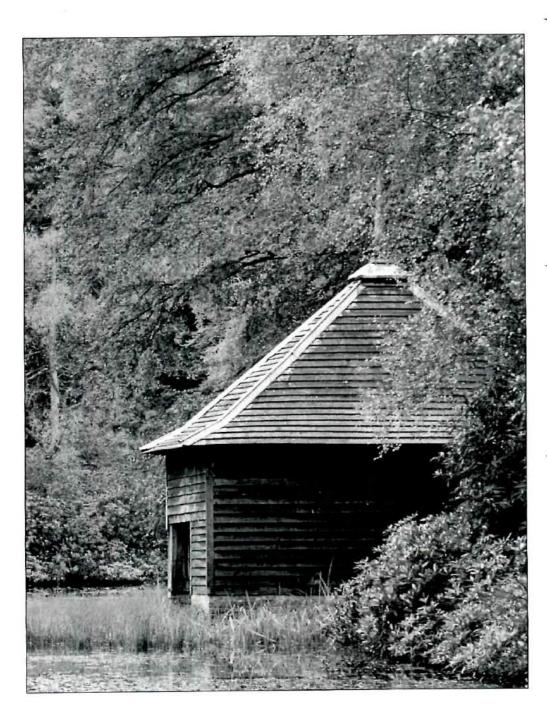
COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION Network News

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The Newsletter of the Countryside Recreation Network

This issue:

Environmental impact:

tourism recreation tranquil areas consensus building

Community involvement

Mountain biking

Exchanging and
Spreading
Information to
develop best
Policy and
Practice in
Countryside
Recreation

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Cover: Tranquil countryside - scene at Loch Dunmore, Scotland photo: Forest Life Pieuwe Library

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of CRN member agencies.



Countryside Recreation Network

CRN is a network which:

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

The Network helps the work of agencies and individuals by:

- identifying and helping to meet the needs of CRN members for advice, information and research;
- promoting co-operation between member agencies in formulating and executing research on countryside and related recreation issues;
- encouraging and assisting the dissemination of the results of countryside research and best practice on the ground.

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Richard Broadhurst Forestry Commission

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Glenn Millar British Waterways

CRN News is free and is published four times a year. We welcome articles and letters from all readers. The copy date for the next issue is 2 April. For more information or to subscribe, please contact:

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Editorial

Welcome!

Welcome to the English Tourist Board who have just joined CRN, further extending the Network.

And a special welcome to those who join the Network by reading this message on the Internet! (http://sosig.ac.uk/crn). We will continue to explore how to use information technology to make our network more effective. If you have ideas, let us know.

There is nothing more certain than change! So they say. It can be irritating, exciting and both. We do not know where all the changes may lead. Some may offer endless opportunities. Change can also generate or absorb enormous amounts of energy. Whatever else it may be, change is, by definition, different. So let us celebrate, adjust and welcome the differences.

Local Government is undergoing change, and also a number of CRN member agencies continue to change. Amongst these, the Environment Service in Northern Ireland becomes the Environment and Heritage Service as it assumes the status of a next steps agency in April; the National Rivers Authority closes and the functions are passed to a new Environment Agency, also to be launched in April; and the Sports Councils complete their reorganisation with the imminent birth of the Sports Council for England and the UK Sports Council. Others are still undergoing change and common to most is the continuing cut in Government funding. This makes it all the more important for the Network to continue to strive to make public funds go further by exchanging and spreading information to develop best policy and practice in countryside recreation.

At a recent meeting of CRN agencies, we reviewed the House of Commons Environment Committee's report 'The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities' to see in how many areas CRN could contribute to the recommendations. In many, is the short answer. This issue of CRN news scratches at a few of the topics but we will continue to revisit many in issues to come.

One person's impact is another's enjoyment, and differences in perceptions are notoriously difficult to resolve. Jonathon Croall's article on tourism and the environment will surely encourage all of us to look hard at the effect of our organisations' action and policies in this area. Should we be promoting more travel to beautiful countryside or creating more beautiful countryside close to where people live?

Another way forward is to build consensus, an approach which goes beyond compromise, seeking a win-win solution every time. Jeff Bishop writes on this subject which was the focus of a joint CRN and Environment Council workshop held in Exeter, with kind support from the Rural Development Commission and Devon County Council. You will need to read a copy of the proceedings which will be available in April.

The next CRN event is the two-day workshop 'A Brush with the Land' 1996. The theme for the next CRN News is Water: Recreation and Access. Articles, illustrations and photographs are very welcome by 2 April, please.

How many more can we take? Assessing recreational capacity

Research commissioned by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) in 1995 focused on public access to Nature Reserves. It helped assess the recreational carrying capacity of such reserves. The research was undertaken on by the Centre for Environmental Interpretation (CEI). Gareth Roberts summarises this research.

Introduction

The provision, improvement and enhancement of opportunities for access and open air enjoyment of the countryside is one of the key purposes of CCW. CCW was the first agency in Britain to be charged with twin responsibilities for wildlife and landscape conservation and for providing opportunities for the public to gain access to the countryside and coasts, for their enjoyment in ways which enhance their understanding and awareness of these environments.

CCW assumed its commitment to improving access opportunity by declaring its wish to see information about access made more readily available to the public, and by confirming its commitment to access to the NNRs it controls and manages.

The public have access to all but one of the 50 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Wales and that sole exception exists because of problems with public safety at this site.

Management of erosion pressure at Pen-y-Ghent



The NNRs are representative of the most important and sensitive habitats and sites of special scientific interest in Wales. These NNRs are the venues for a variety of active outdoor sports as well as more leisurely recreational pursuits. With the range and demand for more outdoor sport and recreational pursuits continuing to grow, it has become even more important to ensure that the impact of activity on sensitive environments is carefully managed and monitored.

It was for this reason that CCW decided to choose three NNRs where it could develop its thinking on monitoring and managing recreational demands within sensitive environments.

Aims of the research

Research sought to establish:

- a method for fixing acceptable levels of recreation and public use of National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Wales;
- a method for determining acceptable levels of change to the Reserves' habitats, species and landscapes;
- a model decision-making process, based on the concept of 'limits of acceptable change', which identifies and subsequently manages acceptable levels of recreational and public use of NNRs; and
- suggested standards for provision for public use and access to NNRs in Wales.

Monitoring system

The research work undertaken led to the devising of a monitoring and decision making system for public access and its environmental impacts.

The methodology advocated by CEI consists of establishing a description of the reserve. This included the preparation of management plans, the division of the reserve into recreation pressure zones, and a baseline recreation survey over the busiest period of the year.

Reserve management should include a simple recreation monitoring system to collect data regularly. This could take the form of, for example, a car park count or of numbers crossing a key stile on a reserve. The reserve should then be divided into recreation zones. Each zone is given a score of recreational impact on a scale of 0 (pristine) to 10 (destroyed) which describes the state of the habitat in each zone. Three surveyors carry out this assessment twice a year. An overall impact figure for the reserve is obtained by averaging the scores for all the zones. Targets for enhanced management can be set by aiming to improve the impact score for specific zones or for the reserve as a whole.

How many people would be acceptable in any one zone, at any one moment in time, on a peak recreation day, is then estimated. Using these 'at-any-one-time' figures, daily and annual capacity figures are calculated. These capacity figures can be altered as management measures and habitat monitoring data are considered.

Finally, it is proposed that a reserve panel meet at least annually. The panel would include representatives from CCW and recreational and local community interest groups. The panel can consider the recreation and habitat impact data and can agree recreation capacity figures for the following year. It can approve management measures providing for public access or better management of existing pressures to minimise their impacts.

Standards

The CEI report recommended that standards for recreation provision on Nature Reserves should reflect different levels of recreational use. It suggests four use categories: reserves with less than 5000 visitors pa, 5–20,000, 20–80,000 and more than 80,000. Minimum and ideal standards are suggested for each category of reserve.

Recommendations and future work

The CEI report makes specific recommendations for three reserves in Wales: Ynyslas, Cwm Idwal and Cors Erddreiniog (see map).

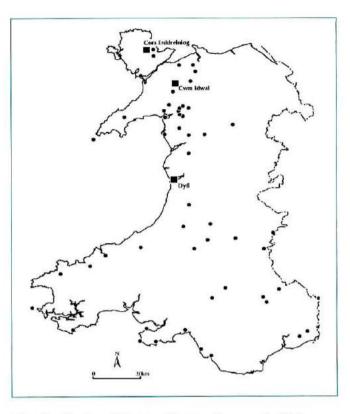
CCW are currently looking at how this research can be taken forward in 1996. It is hoped that a long term experimental project can be established to field test this, or an alternative, methodology. Outstanding problems associated with the approach can then be ironed out. It is also hoped that a such a project will have significant input from local communities.

Conclusions

National Nature Reserves provide the ultimate challenge to managing recreational pressures in the Welsh countryside.

The environmental conservation purpose of these reserves is and should remain paramount. However, reserves have other important purposes to fulfill including providing the public with opportunities for nature study and open air enjoyent of the countryside.

As recreational demands on the countryside become more diverse and the potential for conflict within conservation grows, then it becomes even more important that a straightforward and inexpensive method is established to



The distribution of National Nature Reserves in Wales

assess and judge their impact. The establishment of reserve panels provides the means for a dialogue between various interests. It allows those charged with the conservation of the reserve to raise awareness and understanding amongst panel members of what CCW is trying to acheive.

Any model which aims to assess recreational capacities will need to be thoroughly tested over many years to judge its efficiency. NNRs provide an ideal testing ground.

CEI ran a training course in 1995 on establishing carrying capacities in sensitive environments which was based on their experience in Wales. The course entitled "How many more can we take" is to be repeated in 1996.

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Managing and mediating environmental impact

Jeff Bishop looks at the benefits of a consensus building approach for solving environmental problems

This article is a set of observations by an occasional visitor (some might say 'tourist') to the world of countryside recreation. It highlights three themes that I believe to be central to making progress on the development and use of environmental impact approaches. It ends with some ideas for the sorts of mechanisms that might offer a positive way forward.

Theme 1

Years ago I read a paper by a USA academic on 'The Value of Trees in Urban Areas'. He had 'the answer' to assessing impact and value; a calculation involving the diameter of the mature tree trunk, its eventual height and spread, all multiplied by a 'species value' off a prepared list. Thus, tree X might score 373 and clearly be of greater value to the street than tree Y scoring a dismal 321! This was meant to be serious. First of all I

found it hilarious, then I started to worry. I worried because it was an almost caricature version of the sort of attitude that says: 'if it moves, measure it; if you can't measure it, don't bother with it'.

Our society continues to have an unhealthy reliance on narrow and often quite exclusive forms of 'scientific' quantification of environmental impacts. Ownership of such methods is often claimed by a single profession or group who treat them as a 'bible'. Yet, even at the heart of this supposedly objective approach to impact assessment there are ruptures in its external image. Consider the recent debacle over the disposal of the Brent Spar platform. Each side paraded reams of 'correct' facts to support their case, all said to be distinct from any arguments based on attitudes and values. As chaos theory shows so dramatically, the moment one loosens the control of any system from the shackles of the laboratory – ie. as in real life – there

is almost no area in which rigid, scientific objectivity can survive for a minute. Equally, as the media have shown us, there is no such thing as neutral or value-free information.

This is highly relevant to environmental impacts – especially in the CRN context - because the settings to which the techniques are applied inevitably involve people and the environment. As Schama has shown so lucidly, our attitudes to landscape - for example to mountains - have changed dramatically over the centuries, even to the point where the way the issue or debate is even defined (ie. what information is in circulation) is so different that comparison is simply impossible. Human perceptions of landscape, its relevance to recreation, the effects of recreation upon it, the social value of those activities, and the way those values are socially mediated, all have an effect - right down to the lists of 'objective'



Some 300 people have been involved in drafting the management plan for the Blackdown hills AONB impacts to be assessed.

Of course, deep down, we all still hold on to some notion of objective information and methods because the alternative appears to be a black hole of endless relativity and uncertainty. I believe not only that this either/or argument is untrue (see later text) but also that we simply have to find ways of bringing into impact assessment issues of human and social value.

Theme 2

Where I live, an environmental group collects newspapers from front steps once a month for recycling. In many neighbourhoods, keen people have discussed with the group the possibility of collections from the school, involving parents, children and teachers. The answer is always the same: the 'correct' environmental solution is the street collection; it is wasteful to use resources to assemble materials at venues such as schools. This means that, since many in my street are at work during the day, we never see the collections or get a chance to discuss them, promote the idea to others, learn more and develop our concern. What's more, neither do the children, which is far more worrving.

There appears to be no framework for those in this clearly well motivated group to be able to balance environmental correctness (EC rather than PC?) with social and other benefits. There is a sort of environmental absolutism at play which brooks no erosion of the principles of just this one specific aspect of the systems in which we all operate.

One of the fears people have about losing hold of real facts and numbers is that we will be left without any cohering principles; any theory or ideology that can enable us to find a way safely across the inherently more complex territory of values and judgements. In comes sustainability at last! The principle of sustainability is that we must find ways to balance environmental issues with social, economic, cultural and political ones. Unfortunately, many environmentalists do not appear to have read the word 'balance'. This is fundamental, however, because more practical proponents of sustainability will tell you quite bluntly that - on our way from how we are to how we want to be there will be numerous occasions on which proposals will have negative environmental impacts but be, on balance, properly sustainable.

On reflection, even the very terminology of environmental impacts is value-laden. We can say that someone 'made an impact on us' and this would almost certainly be taken positively. Say that someone (on a trail bike!) has made an impact on a stretch of countryside and we automatically assume a negative impact. 'Impacts' are an entirely human construct and even environmental impacts cannot be implicitly negative.

In fact, another term – sustainable development – shows this even more dramatically. I have lost count of the environmentalists who tell me that there can be no such thing as sustainable 'development'. What they have done is to misunderstand the word 'development', imputing into it

nothing but traditional physical change (buildings, roads, economic 'growth'). Yet, to be correct, it actually refers to a whole range of more affective, human, educational and social aspirations such as capacity building and empowerment.

At best, thinking sustainably will enable us to avoid the 'babies and bathwater' problem of discarding rigorous measures of environmental impact completely because they – with other methods – will be needed even more if we are to find ways to address the appropriate balance of the environmental with the social and economic.

Theme 3

I have no nifty one example for this theme, but it addresses a pernicious and ultimately damaging mind-set that, if not peculiarly British, is one at which we excel. We still seem to favour problems over solutions - indeed we positively relish them. We also tend to treat different elements of any problem as entirely independent; ignoring any creative potential for the cumulative benefit of different solutions, or the fact that a solution to problem A might well ameliorate, even remove, problem B.

As a result, we tend to see environmental impacts not as part of a system susceptible to management, moderation, or mediation – even innovation – but as fixed, given start points and end points. What happens is that, if a study shows that a particular access plan might have X environmental impact, then that is a reason to exclude the plan from further consideration. In fact, it may well

be that an adjustment to the way the plan is implemented would enable that impact to be reduced or moderated, or placed in a different balance with other issues.

By treating each impact as a discrete and fixed item, we not only miss the potentially moderating effect that impacts can have together but also their cumulatively damaging effect. It's often called the 'cocktail' effect, but if it happens to us negatively by default, why can't we make it happen to our advantage? This demands a new way of thinking; one that lists all impacts (more widely, as above) but then gives real time and thought to their degree of inevitability and to their susceptibility to moderation or reduction through other means.

Sadly, our whole British education system is strong on analysis but impoverished when it comes to synthesis and 'problem-solving'. If issues of values and attitudes are part of the equation, and if environmental concerns are to be properly balanced with social and economic ones, then we need – and quickly – not only to start honing our approaches to creative solutions to (for example) environmental impacts, but also to start valuing that skill more highly and placing it directly into assessment practice.

Ways Forward

No, this is not a recipe for what teachers now call a 'relative values' free-for-all. There is still every reason to be thorough and rigorous, to record and assess, to weigh up and to reach sound and defensible arguments. In fact the demands that result from the arguments above make decision-making even more challenging. However, despite prevailing opinion, there are ways to gain greater control and coherence in this more complex domain. From one direction, we see it in legal processes of 'proof'. From another, one can see it in art criticism and education. Most relevantly, there is a literature, largely unknown in the UK, in what is now beginning to be called 'process management' that offers a way forward.

Several of the people involved in developing this area of work are now also engaged directly in environmental issues. At this point the terminology shifts into something many may have heard of around the edges of their countryside recreation world – to consensus building. Consensus approaches have developed in several places and in several ways, and the environmental territory is particularly relevant for all the reasons covered in my three themes. Consensus methods have been used for many years now – with considerable success – through the Canadian 'Round Tables' system, in a whole medley of small and large environmental policy and management issues in the USA, on problems such as visitor access in France, and on water catchment management in Australia.

By definition, a consensus approach is inclusive –

and that covers inclusiveness of people and groups (and hence attitudes) as well as inclusiveness of information (technical, perceptual, ecological, effective). It would be just as dangerous (perhaps more so) to substitute values information for scientific information as it has been in the past to exclude what is difficult to measure objectively. There is no progress on issues such as Brent Spar while each side sticks to its own narrowly defined agenda and information set – and does so in separate rooms talking, very often, to entirely different social groups.

Progress will come on the back of two key principles. First, that all information, ideas, solutions, attitudes and values should be brought together into the same equation. Secondly, that you do not then pass it over to one person or group to resolve it all; resolution can only be achieved through the shared action of all stakeholders (oh dear, even that word's been hijacked now!). Moving further into consensus building methods one then finds that, when working well, they are also effective at shifting people from a problem-orientation into a solutions-orientation, at securing long term commitment to not just support but to act on implementing solutions, and to changing relationships between all those involved.

I believe there is an urgent need to develop ways of working on issues such as environmental impacts which are not either/or approaches but which bring people, information, processes, solutions, resources and skills together so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts. If that's not sustainable, nothing ever will be.

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CRN and the Environment Council recently held a joint conference "Consensus in the Countryside: reaching shared agreement in policy, planning and management". The proceedings will be available in April for £8 (inc p&p) from CRN (address on p.3)

A Tranquil Countryside?

Simon Rendel describes the concept of 'Tranquil Area maps'; a new technique for assessing the countryside resource.

'Tranquil Area' maps were originally drawn for a strategic road project. They show at a strategic scale countryside which is relatively undisturbed by noise and visual intrusion. They are obtained by mapping intrusive elements according to specially selected criteria. The Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) has published regional maps of England at two dates: early 60's and early 90's. These show the change (mostly loss) of tranquillity over the thirty year period. The simplest statistic, derived from GIS plotting, is that tranquillity as defined regionally has declined from 63% to 50% of all areas in England.

Until about 1960 widespread disturbance to the 'sense of countryside' in England was mainly caused by urban development. Roads carried only one quarter of present traffic and even in the South-East were relatively unimportant as disturbance elements outside built-up areas.

Since 1960 the effect of roads, as well as new power stations, pylon lines and airports, has risen dramatically so that in many parts of England only detached pockets of 'tranquil' countryside remain. Around London, particularly, such pockets must be regarded as remnants of an age, well within living memory, when undisturbed countryside was an extensive and continuous feature of the landscape.

Our use of the concept of 'tranquillity' originated from a transport corridor study in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. This study was one of the largest undertaken for a completely new road in England. Although the actual distance from start to finish was no more than 70km it was found necessary to consider a large number of options, giving a total route study length of over 500km.

Immediately north of London, the landscape is widely

designated for quality and as Green Belt. It is an area where the many substantial towns are tightly contained in the remaining countryside and where a feeling of 'real' as opposed to 'suburban' countryside can be appreciated quite close to the M25 London orbital. Stevenage for example is remarkably well-contained with the transition from total urbanisation to wholly undisturbed countryside being sharply defined.

Although most of this local countryside is designated for landscape quality there are significant tracts which remain undesignated. Such undesignated tracts, however valuable to the local community, offer lines of least resistance to transport corridors. It was therefore decided to map all undisturbed countryside as a resource in itself. Remarkably, not only had this not been attempted before but it produced a map which looks completely different from that obtained by plotting landscape quality. Of course as a routeing tool it had the desirable environmental effect of steering the corridor away from 'tranquil' areas and had a powerful influence on the decision-making process.

It was clear from work on this corridor and the maps which had been produced that 'tranquillity' as a tool also had great potential for illustrating the cumulative effect of road building, increase in traffic and urbanisation. Accordingly it was decided, in conjunction with the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Countryside Commission, to attempt to prepare maps showing the trend over the last thirty years.

We considered disturbance as either visual or due to noise. The most obvious change in the last thirty years comes from increased distant noise from roads. All roads



Enjoying the tranquil countryside of the New Forest

shoto: Forest Life Picture Lilwary

have contributed to this but the new multi-carriageway roads have had the most significant effect. In some areas it is now becoming quite difficult to remove oneself from road noise since the hum of a motorway can be heard at least 2km away, unless topographical or wind conditions are particularly favourable. In a light breeze traffic on parts of the M1 can be heard 5km away on the leeward side.

The Tranquil Area maps identify undisturbed countryside for each English Region and, in simplified form, for England as a whole. They are drawn according to simple distance criteria. The aim is to identify 'tranquillity' at a regional scale; there are other more local effects which have been ironed out by the criteria used. There is no claim to complete objectivity but it can be shown that adjustments to the criteria do not radically alter the pattern produced.

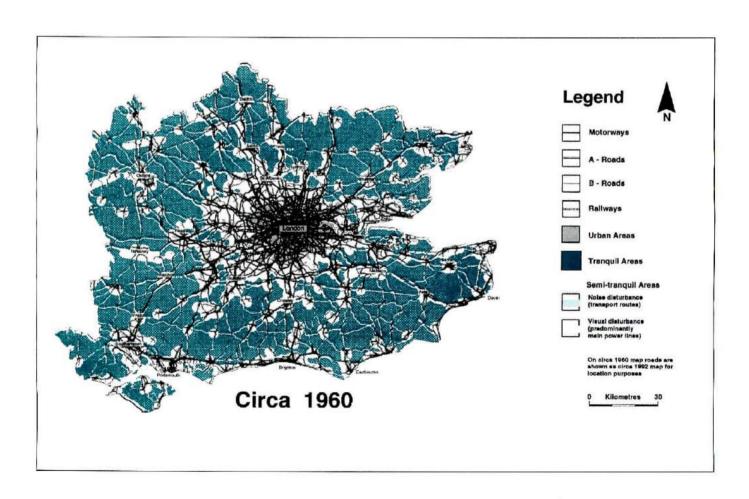
Generalised criteria for definition of Regional 'Tranquil Areas'

The regional maps are drawn to a base scale of 1:250,000 and printed at a scale of approximately 1:750,000. This eliminates many less important effects and makes data collection reasonably economical. 'Tranquil Areas' satisfy the following crtieria:

- 1. A 'Tranquil Area' is at least:-
- 4 km from the largest power stations.
- 3 km from the most highly trafficked roads (such as the M1 and M6) and from large towns (such as Leicester) and from some major industrial areas
- 2km from other motorways and major trunk roads (such as M40 and Al) and from the edge of smaller towns.
- 1km from medium disturbance roads i.e. roads which are difficult to cross in peak hours (taken to be roughly equivalent to greater than 10,000 vehicles per day) and some main line railways.

A 'Tranquil Area' also lies beyond military and civil airfield/ airport noise lozenges as defined by published noise data (where available) and beyond very extensive opencast mining.

- 2. 'Tranquil Areas' are drawn with a minimum radius of 1km. This criterion eliminates local effects.
- 3. Within 'Tranquil Areas' the following linear elements are



shown as creating a lower level of disturbance or 'zone of weakness' 1km wide:

- · low disturbance roads
- 400KV and 275KV power lines
- some well-trafficked railways

4. Within Tranquil Areas various sites are shown as zones of weakness, including large mining or processing operations, groups of pylons or masts, settlements greater than 2500 in population, some half-abandoned airfields and most windfarms.

The Future

Although the maps do not attempt to predict the future, the vulnerability of countryside is illustrated by the 'zones of weakness' in the Tranquil Areas. These give a preliminary indication of where further disturbance could coalesce cumulatively to the detriment of 'tranquillity'. In the case of roads they show where further fragmentation is possible, according to published traffic growth forecasts.

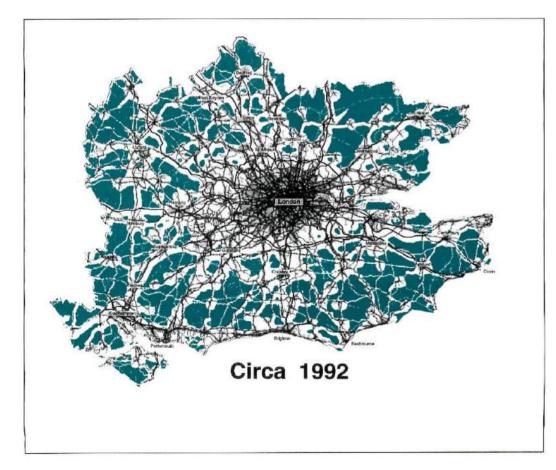
As a result of further work it is now established that, with suitable adjustments and additions, the method can be extended up to 1:50,000 scale. At this scale the method can

be used for local studies in recreational areas, the urban fringe and very remote areas for example. The work for each study needs to be carefully tailored to the place and the needs of the client. Potentially it can be used to help measure landscape change, capacity and sustainability, to plan recreation and landscape management and to plot cumulative effects, for development control.

Simon Rendel is from the Landscape Design and Environmental Planning Group of ASH Consulting Group. Please contact him for further statistical information, more detailed criteria and information on local mapping of 'tranquillity'. He can be contacted at:

140a The Broadway Didcot Oxon OX11 8RJ Tel: 01235 511481

Tranquil area maps are available from: CPRE Publications Warwick House 25 Buckingham Palace Road London SWI WOP Tel: 0171 976 6433



Tranquil area maps have been published by CPRE for all regions of England. These maps demonstrate growth in traffic and development for the South East.

Mountain Biking – Perceptual Problem, Passing Fad or Positive Management?

Kris McGowan looks at the impact of mountain biking on the environment.

This article stems from research which was carried out in 1993/4 using questionnaires. Research focused on the impact of mountain biking activity upon the environment and its interrelationship with other outdoor activities. National Parks, AONBs, Forestry Commission sites and the wider countryside were studied in order to ascertain the scale and scope of any problems. Research also focused on mountain biking clubs and their members to gain an understanding of the requirements of the sport.

A brief history

Mountain biking in the countryside has grown extensively since its introduction to Britain in 1981. Mountain biking activity is now equal to a quarter of that of walking in the countryside and still on the increase.

It could be argued that mountain biking does not really have a place in this country, as it emerged from the desolate wilderness areas of the United States. Our own countryside is disadvantaged in its ability to provide for this sport as in the UK the countryside consists predominantly of managed farmland.

Although many mountain bikers may prefer to ride across open countryside, this is only legal with the owners' permission. Mountain bikes, in common with any other bicycle, are only allowed on highways and byways, excluding footpaths.

Perceived problems

Much is written in the cycling press relating to conflicts that occur between bikers and other countryside users, however this is primarily anecdotal. Most problems of conflict between mountain bikers and other users are more perceived than real. There are very few documented cases of actual physical conflict. Some walkers have even remarked on mountain bikers' courtesy. The British Horse Society

and the British Mountain Biking Federation are working together to raise awareness of each other's pursuit. Where conflict does occur, or when bikers stray off permitted routes, there is very little that can be done legally. The mountain biker's position in legal terms is very difficult to define. County Councils and National Park Authorities have indicated that they are unsure of the mountain biker's position regarding rights of way. As stated by Scottish Natural Heritage, "the position of cycling and horse riding on rights of way is difficult to establish" (SNH, 1992, p14).

Real problems

The issue of conflict with other users is largely a perceptual one. The real problems are those associated with *erosion and disturbance of wildlife* but these aspects do require further research.

Although there is evidence of some disturbance in all areas, problems are concentrated in National Parks, particularly woodland, and steep or mountainous areas. Some areas do come under considerable pressure — Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) for example. In these areas there have been calls for specific banning of not only mountain bikes but also horses.

Governing bodies have little say in the siting of organised events. Such events have the potential to create significant, focused environmental damage.

Palmer (1993) reports that the Forest of Dean has been able to absorb mountain bikes with very little conflict.

Mountain bikers

Rising car use has not just forced bikes off the road, but has also encouraged their use deep into the countryside. The National Parks are within easy commuting distance of the average mountain biker with a car and cycle

rack

In the questionnaire, 61% of respondents stated that they used a car to reach their chosen countryside destination. Of those, 77% stated that they would rather cycle to the countryside, if roads were safe enough or sufficient cycle routes existed. There is an increasing commitment to the creation of cycle routes across the country, which may serve to enable mountain bikers easier access into the countryside. However, these alone do not provide the terrain that mountain bikers require and there is very little actual provision for mountain bikes; perhaps a role which could be taken on by Country Parks.

Questionnaire responses indicate that the mountain biker prefers:

- · challenging terrain;
- · fresh air;
- bridleways;
- · downhill routes;
- · woodland areas.

Responses also indicated that mountain bikers are willing to travel extensive distances to pursue their activity. These characteristics suggest that those areas attracting the most attention are the ones facing the most problems.

The Way Forward?

"Conservation by ban, rightly they say, is the wrong answer. Far better to allow enlightened access, to promote peaceful co-existence." (Hunn, 1991).

- Banning is generally not regarded as the way forward, although may be appropriate in sensitive areas such as
- Management is the key to successful integration of mountain biking into the countryside. Perhaps the onus is on local authorities to provide facilities as there is "mounting evidence to suggest that new recreational pursuits – including trail biking and mountain biking – are unlikely to gain access to

the territory they require unless the public sector makes a deliberate attempt to provide and accommodate them." (Harrison, 1991, p88). Diversification of agriculture may provide some facilities. Perhaps a co-ordination between the public and private sectors is required. An example of such a scheme would be a toll route allowing safe and conflict free riding on private land.

- · Disused quarries could provide some 'challenging terrain' and could provide facilities for wide ranging abilities in areas close to residential areas. National Parks contain a disproportionate amount of nonrestored mineral workings. There is however a problem of cost and incentive. Perhaps, in future, planning gain could achieve restoration of quarry workings for mountain bike use.
- · Loop routes first occurred in the USA and have been introduced into some Forestry Commission areas. Managed correctly, they are able to provide facilities for all recreational activities, separately. Another idea from the States is the use of zoning techniques.

Again, this is being implemented by the Forestry Commission, whereby areas are zoned off where mountain bikes are not allowed. So far the schemes in this country have proved successful in diverting mountain biking activity away from sensitive areas.

- · The Countryside Commission and the Sports Council have published a report which demonstrates good practice relating to sport, including mountain biking, in the countryside. They have also published a mountain bike code of conduct*. The British Mountain Bike Federation have produced land management guidelines for the integration of off-road cycling.
- · There is a need for more education, and liaison between mountain bikers, local authoriites and other path users.

Mountain biking is already an established sport in the countryside. A pro-active approach is required to avert further conflicts and prevent environmental damage.

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Kris McGowan carried out this research as part of a degree at University of Wales, College of Cardiff * Editor's note - There is also a Code of Conduct for Scotland, available from the Scottish Sports Council

Woodland areas can provide challenging terrain for mountain bikers



Loved to Death? Tourism and the countryside

Jonathon Croall presents his views on the impact of tourism on the countryside

It is true that travel broadens the mind. But today, in its modern guise of tourism, it can also ruin coastlines and countryside, create road congestion, pollute air and water and destroy traditional communities.

The problems in the UK are not as acute as those in the Mediterranean, the Alps, Nepal for example, but they are becoming more serious yearly, especially in certain popular parts of the countryside.

Tourism is set to become the world's biggest industry by the year 2000. So how can the damage it has caused in recent times be halted, or even reversed? How can the notion of 'sustainable tourism', now such a buzz-word, be put into practice?

There are grounds for optimism. In parts of the UK there is a growing understanding of the need to encourage and promote a tourism that recognises the need to conserve the physical environment, assist local economies, support distinctiveness rather than uniformity, and respect traditional cultures.

As visitors we like countryside that is familiar, ancient, unchanging, diverse and distinctive. We also want the countryside to be 'unspoilt' yet accessible. Yet as numbers of visitors increase there is a loss of those distinctive characteristics which attraced us in the first place.

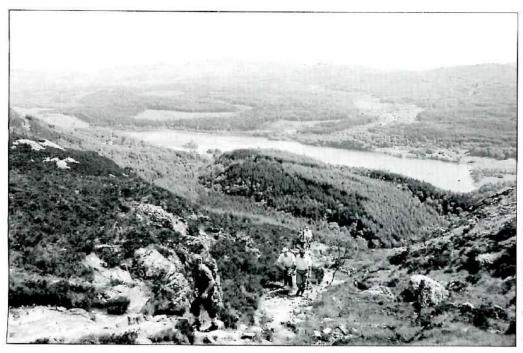
Tourism is now causing serious damage in many spots at peak times of the year. In the Lake District for example, where 14 million visits are made annually, peace and tranquillity are commodities in increasingly short supply. Most visitors come just for the day and travel by car resulting in increased road congestion. On the lakes themselves there is a growing disturbance from water sports activities. The landscape is suffering damage from erosion; for example the single path up the spine of Helvellyn is beginning to resemble a road.

Similar erosion problems occur in Snowdonia where for example half a million people (out of 13 million annual visits per year) climb up the six paths to the summit of Snowdon.

wSuch developments raise fundamental questions about access and conservation, underlining the need for sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is not simply a matter of protecting the physical environment – though this is certainly one crucial element – but a concept with much broader implications. A good definition is given in a 1993 report by the Federation of Nature and National Parks in Europe, entitled 'Loving them to Death'. Here sustainable tourism is defined as

"all forms of tourism development, management and activity which maintain the environmental, social and economic well-being of natural, built and cultural resources in perpetuity."

Several encouraging projects have been established in the UK – for example in the Isle of Purbeck, the North Pennines, South Pembrokeshire, Perthshire and Fermanagh. In some,



Erosion is caused by the increasing numbers of walkers in certain areas

hoto: Forest Life Picture Library

such as the South Devon Green Tourism Initiative, attempts are being made to persuade tourism businesses that a sustainable approach is not only ethically and environmentally desirable, but in the long run, commercially sensible.

A key issue in many areas is transport. Around 80% of trips to the countryside are made by car, resulting in congestion, noise, pollution and the visual blight of car parks.

In regions such as Dartmoor, the Surrey Hills, Devon, the New Forest and the Peak District, traffic management schemes encourage tourists to leave their cars outside 'honeypot' areas, and to travel by bus, rail or cycle. In some areas, such as the Lakes, there are plans to ban cars from certain roads.

Government support for sustainable tourism is not evident. Recent drastic cuts in the English Tourist Board's budget preclude the kind of experiment and innovation needed to develop sustainable tourism. Last April the Department of National Heritage (DNH) published 'Tourism: Competing with the Best.' However, this was about increasing visitor numbers and devising better marketing strategies, rather than the need to prevent an ever expanding tourism industry from damaging the environment. The publication before Christmas of a DNH booklet on 'Sustainable Rural Tourism' provided a useful and balanced assessment of 21 well-established tourism projects, some of them inspired by the government's own task force that produced the report 'Maintaining the Balance' in 1991. However, the Government failed to ensure that a proper monitoring mechanism was built into the work of these projects. As the authors succinctly put it: "Without any attempt to measure impact, it is very difficult to know what works and what doesn't".

Such short sightedness is exemplified by the experience of those working for the Peak District Partnership. This was a national pilot project which for three years, in consultation with local people, had been testing out radical ideas on traffic control and visitor management. The project is now poised to implement many of its plans but lacks the money to do so, and is now seeking European funding. Should not the Countryside Commission or the Rural Development Commission be receiving funds to support this and other valuable tourism experiments?

As the tourism crisis deepens, we are faced wth a stark choice: to preserve or destroy? If we opt for the former, as surely we must, perhaps we will soon have to pay to gain access to places which are now free, or face restrictions when we enter them, in terms of numbers, or means of transport. But isn't this a small price to pay to ensure, for ourselves and for future generations, that our countryside is not 'loved to death'?

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Federation of Nature and National Parks, Loving them to Death? Sustainable Tourism in Europe's Nature and National Parks, 1993

Department of National Heritage, Tourism: Competing with the Best, 1995

Department of National Heritage/Rural Development Commission/English Tourist Board/Countryside Commission, Sustainable Rural Tourism: Opportunities for Local Action, 1995

English Tourist Board/Department of Employment,
Maintaining the Balance: Tourism and the Environment,
1991

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'Preserve or Destroy: Tourism and the Environment' by Jonathan Croall is published by the Gulbenkian Foundation (£6.95). Copies available in bookshops, or (add £2 p&p) from Turnaround Distribution, 27 Horsell Road, London N5 1XL.

A Brush with the Land Art in the countryside

Following the success of last year's popular workshop in Grizedale, CRN is running a second workshop looking at art as a form of communication. From sculpture to storyelling, from music to craft, the workshop will cover techniques which can be used to inspire greater understanding and enjoyment of the countryside.

St Donat's Castle on the coast of South Wales will provide the location for "A Brush with the Land" 1996

Further information from Catherine Etchell, Network Manager. Address on page 3.

21 and 22 May 1996 United World College of the Atlantic

Countryside Recreation Network

Community Initiatives and Countryside Access

Mel Jones and Mike Wild of Sheffield Hallam University look at the relationship between certain kinds of community involvement and increased confidence in using local countryside.

Rotherham: Up to their thighs in cold slimy water, reaching below the surface for objects, large and small, that are rapidly filling a nearby skip; Sheffield: braving the steady drizzle and treacherous conditions underfoot on a dreary February afternoon to stack cordwood in a once neglected coppice wood; Doncaster: risking pinched fingers and trapped toes as they carry timber towards the site for a new boardwalk around a wetland; Barnsley: removing broken glass from a Victorian tip deep in a wood recently purchased by a parish council...

Who are they and why do they do it? They are willing volunteers, of different ages and from a wide variety of backgrounds and they are highly motivated to conserve their local countryside for wildlife and for informal recreation. They have a wide variety of personal motivations, from a desire to learn new skills and to forget work and thereby reduce stress, through to more altruistic motives such as wanting to make a small personal contribution to conserving the environment and saving the planet from further environmental degradation. The model on the next page, using the widely-used notions of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' schemes, summarises the variety of types of community initiatives currently taking place in South Yorkshire. Three types of community initiative are identified:

· Voluntary Action.

This is best exemplified by BTCV, where the practical work is carried out by volunteers, but not necessarily by individuals resident near the site where the environmental work is being carried out. Voluntary action is essentially skilled outside help for local initiatives.

· Community Involvement.

This is involvement of members of the local community in a countryside project initiated by, and often directed by, the local authority. This type of initiative is most commonly site-specific and usually related to a management plan or a site's proposed designation eg. as a Local Nature Reserve. It may, however, have a wider neighbourhood remit or be metropolitan district-wide, as in the case of a voluntary ranger service or an Adopt-a-Path scheme.

· Community Action.

This is an initiative arising from local needs and which, although usually receiving local authority or other support, has originated and is driven by members of the local community. Examples of such schemes in Sheffield include the Gleadless Valley Wildlife Group and the Grenoside Conservation Society. Groups of this kind are not site-



Volunteers help organise a Woodland Crafts Roadshow at Buck Wood

specific or single-task based and are often sustained over a long period of time. At a larger scale, community action also includes important initiatives at metropolitan district level. A pioneering example of this type of community action in South Yorkshire is the Community Action in the Rural Environment Project (CARE), created in 1985 as a partnership between seven parish councils, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, the Countryside Commission and the Peak Park Planning Board. In its formative period this project had the combined advantages of the powerful resources of the partner organisations and the commitment, initiative and enterprise of local communities.

Sheffield Wildlife Trust (formerly the Sheffield City Wildlife Group) is an equally important example of a metropolitan district-wide organisation which has undertaken a major urban habitat survey and, in conjunction with local communities, a range of projects. These include the creation of an urban nature park, pond restoration and woodland management. Community action also includes groups formed to fulfil a specific task such as those that come together to oppose land use change and incompatible development, and individual campaigners who, collectively can have a considerable bearing on the outcome of planning applications. Whether in the context of voluntary action in aid of a local project, community involvement in a local authority initiative, or direct community action, many personal acts, large and small, in combination, often produce long-lasting benefits for the wider community. Three of these benefits relate directly to countryside access:

- an improvement in environmental quality;
- enhanced awareness of the recreational potential of the local area;
- greater confidence in using the local countryside.

These benefits have been realised through a wide variety of projects in South Yorkshire, where, to a greater or lesser degree, all communities have reasonable access to some kind of countryside within walking distance. What cannot be guaranteed, however, is that everyone has equal access to this countryside, or that where countryside is within easy reach, people will be aware that they can use it for informal recreation, and that they are confident about using it.

Local residents can make a valuable contribution to increasing countryside access, as the following examples

show. Scholes Coppice is a medium-sized wood in Rotherham's urban fringe. Like many local woods it is a neglected canopy wood, even-aged, and generally lacking a shrub layer and interesting ground flora. Parts of it are perceived as enclosed and threatening. Before recent work began it was heavily littered in places, and an important Iron Age camp in the woods was being damaged by mountain bikers. Under the aegis of the Amenities and Recreation Department a long term management plan has been devised and in the winter of 1993-94 extensive woodland management operations took place to thin the canopy and to create a number of glades. The main woodland paths have also been improved. Brash and logs have been used to block certain paths to create a walkers' sanctuary in the heart of the wood and to protect the Iron Age camp. Members of the local community have been involved in a number of ways: through a series of consultative meetings, including site visits, by assisting in woodland surveys, and through litter picks and pond clearance. A series of recreational events have also been organised at the wood.

Buck Wood, between two large housing estates in Sheffield, has long been a haunt of drug users and used as a dumping ground for burnt-out cars. Sheffield Wildlife Trust in partnership with Gleadless Valley Wildlife Group, Sheffield City Council, local schools and residents' and tenants' associations have now cleared the area of abandoned cars and litter, built footbridges and steps and begun an important re-coppicing experiment to benefit wildlife, to produce wood and timber, (there is a city-wide revival of interest in coppicing and coppicing crafts) and to achieve a managed setting for informal recreation that local residents can use with confidence. Volunteers aged from four to over 70 have taken part in the project. The local free newspaper delivery was used to help distribute 3,000 leaflets about the work in the wood. In November 1994 a woodland management training weekend took place; future plans include the construction of a pond and a family 'woodland adventure' day.

Broad Ing Wood lies next to the recreation ground in the former mining village of Pilley in Barnsley. It is on the site of an old wood that had seen much ironstone mining activity in the past and had subsequently been planted and then clear felled. It was re-planted with sycamore and Japanese Iarch by the Forestry Commission in the 1960s. The plantation was acquired by the far-sighted Parish Council in late 1988 for development as a parish resource for recreation, education and wildlife conservation. Local volunteers, working to a detailed management plan, have transformed it

within a few years from a plantation into what looks like a semi-natural native wood. A boundary wall, in a bad state of disrepair, has been re-built; wooden fences have been re-erected elsewhere; entrance gates and stiles have been installed; native shrubs have been planted in gaps on the boundaries; the ride system in the wood has been extended; large amounts of fly-tipped material has been removed; the plantation itself has been thinned and glades created; an interpretive leaflet has been produced and distributed to every household in the parish; and an information board proclaiming the site to be 'Our Community Wood' stands at the entrance. Within eighteen months, thinning in the wood produced stunning carpets of bluebells.

These projects, although having very different origins, all share certain common keys to success. Firstly, the mutual and synergetic benefits of working together were recognised with all parties bringing different strengths to bear on the particular project. Such partnerships are not always easy to mobilise, they can be messy, and it is easy for some partners/individuals to assume the driving seat. Tensions can occur and the work may be left to those most committed or with facilities or the organisation. Working together needs to be worked at; process as well as product objectives are important. Second, individuals were working within some existing support framework, whether a strong local

community group or a supportive culture within the local authority. Lastly, these community initiatives were set within a context of sustainable development: sustaining environmental quality and sustaining communities. It is not enough just to mobilise people when a threat to the local environment looms. This short term 'not in my backyard' (NIMBY) approach is certainly the easiest way to generate grassroots action. What is more difficult is to convert this into what Jonathan Porritt recently called 'In my backyard' (INBY), a commitment to doing something constructive. More complex still is to move it on to what might be called TWIMBYism — 'The world IS my backyard'.

The authors wish to thank Peter Walker for assistance in the research project on community initiatives in S. Yorkshire. The article is based on a workshop presentation at the 1994 CRN Annual Conference in York.

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CRN Research Note Community involvement in the n

Community involvement in the management of Forest Enterprise woodlands

Forest Enterprise is responsible for the management of the forests and woodlands owned by the nation. Its objectives include the production and supply of timber for the woodusing industry, the conservation of wildlife in its forests and the provision of wide ranging recreation opportunities. The Government's 1994 Forestry Review confirmed the importance of Forest Enterprise woodlands in helping to meet recreation demand not only for tourists but also for local people. Links with local communities, however, go further than the provision of a recreation resource. A move towards increasing liaison and encouragement of active participation by communities enables local people to develop a sense of ownership and pride in their local woodland. North and East England Region has a range of situations where Forest Enterprise has worked with differing local communities in its woodlands, and some of these were visited on the 1994 CRN pre-conference tour (as reported in Countryside Recreation Network News Vol 2 no.3). The research note gives specific examples of community involvement in the management of Forest Enterprise woodlands and illustrates substantial variation in the nature and extent of activities. It is clear that there is no simple

formula for determining the appropriate means of involvement – this depends on the local situation, and different approaches are quite acceptable providing they are successful. The examples illustrate that community involvement, in whatever form, is invaluable in enhancing the management of woods and helping to optimise the benefits derived from them. In recognition of the value of community involvement, Forest Enterprise has encouraged such participation in recent years and committed substantial resources to the initiatives. It is clear however, that for community involvement to be truly successful the momentum for involvement must come from the community.

Further information from Rob Guest and Fiona Simpson at: Forest Enterprise 1A Grosvenor Terrace

York YO3 7BD

Tel: 01904 620221

Copies of this research note are available from CRN (address on p.3)

Countryside Recreation Training and Events

Developing a Parks Strategy

ILAM 5 March, London 4 June, South West

Communications and Presentation Skills

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 5-7 March, Blairgowrie Contact: 01250 881286

Reclassification of RUPPS

ROW Law Review 6 March, Reading

Understanding Farming Practice

To improve liaison with farmers in rights of way work
Field Studies Council
7-8 March, Shrewsbury

Introduction to the Management of Cemeteries

ILAM 12 March, Middlesex

Event Sponsorship

ILAM 12 March, Bristol 5 June, Doncaster

Growing Old in the Countryside Provision for older people in rural areas

Rural Development Commission/
Help the Aged
12 March, Wolverhampton
19 March, Taunton
26 March, York
16 April, Preston
23 April, London
Contact: Lesley Phillips 01367 240129

Food for the 21st Century

Effect of food systems on health and the environment Schumacher College 10–15 March, Devon

Site Management Planning

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 11–15 March, Ayr Contact: Bruce Philp 01292 525319

How Successful are You?

Evaluating interpretation and other visitor services CEI, Scotland 12–13 March, Pitlochry

Education for the 21st Century

Sustainability, values and policy Schumacher College (in assoc. with WWF) 17–30 March, Devon

Organisational Roles and Responsibilities

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 18-22 March, Blairgowrie Contact: 01250 881286

Transport and the Environment

ESRC Conference Economic & Social Research Council 22 March, London

Getting the Message Across

Introduction to the world of PR and communication IEEM 25 March, Surrey

National Green Lane Day, 24 March

Voluntary conservation work and repairs LARA; local clubs and individuals Contact: Andy Bush 01634 260485 e mail: 1013511733@compuserve.com

Environmental Assessment of Transport Projects

RTPI Practice Workshop 27 March, Cardiff Contact; 01222 874956 e mail; stodmg@cardiff,ac.uk

How to Access Principal Funding Regimes

ILAM 27 March, N. Wales

Storytelling in Interpretation

CEI, Scotland 27–30 March, Pitlochry

The Future of Rural Wales

Key issues including the Rural White Paper 1 April, Cardiff Contact: 01222 874956 e mail: stodmg@cardiff.ac.uk

Environment for All

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 1-5 April, Blairgowrie Contact: 01250 881286

Practical Sports Development Strategies

The role of the local authority, enabler and provider 16 April, Watford 12 June, N. Wales

LARA-the Next Ten Years, Anniversary Conference New ideas for cooperative management

LARA
17 April, Warks
Contact: Tim Stevens, PO Box 9, Cannock,
Staffs, WS1 2FE

Rights of Way Enforcement

Dealing with obstruction, ploughing etc CSS SW 17–18 April, Exeter

Contract Management Skills

For landscape projects Losehill Hall 17–19 April, Derbyshire

Marketing for Countryside Recreation

Losehill Hall 17-19 April, Derbyshire

Environmental Impact Assessment

An introduction IEEM 22 April, Lincoln

Countryside Interpretation

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 23–26 April, Dumfries Contact: Christine Dudgeon 01387 860251

Customer Care

'Visitor Welcome' initiatives Losehill Hall 24–26 April, Derbyshire

Working with Communities

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 29 April-3 May, Ayr Contact: Bruce Philp 01292 525319

Managing Events for Children

ILAM 1 May, venue tba

Visitor Safety

Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 6-9 May, Blairgowrie Contact: 01250 881286

Woodland Management for Nature Conservation

Losehill Hall 13-17 May, Derbyshire

Understanding and Assessing Landscape

Losehill Hall 13-17 May, Derbyshire

Countryside Recreation Training and Events cont..

Work, Leisure and the Quality of Life Leisure Industries Research Centre 14 May, Sheffield

Guided Walks
For urban or countryside tours
Plas Tan y Bwlch
15-16 May, Gwynedd

Ponds, People and Planners Ponds in a development context IEEM 16 May, Cheshire

Tree Care and Management In open spaces and on development sites Plas Tan y Bwich 20-24 May, Gwynedd

A Brush with the Land 1996
A follow up to last year's very
successful workshop on art in the
countryside
Countryside Recreation Network
21-22 May, Atlantic College, S. Wales

Upland and Moorland Conservation Management Conservation and recreation management Plas Tan y Bwlch 10-14 June, Gwynedd

Men, Machines and Mess Using machinery in conservation sites IEEM 11 June, Dorset

CoastNET '96:
A New Deal for the Coast
First annual conference of the new
Coastal Heritage Network
CoastNET
11-14 June, Southport

Woodland Conservation Management To develop skills and understanding Plas Tan y Bwlch 17–21 June, Gwynedd

International Symposium on the Non-Market Benefits of Forestry Forestry Commission conference 23 – 29 June, Edinburgh

Habitat Survey and Monitoring Scottish Countryside Rangers Association 24–28 June, Ayr Contact: Bruce Philp 01292 525319 Grassland Management for Nature Conservation Losehill Hall 24-28 June, Derbyshire

Habitat Management for Invertebrates: Grasslands and Heaths Achieving an integrated wildlife management strategy Plas Tan y Bwlch 24–28 June, Gwynedd

Visitors to the Countryside Losehill Hall 26–28 June, Derbyshire

Restoring and Creating Wildflower-rich Grassland on Farmland IEEM 28 June, Wiltshire

Understanding Farming Systems For countryside staff Plas Tan y Bwich 15-19 July, Gwynedd

Accelerating Leisure?
Leisure, time and space in a transitory society
Leisure Studies Association
12–14 September,
Wageningen, The Netherlands
Contact: +3170 35 00 111
e mail: rene.vanderduim@alg.swg.wau.nl

Velo Australis
International Bicycle Conference
October 28 – November 1,
Fremantle, W. Australia
Tel: +61 9 364 8311
e mail: promaco@cleo.murdoch.edu.au
Info also available on http://
www.dot.wa.gov.au/Velo-Australis-1.html

Landscapes of Leisure & Pleasure 1996 joint annual conference of the Countryside Recreation Network and Landscape Research Group Explores the challenges and trends of recreation in the countryside 19–20 November, Peterborough

Biodiversity: from Politics to Practice IEEM 5th anniversary conference 26–28 November, Kent

CEI, England - Jane Regan 0161 247 1067 CEI, Scotland - James Carter 0131 650 8017 CoastNET-0161 247 1067 Countryside Recreation Network --- 01222 874970 CSS SW - Vanessa Davis 01209 820611 ESRC — Geraldine Reilly 0171 380 7456 Forestry Commission - Ann Alexander +44 131 334 0303 FSC — Christine Reader 01743 851074 IEEM - 01635 37715 ILAM -- 01491 874222 Leisure Industries Research Centre - Samantha Crofts 0114 253 2518 Losehill Hall — 01433 620373 Plas Tan y Bwlch-01766 590324 ROW Law Review - Juanita Davy 01249 740273 Schumacher College-01803 865934