
	1995	2008	1995	2008	1995	2008
Adventure Racing	N/A	26	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,000+
Caving	N/P	2	21 ¹	2	557 ¹	22
Fell Running	11	21	17	25	207	700+
Field Archery	N/A	14	N/A	27	N/A	300
Mountain Biking	13	81	N/P	8	1,000	15,000
Kite Buggying	N/A	4	N/A	1	N/A	40
Mountain Boarding	N/A	1	N/A	1	N/A	1,125
Orienteering	N/P	88	3	4	300	1,632
Rock Climbing	4	20	N/P	7	N/P	600
Canoeing	N/P	63	22	22	772	2,600
Kite Surfing	N/A	19	N/A	1	N/A	50
Rowing	3	17	35 ¹	14	1,500 ¹	500
Sailing	50	55	37	37	9,900 ¹	12,000
Power Boating & Motor Cruising	N/P	27	N/P	N/P	N/P	N/P
Scuba Diving	7	20	30	30	N/P	N/P
Surfing	N/P	16	N/P	5	N/P	7,580
Water Skiing & Wake Boarding	8	24	7	N/P	2,500	N/P
Aeromodelling	20	35	16	22	382	557
Microlight Flying	8	9	4	3	300	377
Paragliding & Hang Gliding	20	23	1	1	61	50
TOTALS	144	565	193	210	17,479	44,133

Figure. 1

Figures for 1995 are all Ireland

N/P Information not provided

N/A New activity with no comparative data for 1995

The number of venues has increased by 421 - 340%

The number of clubs has increased by 17 - 8%.

The number of participants has increased by 26,654 - 152%

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Copies of the full research report can be downloaded from CAAN's website

www.countrysidecreation.com

Photographic References:

All pictures credited to CAAN

Participation in Outdoor Recreation in Scotland: Key Results from the Scottish Recreation Survey

Fiona Cuninghame- Scottish Natural Heritage



People walking by Forth Clyde Canal

The Scottish Recreation Survey is a 10-year programme of monitoring participation in, and attitudes to, outdoor recreation amongst the Scottish adult population, running from July 2003 to 2013. The survey was commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) through the inclusion of questions in each monthly wave of the TNS consumer omnibus survey, the “Scottish Opinion survey.”

The survey shows that there has been an increase in the number of recreation trips in Scotland over the last three years, but it is too early to tell whether the long term trend will increase or fluctuate. Emerging trends from the survey show a move towards a greater number of visits made close to where people live. This trend is welcomed given the considerable investment over recent years to develop better local path networks, with the opportunity to provide quality recreational provision close to where people live.

The survey – now in its fifth year - aims to measure outdoor recreation participation in all types of locations and includes visits in Scotland made while on holiday or on a short break away from home. Information collected through the survey informs the Scottish Government’s national indicator to

increase the proportion of adults making one of more visits to the outdoors per week.

Survey details

Around 1,000 adults (16 and over) are interviewed each month, with a representative sample of Scotland’s adult (16 years and over) population. A core set of questions is asked every month while other questions are asked less frequently. Interviews are conducted in-home using CAPI (Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing) hardware. These interviews are undertaken in 42 sampling points per month throughout the country with quota targets set on the basis of gender, age-group, social grade and working status. At the analysis stage, the survey data is weighted to more closely match the sample profile with that of the Scottish adult population.

Respondents are asked whether they have taken any visits to the outdoors for leisure and recreation in Scotland in the previous 12 months and during the 4 weeks prior to the interview, with outdoors being defined as ‘open spaces in the countryside as well as in towns and cities.’ Respondents who have taken part in recreation visits during the previous 4 weeks are asked more detailed questions about their most recent trip, including questions on the location visited, transport, distance travelled, duration of trip and expenditure. Respondents were also asked about the activities they undertook and range from walking, cycling and horse riding to family outings, picnicking and wildlife watching.

The questionnaire was amended in 2005, including some

changes to questions regarding recreation visits during the previous 12 months and also in the last 4 weeks. This resulted in the pre-September 2005 results for participation levels in outdoor recreation and estimates of the total volume of visits to the outdoors not being directly comparable with results after the questionnaire change. Therefore some data in this article is from 2004, whilst other starts in 2006.

Total number of recreation trips to the outdoors

Over the last three years there has been an increase in the estimated number of recreation trips in Scotland as follows:

2006	327.1 million
2007	336.7 million
2008	384.2 million

This is based on an adult population of 4.1 million, giving an average of 7 trips per adult in a 4 week period in 2008. Given recent drives to increase health and well-being including encouraging more recreation participation the increase is to be welcomed, but our status as the second most obese nation in the developed world means that there is a long way to go!

... and value to the economy

Whilst the number of trips has increased the estimated total expenditure on these trips has dropped as follows:

2006	£2.9 billion
2007	£3.1 billion
2008	£2.8 billion.

Whilst the decrease between the 2007 and 2008 figures is within statistical margins of error, this may also be a reflection of the economy in 2008 and the effect of more trips being taken closer to home.

More Shorter visits

Over the five years of the survey there has been a year on year increase in the number of shorter visits (both in time and distance). The distance steadily decreased from an average of 26 kilometres in 2004 to 15 kilometres in 2008, whilst the length of time of the visit decreased from 2.5 hours on average in 2004 to 2 hours and 17 minutes in 2008. As shown in figure 1, there has been a drop in the percentage of adults using a car as the main type of transport to reach their trip destination from 43% in 2004 to 29% in 2008, with a corresponding increase from 50% to 64% for people travelling on foot to reach their destination.

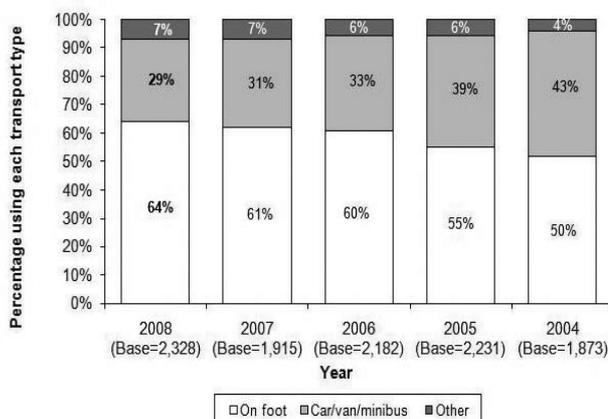
Figure 1 Main means of transport to reach outdoor recreation destinations between 2004 to 2008

Base: Respondents who had made visits to the outdoors in the 4 weeks prior to interview

Note: Totals do not always add up to 100% due to rounding and the exclusion of a few responses from people who did not state their main type of transport.

Figure 1 Main type of transport used during outdoor recreation visits 2004 to 2008

Base: Respondents who had made visits to the outdoors in the 4 weeks prior to interview



Walking continues to be the most popular recreation activity and has gradually increased from 69% in 2004 to 78% in 2008, whilst there has been a decrease in the percentage of family outings over the five years.

Location, location, location

The countryside has been the most popular destination type since 2004, compared to a town/city and the seaside. However, over this time the gap between visits to the countryside and to a town/city has decreased significantly as shown in figure 2 below.

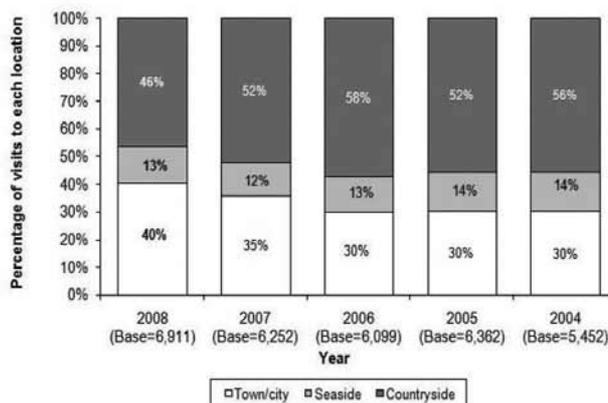
Figure 2 Location of Outdoor Recreation Visits 2004 to 2008.

Base: Respondents who had made visits to the outdoors in the 4 weeks prior to interview

Note: Totals do not always add up to 100% due to rounding and the exclusion of a few responses from people who did not know which destination they had last visited.

Figure 2 Location of Outdoor Recreation Visits 2004 to 2008.

Base: Respondents who had made visits to the outdoors in the 4 weeks prior to interview



Note: Totals do not always add up to 100% due to rounding and the exclusion of a few responses from people who did not know which destination they had last visited.

This trend is predicted to continue according to initial research findings on future recreational trends with a slow decline predicted for countryside trips within the next 5-10 years, especially for less active trips, but nevertheless continuing to be the largest proportion of all recreation trips. The research also found that the trend for an increase in visits close to home is likely to continue over the next 5-10 years.

Weekly recreation trips to the outdoors

The Scottish Recreation survey provides the data for the National Performance Indicator which is to increase the proportion of adults making one or more visits to the outdoors per week. This is one of 45 indicators which have been developed to monitor performance on a range of topics affecting all aspects of Scottish life – more information is available from the Scotland Performs website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms> 47% of Scotland's adult population took at least one recreation trip to the outdoors per week in 2008, an increase from 44% in both 2006 and 2007, which is encouraging, but it is too early to say whether the long term trend will fluctuate or increase. Whilst there was little difference at the weekly level, women were more likely than men to have visited the outdoors at least once a day (35% and 26% respectively in 2008). In the future we hope to be able to make more participation data available at Local Authority Level, which could be used by Local Authorities as a tool to help them address geographical differences in participation rates and inequalities.

Social Patterns

The survey shows that those in the D and E social grades, which includes all semi skilled and unskilled manual workers (D) and those entirely long term dependent on the state (E), have consistently been less likely than the adult population as a whole to state that they had taken any trips to the outdoors in the last 12 months (68% for those in the D and E grades in 2008 compared to 79% of the entire adult population). Since 2004, there has been an overall increase in the percentage of respondents citing poor health as their reason for not visiting the outdoors for recreation (22% in 2004 to 31% in 2008). There was also a decrease recorded in the percentage of respondents citing a lack of time (37% in 2004 to 29% in 2008).

Encouragingly, over the past five years, the proportion of respondents stating that they were 'not interested' has fallen (16% in 2004 to 8% in 2008).

Further information:

Further detail on the questionnaire change, along with the annual reports, is available within the commissioned report area of the SNH website at

http://www.snh.org.uk/publications/on-line/comm-reports/srs_10.asp

You can also find more information by searching for Scottish Recreation Survey on the SNH website.

Footnotes:

- 1) Obesity in Scotland: An epidemiology briefing 2007. (ScotPHO).
- 2) SNH Commissioned research Assessing Future Recreational Demand (in progress) Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and Countryside and Community Research Institute in Cheltenham
- 3) TNS (2009). Scottish Recreation Survey: annual summary report 2008. Scottish Natural 2008 report - in publication. (ROAME No. F02AA614/7)
- 4) TNS (2008). Scottish Recreation Survey: Calibration Exercise. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No.296 (ROAME No. R06AA620).
- 5) Scotland Performs website
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms>

References:

- 1) Obesity in Scotland: An epidemiology briefing 2007. ScotPHO).
- 2) SNH Commissioned research Assessing Future Recreational Demand (in progress) Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and Countryside and Community Research Institute in Cheltenham

Photographic References:

All photographs credited to George Logan, Scottish Natural Heritage

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Family walking on the outskirts of town, Kilpatrick

Preferences or Barriers? Why do Some People not Visit the Outdoors?

Sue Williams, Countryside Council for Wales



Why don't some people take part in informal outdoor recreation, whilst others do? Understanding not only who doesn't visit the outdoors very often but also why they don't go, are key questions for the outdoor sector and countryside managers.

It has been generally accepted that participation in informal outdoor recreation is relatively low among certain groups, such as young people, older people, women, ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities. But why is this? What are the reasons why some social groups are less likely to be active participants than others?

There have been a large number of studies and pilot projects that have looked at equality and low participation in outdoor recreation. Many of these have offered a number of reasons for the equality and low participation along with suggested interventions. To gain a clearer picture of the current 'state of knowledge', the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) recently commissioned a systematic review of all existing studies throughout the UK and a number of international studies, with the following aims:

Do we fully understand the reasons why some people rarely

visit the outdoors, if at all?

Are the main reasons for non-participation due to barriers, or are they a result of different preferences?

What are the possible interventions that could be successful in encouraging greater levels of participation from specific social groups?

Barriers to Participation

The review found that participation barriers (often referred to as constraints) exist in three main areas:

Individual issues – those personal and psychological constraints that affect you as an individual such as personality, attitudes, and mood. These are referred to as 'Intrapersonal Constraints'

Social interactions – in particular the influence of other people attitudes and behaviour, such as family members and friends. These are known as 'Interpersonal Constraints'.

Physical or practical aspects – these can include a lack of opportunities (especially for certain activities), transport, or the cost of taking part, and are called 'Structural Constraints'.

The review found that the majority of the research into non-participation by specific social groups had concentrated on 'barriers'. It is clear that there has been a particular focus on

the reasons why people can't participate. There were 13 different constraints that were experienced by non-participants, which are described under each of the three main areas.

- Intrapersonal Constraints
 - Fear for personal safety & security
 - Lack of knowledge
 - Lack of time
 - Poor health or fitness
 - Lack of confidence
 - Lone person
 - Finding the weather disagreeable
- Interpersonal Constraints
 - Concern about anti-social behaviour
 - Feeling unwelcome
 - Being put off by a bad experience
- Structural Constraints
 - Poor provision of facilities and management
 - Lack of transport
 - Costs too high

Recreation Preferences

A key question for this review was to find out what people from low-participation groups actually enjoy doing! However, the review found that there was limited information on this, and what studies did exist rarely made a distinction between participants and non-participants. However, there were some general conclusions about what different social groups prefer, and some similarity in their reasons for participating in outdoor recreation.

Personal Motivations and Preferences

Both older people and those from lower social class groups have been found to be particularly motivated by the opportunities for 'fresh air and exercise' that outdoor recreation offers. This contrasted in particular with young people, who are more motivated by 'socializing with friends'.

'Lack of interest' was assessed in the review as an expression of preference (although it could also be considered a constraint). The review found that ethnic minority groups expressed the greatest lack of interest, followed by people from areas of multiple deprivation, and then young people. The review identified two aspects to lack of interest or motivation: those associated with cultural

aspects and those with social context. There may be no cultural habit of using the countryside, for example for some ethnic minority groups visiting the countryside for recreation is an alien concept. Alternatively, there may be no social context for a visit to the countryside; for example younger people may perceive the countryside as boring or not for them and they may have other recreation preferences.

Activity Preferences

In relation to 'activity preferences' the review found that the majority of studies either did not specify any particular activity, or concentrated only on walking. The conclusions on activity preferences were therefore not particularly strong, but some key points were highlighted. As with people's personal motivations, it was found that there are some general differences between social groups when considering what activities they prefer to do. All groups place walking first, but it was notable that this was particularly important for older people and ethnic minority groups. In contrast, young people were least likely to enjoy walking, and had the strongest preferences for both more active pursuits such as biking, and more sociable activities like picnicking. People with disabilities and people from areas of multiple deprivation were more likely than others to prefer sightseeing, along with appreciating landscapes and good views.

Interventions

A large number of the reviewed studies had considered strategies to overcome non-participation, but despite this coverage there was found to be little solid evidence of the effectiveness of different strategies as follow-up evaluation was not a focus of many of the studies.

Despite this, the review identified some general conclusions on strategies that could be used by the outdoor recreation sector and countryside managers to help encourage a greater range of people to visit the outdoors. These were based on the following ten areas:

- Focused information and events: these should concentrate on the needs of specific social groups (for example by using new technologies or translating information into different languages).
- Site enhancement and maintenance: in particular there appears to be a need to provide toilets, seating and cafes.
- Awareness raising and staff training: to help countryside staff understand the needs and preferences of different social groups.
- Outreach and skills development: this covers action to

directly encourage particular groups to participate, for example through a targeted 'taster' programme of activities.

- Empowerment of target group: to support local communities to take action to develop and deliver their own activities. It is important to include both 'communities of interest' (for example young people who are interested in biking) as well as 'geographical communities' (the local neighbourhood).
- Coordination and infrastructure: this includes a wide range of 'provision' issues, such as ensuring that routes form networks rather than piecemeal sections, and that transport options are integrated.
- Baseline data: there needs to be an improvement in baseline information to both understand who the low participation groups actually are and to monitor the effectiveness of any interventions.
- Offset costs: in those instances where cost is affecting participation, strategies such as subsidised transport or reduced entry fees can assist in encouraging participation.
- Role models: having staffing and volunteer profiles that reflect the population diversity could assist in encouraging greater involvement.

Conclusion

The review has highlighted that there has been an emphasis on the 'barriers' to participation, with a particular focus on 'structural constraints' such as lack of transport. It is certainly important to understand these problems, and they are often aspects that have the potential to be addressed through actions by the public and voluntary sector. However, will removing these structural constraints be enough to result in more equitable participation from the full range of social groups?

It is unlikely that non-participation will be fully addressed only through removing 'barriers'. In order to engage with a wider range of people, the outdoor recreation sector needs to get a better understanding of the preferences of different social groups. This review has found that there is a distinct lack of knowledge about different recreation preferences, and that this is an evidence gap that needs to be prioritised.

A key point that has arisen from reviewing issues related to recreation preferences has been an awareness that there is a difference between 'exclusion' and 'under-representation'. There is an implicit assumption that all people would like to take part in outdoor activities but that some are unable to do so due to particular barriers. These represent 'excluded' groups and are a key audience for the public sector.

However, it is likely that there is also a significant proportion of people who are 'under-represented'. These individuals do not face any particular barriers to participation, but rather have different preferences. Understanding these preferences is key to encouraging participation from 'under-represented' groups, and could require changes to the type and range of recreation opportunities that the countryside sector currently provide. However, it should also be noted that there will always be a number of people who just prefer to do other things with their leisure time!

Having a greater understanding of people's preferences for different types of places, activities, and facilities will help all of us to reflect on how well current provision meets the wider needs of society. This potentially could raise some significant challenges for the outdoor sector, but will ultimately help us to fully realise the benefits of recreation to society as a whole.

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OPENSspace Research Centre. (2008) Review of Evidence Participation in Outdoor Recreation by WAG Priority Groups. CCW Policy Research Report No. 08/15

D.W. Crawford, E.L. Jackson and G. Godbey, (1991) "A Hierarchical Model of Leisure Constraints," *Leisure Sciences*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 309-320.

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Photographic References:

All photographs credited to Visit Wales



Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Participation in Forest School

Rebecca Lovell, University of Edinburgh and Jenny Roe, OPENspace - Edinburgh College of Art



This article reports on recent research highlighting the multiple health benefits to children and young people from participation in the outdoor learning programme 'Forest School'.

Forest School

Forest School is a particular approach to outdoor learning; originating in Scandinavia it has been used in the UK since the mid 1990s. There are currently around 140 Forest School programmes in the UK (O'Brien 2009). Several factors define Forest School:

Firstly, Forest School takes place in the specific context of a forest or woodland; the site is typically, and ideally, close to the participants' school or youth centre.

Secondly, while attending Forest School the participants (generally school-aged children) take part in a range of activities; these normally include small and achievable tasks, physically active games and exploration of the environment. Formal academic learning is usually incorporated into the sessions; the emphasis is on education in the outdoors rather than education about the outdoors.

Thirdly, one of the most important aspects of Forest School practice is that it is a sustained experience, participants generally attend once a week or fortnight (for a whole or half day) for at least 12 sessions, in some instances participants

attend during the whole school year.

Background

In recent years there has been increased interest in using the outdoors, and in particular the natural environment, as a setting for education and learning (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee 2005). This interest is supported by a body of evidence which suggests that outdoor learning has a range of benefits (Rickinson, Dillon et al. 2004; Dillon, Morris et al. 2005). A recent OFSTED review concluded that "outdoor education gives depth to the curriculum and makes an important contribution to student's physical, personal and social education" (2004 p2). Furthermore there is evidence which indicates that outdoor learning may benefit the health and wellbeing of those who participate (New Economics Foundation 2006). In particular the use of the natural environment may promote good mental wellbeing including improvements to concentration, mood and self-discipline (Faber Taylor and Kuo 2008; Faber Taylor, et al. 2002; Wells 2000) - and provide opportunities for physical activity and the development of physical skills (Fjørtoft 2001; Fjørtoft 2004; Mygind 2007). A recent evaluation indicated that Forest School may have numerous benefits; O'Brien and Murray (2007; 2009) concluded that Forest School has the potential to increase self-esteem, confidence and other social skills and has beneficial impacts on concentration, motivation and communication. It was also suggested that Forest School may provide opportunities for the improvement of physical motor skills. These positive findings are strengthened by two

recent evaluations, reported here, which focused on the potential for health and well-being benefits (Lovell 2009, Roe 2008): the first of these evaluated the opportunities for, and perceptions of, physical activity at Forest School; the second assessed the programme's potential to provide psychological benefits for adolescents with varying emotional needs.

Physical activity at Forest School

Significant percentages of children in much of the western developed world, are not sufficiently physically active (Currie, Gabhainn et al. 2008). This is an important public health issue, as inadequate levels of physical activity during childhood are linked to cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and certain cancers (WHO 2004). Forest School, like other forms of outdoor learning, may be one approach to increasing children's levels of physical activity.

Using a multi-phased mixed method design this research explored the value of Forest School as a source of enjoyable physical activity: the first phase entailed an assessment (using an objective measure) of the quantity, frequency and duration of the participants' (n=26 aged 9-10) physical activity during Forest School and two control day types (typical school days with and without timetabled physical activity: 'active' and 'inactive' days). Perceptions of Forest School and the resulting physical activity were explored during the second phase (n=24 aged 10-11). Both phases of this research were conducted at a single school in southern of Scotland.

Results

The quantity and intensity of physical activity during Forest School was shown to be significantly greater (< 0.001) than during the typical school days; levels of activity during Forest School were 2.2 times greater than those on active school days and 2.7 greater than on inactive school days (see Fig. 1).

The children, on average, exceeded the daily recommended one hour of moderate and vigorous physical activity (MVPA) on the Forest School days (89.4 minutes); however on the typical school days the children, on average, did not meet the recommendation (active school days 29.1 minutes, inactive school days 20.5 minutes).

The children consistently engaged in a higher number of bouts of continuous MVPA on the Forest School days in comparison to the typical school days (see Fig. 2).

Two thirds of the children achieved at least one bout of 20 or more minutes of continuous MVPA at Forest School. While studies of children's physical activity consistently show that girls are less active than boys; there was no significant difference (p=0.112) in the amount of activity during Forest School between the boys and the girls. Significant differences were found on the typical school days (active school days p=0.042; inactive school days p< 0.001).

Figure 1: Average levels of physical activity on the inactive school day, the active school day, and the Forest School day (n=26)

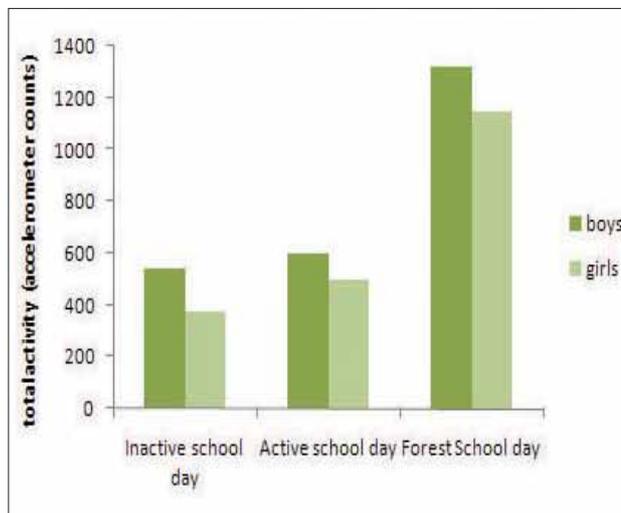
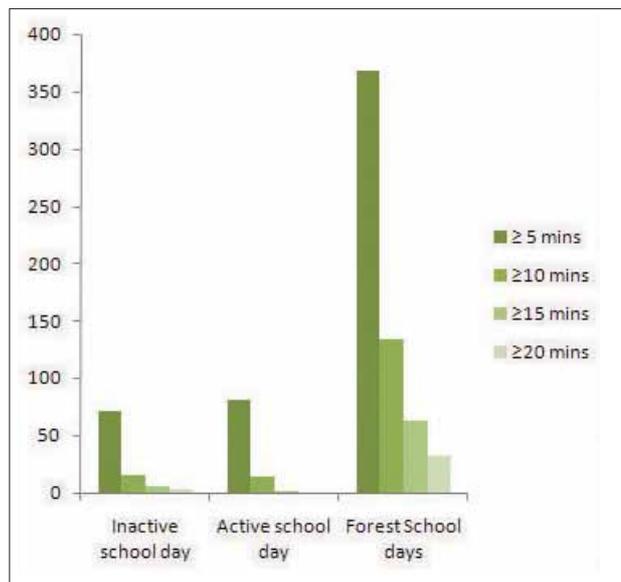


Figure 2: Total number of bouts of sustained moderate and vigorous physical activity on the inactive school days, the active school days and the Forest School days (n=26)



All the children greatly appreciated the opportunity to take part in Forest School; the physical activity, both the types and the amounts, was a significant factor in their enjoyment. Forest School was considered to provide them with an opportunity to take part in a greater quantity of physical activity than in the typical school setting and that the activity was, in general, more enjoyable. Activities which were particularly enjoyed included active games, building dens and just being able to 'run about'. The participants were, however, not so keen on the walks to and from the site; an aspect of Forest School which they found a bit boring. The children also appreciated the opportunity to use their local green space, something which few reported having had much prior experience of; they reported feeling safer and

happier in the forest during Forest School than at other times. Certain barriers to outdoor physical activity were not relevant at Forest School; in particular 'bad' weather and the threat of getting dirty, which the children reported prevented them from playing and being active in the outdoors at other times, were actually viewed as positive aspects of Forest School.

Mental health benefits of Forest School

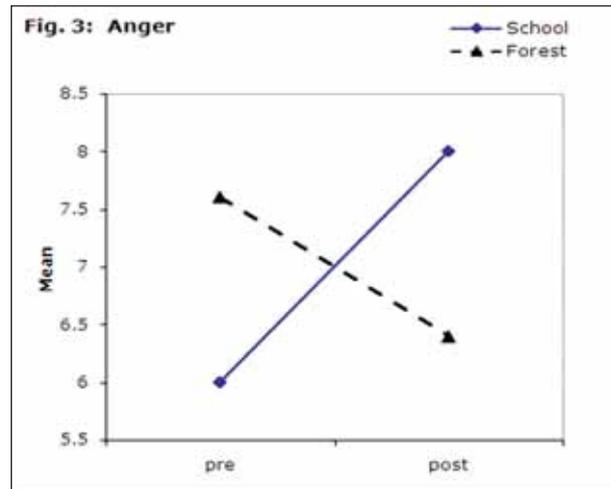
Mental well-being has been shown to fall as children get older, dropping substantially in secondary school (New Economics Foundation 2004). In addition, the number of children in the UK with troubled behaviour is increasing in secondary schools leading to a rise in school suspensions (up 13% in 2005, Mental Health Foundation). To date, empirical research on the effect of natural settings on behaviour problems is mostly limited to studies of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which has shown that being in the natural environment can reduce the severity of behaviour symptoms (Faber Taylor and Kuo 2008).

This is the first study in the UK to quantify mental health outcomes of Forest School in young people (age 11-13) with varying emotional health. It measured psychological restoration in two different settings, both before and after a typical day at school v. Forest School. Restoration is a term that refers to the process of recovery from a depleted physiological, psychological and/or social resource. Cognitive restoration was explored using personal project techniques (Little 1983) and affective restoration was explored using a mood scale (UWIST MACL, Mathews et al 1990), measuring anger, energy, stress and hedonic tone (happiness). The research was carried out in a mainstream school (n=12) and in a specialist residential school (n=8) in Glasgow, with three behaviour groups ranging from 'no behaviour problem' (n=6) to 'significant behaviour problem' (n=4) to 'mental disorder' (n=8).

Results

The school setting significantly depressed mood ($p < 0.05$) across all behaviour groups. By contrast, Forest School was advantageous to mood in all behaviour groups but particularly in those adolescents suffering from 'mental disorder', (see Fig. 3.) Analysis showed a significant main effect of both setting ($p < 0.01$) and behaviour ($p < 0.05$) on anger with large observed effect sizes. These results shows setting, as well as behaviour, had different effects on the outcomes (anger rose in school and decreased in Forest School). Whilst Forest School was particularly effective at reducing anger levels, similar patterns were found in the other mood variables. Forest School also improved cognitive restoration (as measured by reflection on personal projects) but not to a statistically significant level. This study suggests Forest School can help control anger in young people at risk, opening a potential door to improved learning experiences and rehabilitation.

Figure.3: Anger outcomes after a day at school v. forest school in the 'mental disorder' group, n=8



Conclusions

The results of these two research studies suggest that the outdoor learning programme 'Forest School' has the potential to significantly benefit children and young people's physical health and mental well-being.

In particular Forest School may represent a relatively novel approach to increasing levels of physical activity in the school setting. It has been suggested (Reed, Warburton et al. 2008) that, for maximum benefit, physical activity should be incorporated throughout the whole school day. Forest School achieves this; importantly the physical activity is supplementary to the positive learning opportunities highlighted in previous research (O'Brien 2009).

Furthermore the physical activity was demonstrated to be of a sufficient duration and intensity to be of benefit to the health and well being of those who participated. The findings highlighted the potential value of Forest School as an approach to reducing the inequality in levels of physical activity between boys and girls.

The research also indicates that natural environments can help promote mental well-being in young people with wide varying emotional health, and that Forest School may have an important role in controlling anger and anti-social behaviour in young people at risk from exclusion. Results were consistent with restorative outcomes of natural settings. A key finding was the ability of forest settings to stabilize anger across all three behaviour groups.

Of particular importance were the findings that the participants enjoyed Forest School and that the experience appeared to promote more positive attitudes towards the forest environment. Evidence suggests that enjoyable experiences of forests and woodlands in childhood are positively associated with use in later life (Ward Thompson, Aspinal et al. 2008). It is therefore possible that the participants' positive experiences during Forest School will have far reaching impacts; through the increased likelihood of their continued use of forests and woods, in adulthood, as a context for physical activity and psychological restoration.

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Mental health benefits of Forest School

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Footnotes:

¹ 'n=26' indicates the sample size – 26 children participated in the first phase of the physical activity research.

² This value represents the significance of the result: $p < 0.05$ is generally accepted to indicate statistical significance. See Whitley and Ball (2002) for more detail.

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Agency Profile

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

Environment Agency

Chris Marsh, Recreation, Policy and Process Manager



Our job is to look after your environment in England and Wales and make it a better place – for you and for future generations.

At a time when the importance of a healthy environment is increasingly being recognised, as the largest environmental body in Europe, we have many opportunities to shape how society deals with climate change and protect the natural resources essential for sustainable living.

We are a public body - around 60 per cent of our funding comes from Government - the rest comes from charging schemes and boating and fishing licences. We are independent, but we work closely with Government to get the best possible results for the environment.

We have around 12,000 staff and an annual budget of just over £1 billion.

We work across England and Wales through regional and area offices that work closely with people, business and organisations to develop the right solutions for local environments.

Our main roles are:

- Protecting people from floods - last year we increased flood protection to homes and business by building new and improving existing flood defences.
- Working with industry to protect the environment and human health - since 1990 we have reduced the amount of sulphur dioxide released into the air by 75 per cent. Sulphur dioxide can create acid rain and damage people's health.

- Helping businesses use resources more efficiently – businesses we regulate now produce less waste - much of which is now recycled or used to produce energy.
- Taking action against those who don't take their environmental responsibilities seriously - every year we bring hundreds of polluters to justice.
- Improving habitats for wildlife - we complete around 400 projects every year to create better places for wildlife. Over the last 25 years there has been a six-fold increase in the places otters can be found in England.
- Better places to play - we provide over 1000km of inland navigation and sell over a million rod fishing licences per year. All the money we raise goes straight back into improving the places where people boat and fish.
- Restoring rivers and lakes that help to improve the quality of inner city areas and parks for the benefit of local communities.

The big challenge

In a recent speech, our Chairman, Lord Chris Smith, made clear the big environmental challenge and opportunity the UK and the world faces. We are in the middle of a major financial crisis; we are on the cusp of a serious energy crisis; and we are stoking the fire of a potentially catastrophic climate crisis. In some ways these are interlinked but many people consider the most intractable challenge facing many countries is tackling climate change.



2 girls in a boat

The evidence is now clear. Arctic sea ice is declining much more rapidly than we previously thought; many scientists now believe that its complete disappearance in the summer months could happen by 2030, or even earlier. The potential rise in sea level could be up to 1.5 metres by 2100. Global greenhouse gas emissions have been rising at three per cent a year on average since 2000. Eleven out of the last twelve years rank among the hottest on record.

This is a stark reminder of the biggest challenge we face - mitigating and adapting to climate change. Drastic cuts will have to be made in the emission of 'greenhouse gases' such as carbon dioxide if we are to avoid severe environmental impacts in the long term.

Even if we make these reductions now, society as a whole will have to be prepared for probable changes in our climate. In central England average temperatures have risen by about one degree centigrade since the 1970s, with 2006 being the warmest year on record. Sea levels around the UK rose by about one millimetre a year from 1900 to 2000.

Although we need to tell it as it is, we also need to give a sense of hope and clear leadership that things could be different. Chris Smith argues that now is the time for a massive green investment initiative and change programme. This could see Britain as a world leader in cleaner energy technology and it would also help to lift us out of recession.

A better place to play

People are drawn to water and watersides for all sorts of activities. Water offers life-changing experiences, inspiration and discovery for millions of people from all walks of life. For us, recreation is about the enjoyable use of inland and coastal waters and the surrounding land... A better place to play is our strategy for water-related sport and recreation 2006 - 2011.

Working with partners, we are launching a set of regional strategic plans for water-based sport and recreation in England and Wales. The plans will encourage organisations to provide for, and people to take part in water-based activities like canoeing, sailing, rowing and surfing. We have published plans for Wales and South West England and a third plan for South East England will be available soon. These plans will change the way planning authorities and organisations work when providing new opportunities for water-based recreation.

Further Information:

To receive a copy of 'A better place to play', please contact us by phone on 07808 506 506 or by email at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk .

To receive a copy of our plans for Wales or South West England, please contact us by phone on 07808 506 506 or by email at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk . They are also available on our website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/recreation.

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Photographic References:

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Exploring the hidden places by canoe

News



BRITISH WATERWAYS

The first flotilla of boats will travel through Three Mills Lock, the first new lock to be built in London in over 20 years, today on World Environment Day (Friday 5 June 2009). The new lock at Prescott Channel, Bromley-by-Bow, will open up the Bow Back Rivers, a network of waterways in and around the Olympic Park for the first time in decades, creating a green gateway for freight barges to enter the Olympic construction zone. Environment Secretary Hilary Benn said: "We want the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games to be the greenest games ever. Funding the Three Mills Lock will not only take many lorries off local roads, reducing thousands of tonnes of CO2 and local congestion, it will also provide a green freight route for the redevelopment of East London, and open up the waterways for boaters, walkers, and cyclists." Water transport is greener, cleaner and more sustainable than road haulage. The state-of-the-art lock will provide access to the area for 350 tonne barges, taking hundreds of lorry journeys away from local roads, saving thousands of tonnes of CO2 and creating a platform for a new 'Water City' to emerge in the East of London. The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: "The revitalisation of this network of canals after decades of decline heralds a new age of water transport in the capital. By shifting noisy, dusty and heavily polluting freight vehicles from busy roads onto water, we can free up traffic and drastically improve the quality of our environment. "This vital investment means a steady flow of boats will soon be carrying a substantial proportion of the materials needed to create the Olympic Park that would otherwise have travelled by road, sealing a legacy beyond the duration of the Games themselves." A tug and barge, flanked by a flotilla of colourful narrowboats, will lock in and out of the new structure, putting the lock gates through their paces ahead of planned freight deliveries to the Olympic Park that are scheduled to take place later this month. In the longer term the works will allow new opportunities for leisure boats, water taxis, trip boats and floating restaurants, creating a major boating destination in the area. Tony Hales, chairman of British Waterways said: "As guardians of the UK's canals and rivers I am thrilled to see Three Mills Lock open today, and show everyone how the waterways can play an integral role in making the London 2012 Olympic Games the most sustainable yet. Rejuvenating the waterways of East London has been a long term goal for British Waterways, and the Olympics provided a catalyst to kick-start this process. "The lock is just the beginning though, British Waterways is working with its partners to ensure that the maximum benefit can be delivered using these waterways, with everything from water taxis, waste removal by water and new marinas planned for the future." Three Mills Lock and Water Control Structure is funded by British Waterways, the Department for Transport, London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Olympic Delivery Authority, London Development Agency, and Transport for London. The project comprises twin water control gates, a 62m x 8m tidal lock, footbridge, lock control

building, fish pass and fixed weir. Construction of the lock has been managed by British Waterways and undertaken by design and build contractors VolkerStevin Ltd, with a supporting team including Tony Gee & Partners LLP, Bennett Associates, Clague Architects and Weetwood Environmental Engineering. Works began in March 2007 ensuring that the lock was accessible for barge traffic during the peak Olympic construction period. Contact details:

Head Office & Customer Service Centre
64 Clarendon Road
Watford WD17 1DA
Telephone: 0845 671 5530
Email: enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk

CAAN

Salt Island Bothy was Highly Commended in the Tourism Innovation Category at the recent Northern Ireland Tourism Awards. The award formally recognises the success of the Bothy since it was officially opened in July 2008 in partnership between the Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) and the National Trust. The judges commented that the Salt Island Bothy was an excellent tourism related initiative for the area. "We are absolutely delighted to be Highly Commended at the Northern Ireland Tourism Awards. We really strive to be innovative in all the products we develop and therefore it is great to receive recognition from within the industry." commented Clare Wright, Strategic Access Manager, CAAN. Both Salt Island and the Bothy are both owned and managed by the National Trust, the restored cottage offers basic shelter (for up to 12 people) with running water, wood burning stove, and toilets. There are also two official camping areas on the island – one within the Bothy grounds and one on the opposite side of the island. The Bothy forms an integral part of the Strangford Lough Canoe Trail which offers no less than 80 square nautical miles of paddling playground for canoeists of all abilities. The trail is accompanied by a waterproof trail guide, interpretation panels and a regularly updated website – CanoeNI.com – your definitive guide to canoeing in Northern Ireland. Speaking at the ceremony, NITB Chairman Howard Hastings said "The high calibre of our entries and our outstanding winners show that standards right across tourism are constantly rising. We are always striving to deliver quality visitor experiences which are unique and succeed in setting Northern Ireland apart from any other destination." The Salt Island Bothy and Strangford Lough Canoe Trail are accompanied by four further canoe trails on Lough Erne, Lough Neagh, River Blackwater and Lower Bann making Northern Ireland a fantastic canoeing destination whatever your ability. Contact details:
Chris Scott
CAAN Marketing Officer
DD: 02890 306 940-Email: chris@countrysiderecreation.com

Case Study



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Building on lessons learnt from the former East Germany, we have built a fish pass on the River Medway Navigation in Kent that combines safe passage for fish and canoeists alike.

This is the first pass of this type in a British river and from start to finish the project took just five months and cost £94k funded by Environment Agency Waterways and Recreation departments. It involved the use of an 80 tonne crane to lift an 8 tonne excavator onto the lock island.

The combined pass consists of a 1.5 metre wide steel trough 70cm deep, 17 metres in length with a gradient of approximately 1 in 12 (8%). The key element to the successful operation of the channel is the installation of artificial plastic reeds referred to as "fish brushes". These fish brushes slow the water flow down and create eddies and back currents to enable fish to swim up the pass. Secondly, the softness and flexibility of the individual brush strands allow canoeists to safely pass without injury to themselves or damage to their canoes.

Porters Lock on the River Medway was the chosen site for this pilot project as an existing concrete channel with a fixed crest weir had suitable dimensions to suit the pass criteria.

The Project Manager, Phil Munslow said 'The success of this innovative project was due to good cross team working between Waterways and Fisheries, and the dedication, expertise and flexibility of the construction team. Thanks also must go to our German colleagues who provided good and free design advice.

We faced many challenges in getting the project to site as well as the complex engineering works to fabricate and install the pass itself.

This structure is a further string in the bow of what the River Medway has to offer for canoeists, but fundamentally it aids the migration of all fish species at this location - which to

Volunteering in the Natural Outdoors

A report for the Countryside Recreation Network

by The Tomorrow Project

Whether it's organising a walking for health initiative, clearing rhododendron in ancient woodlands, undertaking a beach clean up or monitoring wildlife in hay meadows, volunteering in the natural outdoors needs a better image and more people taking part. That's the call from research undertaken for the Countryside Recreation Network, the body which involves all the UK and Ireland major countryside and recreation agencies.

Copies of the report can be purchased for £15.00. Payment can be made by cheque (made payable to 'Sheffield Hallam University') or credit card.

Go to the *Countryside Recreation Network Publications List* on page 29 to order your copy.



Summary of CRN Seminars

Dogs in Parks and the Countryside-

07 May 2009 - Worcester

This seminar attracted 32 delegates and was chaired by Andy Maginnis from Worcestershire County Council. The seminar aimed to raise awareness of the scale of the issue, provide an insight into the dog owners' perspective, give an update on the legal position and share good practice.

The morning session included presentations from:

Stephen Jenkinson, Kennel Club Access Advisor, on the users' perspective; Maxine Gregory, Sport Industry Research Centre, on the assessment of perceptions, behaviours and understanding of walkers with Dogs in the Countryside; Duncan Stewart, TNS, on illustrating the importance of the 'Dog walking' market using FC/SNH/CCW surveys as an example. The afternoon session consisted of three case studies from:

Paddy Harrop, Forestry Commission, on Forestry Commissions work on managing dogs;

Jo Hale, Hampshire County Council, on the councils work on managing dogs; Dan Boys, Moors For the Future, on the Paws on the Moors project.

Influencing behaviour and Understanding for Positive benefits - Social Marketing and the Countryside -

11 March 2009- Sheffield

This seminar attracted 19 delegates and was chaired by Rachel Hughes from the Sports Council for Wales. The seminar aimed to understand the underlying concepts in social marketing, understand how social marketing fits with strategies to engage more closely with third sector organisations, show delegates how to write a basic specification for a social marketing project, advise delegates how to access advice, guidance and case studies in social marketing.

The morning session included presentations from:

Alex Christopoulos, The National Social Marketing Centre, who used the Centre as a case study; Veronica Sharpe, The Social Marketing Practice who gave a theoretical understanding of social marketing; Dr Rory-Ridley Duff, Sheffield Hallam University, on why social enterprises are attracting more interest and why social marketing is particularly relevant to them; Prof Simon Shibli, Sport Industry Research Centre, who gave a history, useful principles and lessons transferable to the context of countryside recreation.

The afternoon session included presentations from: Sheila Paul, Sheffield Primary Care Trust who answered the question - how does social marketing differ from standard marketing approaches; Alan Love, BDRC, who gave Research to underpin Social Marketing initiatives and examples of

campaigns; Bryony Elliot, Experian, on Great Yarmouth PCT case study where Mosaic has been used.

Supporting Outdoor Recreation - The Changing Funding Environment -

14 January 2009- Sheffield

This seminar attracted 25 delegates and was chaired by Glenn Millar from British Waterways. The seminar aimed to give practitioners an understanding of what funding is available for outdoor recreation and how funding sources / programmes are changing; the requirements of key funding programmes and sources; issues that need to be addressed to successfully secure funding; and what needs to be done to appraise, monitor and evaluate projects.

The morning session included presentations from:

Sarah Preston, Natural England, on Access to Nature;

Chris Frankin, Yorkshire Forward, on the Rural Development Programme for England; Tony Crosby, Heritage Lottery Fund, on Funding for the Future.

The afternoon session provided practical experiences of funding recipients from:

Andrew Stumpf from British Waterways; Rebecca Pell from Worcestershire County Council. Presentations were also given on appraisal and evaluation from: Prof Simon Shibli from Sheffield Hallam University's Sport Industry Research centre; Isla Campbell from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Growing Up Outdoors Conference-

03 December 2008- London

This conference attracted 130 delegates and was chaired by Caro-lynn Ferris from the Countryside Access and Activities Network. The conference aimed to explore the benefits and the challenges on encouraging children and young people to be active in the outdoors.

The morning session included presentations from:

Young people from the Scout Association gave their view and set a challenge for the day; The Government on their approach on youth and the outdoors (pre-recorded DVD from the Welsh, English, Scottish and Irish ministers); Sir Al Aynsley-Green, Children's Commissioner for England, on '11 Million Reasons': A Happy and Healthy Childhood; Tim Gill, Rethinking Childhood, on Growing Adventure: A case study in a woodland context; Jim Davis, The Children's Society, on what makes a good adventure.

The afternoon session included workshops from:

Forestry Commission, on Natural Play Space; Countryside Council for Wales, on Wellbeing; Natural England, on Access to Nature.

Countryside Recreation Network Publications List

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Volunteering in the Natural Outdoors (2008)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise (2005)	£20	<input type="checkbox"/>
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For more information, please contact: Kimberley Haigh, CRN, Sheffield Hallam University, Unit 1, Sheffield Science Park, Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 2LX.

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Front page photograph: "Sailing dinghies in close competition" credited to the Environment Agency