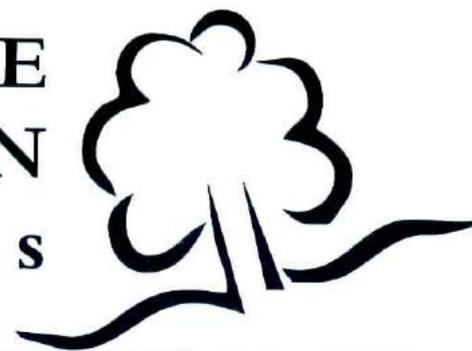


C O U N T R Y S I D E R E C R E A T I O N N e t w o r k N e w s



Volume 5 Number 2 April 1997

ISSN 0968 - 459X



Outdoor recreation:

Economic, social and health benefits

Visitor Monitoring

Rights of Way

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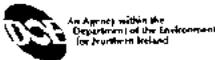
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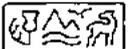


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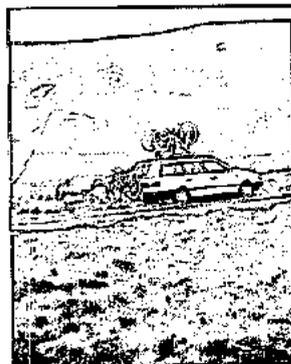


Photo: North York Moors NPA

Visitors enjoying the
North York Moors

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 countryside research and best practice on the ground.

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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 20 May.

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Editorial

Why do we visit the countryside...to escape the pressures and tensions of modern life...to exercise and improve our fitness...to enjoy the sights, sounds and smells of nature...to be inspired for some artistic purpose, or simply to savour the peace and tranquillity? Whatever the reason, and there are bound to be others besides these, millions of us visit the countryside each year for physical, mental and even spiritual sustenance.

In addition to the personal benefits derived from spending our leisure time in the countryside, there are also various benefits to rural communities (there are some significant dis-benefits as well, but that's another story). In fragile rural economies, where farming or other primary industry is no longer the mainstay, income from casual visitors and tourists can be a welcome boost.

This issue of CRN News takes a look at some of individual and community benefits of countryside recreation.

Although there is nothing particularly new in the recognition that recreation and tourism can bring major benefits to rural economies, we might be surprised by the sheer scale of this contribution. Richard Davison looks, amongst other things, at the economic benefits derived from recreation and tourism in Scotland, and Catherine Bowmer discusses how, through the development of the Peak District and North Pennines Tourism Partnerships, efforts have been made to maximise the social and economic benefits of sustainable tourism.

Rob Fairbanks reports on an innovative project in Oxfordshire where doctors have been prescribing 'Health Walks' as part of an holistic approach to promoting healthy living. Did you know that brisk walking as part of a healthy lifestyle can help reduce the risk of ailments such as osteoporosis and coronary heart disease?

When looking at benefits we must not forget that many people find it difficult, for whatever reason, to get into the countryside. Physically disabled people, for example, often face difficulties in the moving about in the countryside because of physical obstacles such as gates, styles and uneven path surfaces. Alan Teulon, looks at recent initiatives to extend the benefits of outdoor recreation to people with physical and learning disabilities, through involvement with the BT-sponsored 'Countryside For All' project.

CRN's Annual Countryside Recreation Conference this year explores the whole issue of 'access for all'. By identifying existing barriers, and charting the level of progress made in overcoming them, the intention of the conference is to set an agenda for making access for all a future reality.

Matthew Jones

The Benefits of Countryside Recreation: a Scottish Perspective

Richard Davison, Scottish Natural Heritage



Photo: John Mackay

Walkers enjoying the Scottish countryside

Last weekend, my wife and I visited the Scottish Borders. We bought petrol, locally as well as near home; had two meals out; and stayed in a youth hostel. We enjoyed the scenery and the exercise and came back feeling refreshed; our batteries recharged.

This brief description helps illustrate some of the benefits that countryside recreation offers; benefits which agencies such as SNH find themselves increasingly having to try and quantify in order to justify greater investment by public and private sectors.

Economic benefits

A 1991 Scottish Agricultural College Study (1), examining the economic benefits of countryside recreation in Scotland, estimated that annual visitor expenditure amounted to £250-£300 million and supported between 20,000 and 29,000 full-time equivalent jobs. In economic terms, this makes countryside recreation the most important land-use after farming.

This is reinforced by the UK Day Visits Survey (2) which estimated that in 1994, day visitors to the Scottish countryside and coast spent around £546 million. In 1995, British tourists on holiday in Scotland spent £950 million, and in 1994, overseas tourists spent £436 million.

More than half of all holiday trips in Scotland involve some form of outdoor activity(3). A recent study in the Scottish Highlands & Islands (4) revealed that hill walkers and mountaineers spent about £164 million in 1995, supporting over 6,000 jobs.

At a more local level, walkers in Ross & Cromarty were estimated to have spent up to £4.5 million in 1995, and walkers on the West Highland Way, £3.5 million in 1994 (5,6).

It is tempting to get carried away with these figures, but they do mask some important issues, not least of which is the fact that expenditure on accommodation, food and drink, and transport, is often made well away from where people actually carry out their recreational activities. It also conceals the fact that there may be economic costs

associated with countryside recreation. For example, the Scottish Agricultural College study (1) estimated that the annual total costs of access falling on farms and estates in Scotland amounted to £7.5 million, with much of this resulting from vandalism, litter and rubbish dumping, damage to gates and fences etc. However, the same survey showed that only 3% of farms and 21% of estates obtained any access-related income (e.g. accommodation and car parks). The potential for spreading the benefits to offset costs appears high.

Other benefits

As well as promoting understanding and appreciation of our natural heritage and lending weight to conservation arguments, countryside recreation provides participants with significant health benefits. This fact is recognised in the National Fitness Survey, which points out that for many people walking is the single-most

opportunities for public access to the countryside.

Visiting the countryside for recreation offers an antidote to the pressures and stresses of modern living. Although this premise is clear to many people, it is extremely difficult to show it in hard facts and figures that justify greater investment. In short there is insufficient recognition of the high importance of countryside recreation as a fundamental need of modern society.

Increasing the benefits

When discussing benefits we should not forget that many people (even those living and working in the countryside) do not currently engage in, and therefore benefit from, countryside recreation. For example, less than 30% of Scotland's adult population go walking as frequently as once a month. The 'Paths For All' initiative promises to provide new and better opportunities for such people.



Photo: John Mackay

Scotland attracts visitors year-round

important form of exercise (7). The newly-established 'Paths for All Partnership' in Scotland centres very much on promoting the health benefits of recreation by developing path networks around towns and villages to increase

Walking is the most popular activity within the burgeoning Scottish activity holiday market. Visitors on walking holidays typically stay longer and spend more than casual visitors. Maximising the benefits of countryside recreation in Scotland



Photo: Forest Life

therefore depends to a large extent on servicing and promoting the needs of walkers. This is another of the aims of the 'Paths for All' initiative; to help develop a stronger, higher-quality tourism industry in Scotland by creating well sign-posted path networks, linking interesting locations, good views and quality accommodation.

Through the better planning and management of local access, greater land management and environmental benefits should be generated: by creating access opportunities close to where people live and stay on holiday, recreation will become more sustainable, because it will consume fewer resources. It should also reduce some of the social and environmental pressures on 'honeypot' sites.

Future research

Despite these good words, it is evident that open-air recreation in the countryside has lost out, and is still doing so, in the competition for scarce resources, particularly in local government. To be critical of ourselves, SNH and the former Countryside Commission for Scotland have rarely put a strong case on benefits that justifies an increased share of resources, even within leisure and recreation budgets which since the 1970's have increased greatly.

A key priority for SNH over the next few years will be to build this stronger case. To support this, we are proposing to work with Perth & Kinross Council and Scottish Enterprise Tayside to determine the economic benefits that have arisen through the creation of a new local path network

at Dunkeld & Birnam. In 1997/98, we will also commission a project aimed at establishing a clearer picture of the value and benefits (qualitative as well as quantitative) of informal recreation in the countryside.

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Tel: 0131 554 9797

I Never Thought of Going There!

...Making Access for All a Reality

The Annual Countryside Recreation Conference

Mid-November 1997 (to be confirmed)

Cost: £260

What's it all about?

Speakers and participants at this year's Annual Countryside Recreation Conference will explore equality of opportunity for countryside recreation and enjoyment, by:

- *documenting the barriers*, whether physical, cultural, psychological or economic, which prevent or deter people from enjoying the countryside;
- *improving awareness and understanding* of why, how and what factors influence equality of access – different groups (for example, older people, children, people with disabilities, people from ethnic minorities and people with low incomes) are affected on different occasions by different factors;
- *identifying practical steps* to remove these obstacles and encouraging individuals to take positive actions in the future to make access for all a reality.

Plenary papers, displays, fringe events and workshops led by innovators and experts in the field, will complement a participative 'mapping exercise'. This exercise will identify who is doing what (and where) to promote access to the countryside for everyone, and therefore reveal where we might best focus our effort now.

Participants will be drawing, amongst other things, on some significant work undertaken as part of the BT 'Countryside for All' project. One of the key aims of this project is to develop standards and guidelines on countryside access for disabled people. The Fieldfare Trust has been heavily involved in co-ordinating this project, and many of the CRN agencies have contributed to the national advisory group steering the project.

Who should attend?

If you are already involved in access for all initiatives, or would like to know how your organisation can do more, then you should attend this conference. This is a unique opportunity for people from a variety of backgrounds (e.g. statutory agencies, voluntary organisations, local government, social services) to meet and exchange ideas and experiences on this important issue.

The Countryside Recreation Network is committed to
**exchanging and spreading information to develop best
policy and practice in countryside recreation**

'Pathways to Partnerships'

Alan Teulon discusses recent disability access initiatives in the Northamptonshire Countryside



photo: Alan Teulon

Enjoying the outdoors: a Ranger talks to a group with learning difficulties

Some years ago I met a man sitting quietly in a wheelchair just outside the gate to a wildlife reserve and observation hide in a Country Park. When asked if he was OK he replied "Yes, I always wait here while the family go ahead to see what they can". The park was not my responsibility, but the impression of resigned tolerance of his situation remains with me, and I often recall his situation when discussing the design of our own facilities.

For years since this incident we have made special provision for the disabled; usually remembered to keep an eye out for people in wheelchairs; allowed the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association to make a small amount of money by providing teas at a Country Park; or laid on a low-loader, pulled by a tractor, to help the less mobile to get around. We have also arranged countryside discovery days for special schools or clients of day centres. Yes of course we thought about the disabled and did our bit.

However, we did not think with (or like) those with disabilities and genuinely provide for them until quite recently. The change in our approach stemmed from meeting and working with the

Fieldfare Trust, consultant advisors to the Countryside Commission in all aspects of universal design in the countryside and spear-heading the BT-sponsored 'Countryside for All' project.

Since the Fieldfare Trust first visited Northamptonshire and suggested many ways in which provision for disabled access could be improved, a great number of advances have been made:

- improved information about facilities and events;
- closer working links with organisations representing disabled people;
- improved physical access at major sites (e.g. ramps and surfacing);
- staff awareness training;
- consultation with members of the disabled community about design issues;

- partnerships between Countryside Rangers and Social Services Day Centres;
- transfer of a member of staff to permanent 'Countryside for All' duties and the appointment of an additional staff member to assist with network duties;
- a successful Millennium project with funding of £1 million for the establishment of a 'Countryside for All' facility based on a Country Park and adjoining reservoir

A recent innovation has been the use of focus groups as a mechanism for exploring the needs and aspirations of different groups. Focus groups have been used to tackle a range of issues, including: physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment and learning difficulties.

Increasingly, the lessons learnt in relation to the disabled community are being applied to other groups in society. For example, contacts are being established between Country Parks and various ethnic organisations, and through our programme of environmental playschemes, we now provide transport and free places for young people who find it difficult to get out into the countryside.

Whilst political support and additional resources make the work easier, staff attitude has been the main factor in the success of the 'Pathways to Partnerships' initiatives in Northamptonshire. There is an eagerness to provide access opportunities for all, based on the belief that contact with nature is an essential ingredient of a balanced life of good quality.

Alan Teulon is Head of Countryside Services for Northamptonshire County Council.

Northamptonshire Countryside Services won the 1996 National BT 'Countryside for All' Award for the 'Pathways to Partnership' project mentioned in this article. Copies of the report are available free of charge from:

*Northamptonshire Countryside Services
PO Box 221
John Dryden House
8-10 The Lakes
Northampton
NN4 7DE*

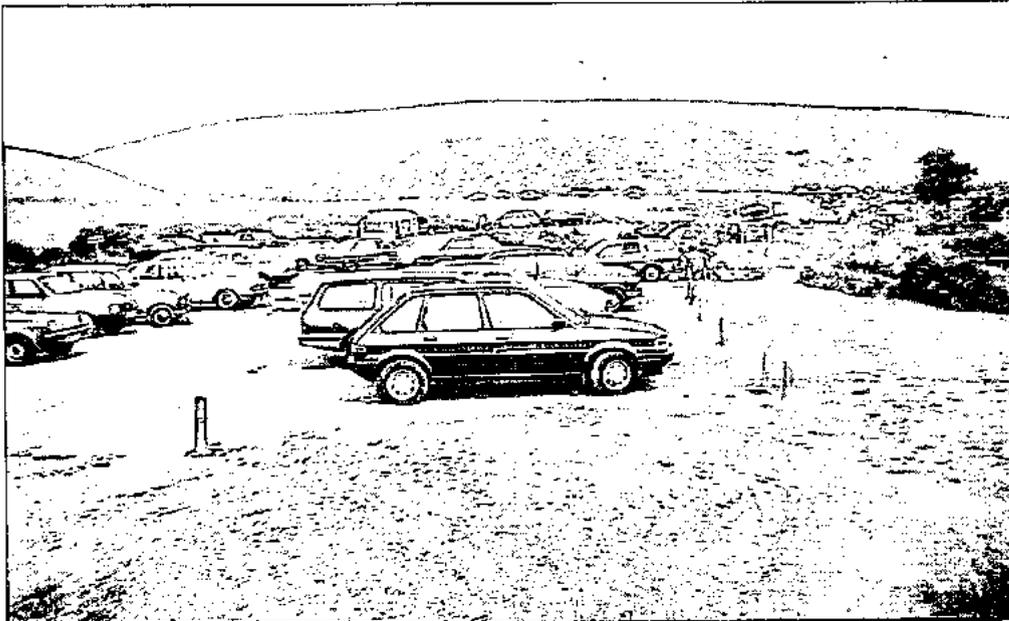


photo: Alan Teulon

A meeting of professionals, voluntary organisations, agencies and clients to discuss access needs.

Monitoring the Monitors

Andy Cope & Dr Tony Hill investigate the use of visitor monitoring in England and Wales



Monitoring site use at car parks and access points is common practice

Photo: North York Moors NPA

Monitoring Study

Visitor monitoring is increasingly being recognised by countryside managers as an essential input into the recreation planning process. Firstly, the collection of sound empirical information enables decision-makers to move away from management practices based on guesswork, and mis-placed assumptions. Secondly, it offers a valuable means of ensuring public participation, which can in turn engender support for management actions. Thirdly, and linked to the last point, monitoring provides valuable feedback about management performance and can help focus attention on key areas of concern. Fourthly, data derived from monitoring can help strengthen the case for organisations seeking funding, for example from European sources or from the National Lottery.

Visitor monitoring has two main elements: profiling and counting. Visitor profiling is the collection of information about people's socio-economic characteristics, attitudes and perceptions. Visitor counting involves the

collection of quantitative data, indicative of total usage and/or the spatial and temporal distribution of visitors.

In spring 1996 a postal survey of site managers in England and Wales was undertaken. The aims of this work were essentially threefold: (i) to find out the extent to which visitor monitoring is used by site managers; (ii) to find out why monitoring data is collected; and (iii) to evaluate managers' attitudes towards such programmes.

Questionnaires were distributed to managers of Country Parks (49%), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (13%), Heritage Coasts (8%), National Trust sites (6%), County Council sites (5%), RSPB sites (6%), Wildlife Trust sites (4%), National Parks (5%), National Trails (2%), and others (3%). A total of 334 questionnaires was distributed, yielding a response rate of 70%.

The first question asked of managers was; 'Do you have a visitor monitoring programme in place on (any of) your site(s)?'. Seventy-seven percent of respondents answered positively. The most

popular approaches to visitor monitoring were: on-site interview by questionnaire (56% of managers with monitoring programmes); and people and traffic counts (both 48%).

The most popular objective of monitoring cited by managers was to identify the overall volume of use of their site (83% of those operating a monitoring programme). A smaller percentage of managers (54%) were interested in assessing visitor opinions or composing detailed socio-demographic profiles (48%); and 27% were monitoring to observe peaks and troughs in visitor numbers.

In management terms, monitoring was most often used as an aid to site planning and development (62% of monitored sites); as a guide for policy creation (56%); as a means of reviewing management performance (54%), and to gain an insight into the nature of user markets (50%).

The commonest application of monitoring data was to inform the development of management plans (60% of monitored sites), and to assist with the improved provision of visitor information and interpretation facilities (45%).

The most frequently mentioned adverse affects on monitoring were: accuracy of counter units (29% of monitored sites); poor response rates (where questionnaires had been used) (24%); hardware difficulties (20%); and data analysis (20%). Lack of expertise was also cited (11% of monitored sites).

Of those managers currently operating a scheme on their site, 40% intended to build on existing arrangements, or commence a new scheme, and 51% planned to maintain their scheme at present levels. Only 9% said that they did not intend expanding or commencing a monitoring programme. Fifty-six percent of managers without a monitoring programme planned to continue without one, and 39% intended to commence monitoring in the near future.

The main barriers to the extension or inception of visitor monitoring were deemed to be: lack of time (72%), expense (56%) and lack of expertise (11%). Seventy-six percent of those with existing schemes complained that a lack of time militated against any extension of their programme, and 61% of managers without a scheme on their site saw a lack of time as the main obstruction to undertaking monitoring. Lack of expertise was seen as a deterrent by 19% of managers on sites

without monitoring schemes, and 9% of managers on sites with monitoring.

Thirty six percent of managers saw monitoring as 'an invaluable tool for management and planning'; 42% 'a worthwhile exercise for providing useful information'; 13% 'a potentially useful exercise'; and only 2% thought monitoring was 'an exercise with no relevance to management'.

Not surprisingly, managers actively involved in monitoring tended to view the activity more favourably than those not involved, or involved on a much smaller scale.

Summary

Overall, the survey paints a positive picture of visitor monitoring. In particular it is interesting to note:

- the high percentage of sites in which some form of visitor monitoring is conducted;
- the high proportion of managers intending to expand or commence monitoring programmes in the near future;
- the way in which managers who hold monitoring in the highest regard also tend to use monitoring for the widest variety of purposes.

Visitor monitoring is clearly a popular mechanism for assisting management. Indeed, this study suggests that on many sites, monitoring is likely to play an increasingly important role in the future.

Andy Cope is a research student and Dr Tony Hill is a senior lecturer, at the School of the Environment, University of Sunderland. For more details of this research contact either Andy Cope or Tony Hill at:

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SR2 7BW*

Tel: 0191 515 3700

Publications

'National Cave Conservation Handbook'

Caves form a unique and vulnerable part of our natural and archaeological heritage and constitute a valuable scientific resource, providing evidence of human cultural change and the development of our landscape as well as changes in our climate. They are also an important recreational resource.

In order to protect these valuable qualities for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations, it is imperative that owners, cavers and statutory conservation agencies work together in a co-ordinated fashion.

In 1995 a national Cave Conservation Policy was published following a five year consultation amongst these various interest groups. This sets out a policy on issues affecting cave conservation and proposes some initiatives to advance cave conservation. Factors affecting cave conservation are discussed and, where appropriate, the policy of the National Caving Association is highlighted. The document is fully supported by all the statutory nature and archaeological conservation agencies and a leaflet summarising the key points is also available.

Soon to be published is the 'National Cave Conservation Handbook' (ISBN 0 9525520 1 9) which incorporates and builds on policies set out in the 1995 Cave Conservation Policy document. In it, each caving region is examined in detail so as to provide a valuable reference source for anyone interested in, or involved with cave conservation. The Handbook also contains guidelines for the formation and running of conservation committees and the formulation and implementation of conservation plans. Advice is also given on practical conservation measures (e.g. repairing broken formations, removing material from caves to study, procedures for dealing with archaeological findings) and how to photograph caves for conservation monitoring purposes.

The Handbook will be published in April in ring bound, loose leaf format to allow for ease of updating.

The National Conservation Policy document is available priced £5.00. The Handbook is available at a specially discounted price of £10.00 to cavers and those actively involved in cave conservation and at £20.00 to other parties. Orders should be sent to: Graham Price, The National Caving Association, 3 The Acorns, Oakhill, Bath, BA3 5BT.

'Detecting Patterns of Countryside Recreation, with Special Reference to Recreational Walking'

This paper seeks to identify and decipher information on participation in several major sources, including the General Household Survey, 1965-1990; the National Surveys of Countryside Recreation, 1977-1990; the UK Day Visits Survey; and visitor surveys of the Peak District and North York Moors National Parks.

An underlying aim is to examine the origins and purposes of apparently objective surveys and the role of contemporary conventional wisdom and image-building. A 'circular relationship' seems evident in many cases. Perspectives of minority interest groups seem to affect both survey design and the interpretation of findings; and the latter reinforce and develop prevailing 'politically correct' images and policies. All-too-often, clear messages of the basic information are overlooked or obscured. The origins of such unfortunate and possibly dubious circumstances probably lie in the tangled web of ideas and emotions which embrace countryside affairs and issues.

This broader field is the subject of a larger work currently in progress; and this Occasional Paper is an offspring which may serve more immediate purposes in various areas of teaching and research.

George Kay, 1996, Occasional Papers: Geographical Research No.8, Division of Geography, Staffordshire University, Leek Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2DF, £3.00.

CRN welcomes your own reviews of forthcoming or recent publications

The copy date for next newsletter is 20 May

'Repairing Upland Path Erosion: A Best Practice Guide'

Through the expertise and experience gained by the Lake District National Park Authority, National Trust, English Nature and others, this manual is intended as a practical working document for all those involved in the repair and maintenance of eroded upland paths.

It covers:

- Upland Path Erosion
- Assessing Upland Path Erosion
- Considerations Prior to Repair Work
- Techniques for the Control and Repair of Upland Path Erosion
- Erosion on Peat
- Site Organisation and Safe Working Practice
- The Use of Machinery in Path Construction

"I would like to recommend its contents to all land managers, rangers, wardens and footpath erosion team workers who have the unenviable task of dealing with the major problems in our inestimable hills and mountains."

Sir Chris Bonington

A report written by:

Peter Davies, Area Manager, Lake District National Park

Jim Loxham, Upland Access Co-ordinator, The National Trust, North West Region

Copies of the above publication may be ordered through Jane Lund at The National Trust, 33 Sheep Street, Cirencester, Gloucester, GL7 1RQ. Tel: 01285 651818. Fax: 01285 657935. Price £19.95 plus £3.00 postage and packaging.

'A Manifesto for Fields' and 'Field Days - Ideas for Investigations & Celebrations'

On March 1st, Common Ground published 'A Manifesto for Fields' (offering 41 ideas for fairer fields), and a sister volume, 'Field Days - Ideas for Investigations & Celebrations'. These pamphlets are beautifully researched, written, illustrated and produced and are accompanied by information sheets, a set of postcards and a poster display. Fans of Common Ground will know what to expect; nothing short of brilliance.

There is something in both these pamphlets to make you change the way you think or act, whether you are a policy maker, manager, farmer, consumer, parent or child. By juxtaposing the interesting, the fascinating and the beautiful with messages that exhort us to be more conservation minded (and even, active), the pamphlets extend their reach. You will be tantalised by pieces on the field origins of cricket; on how a group of people revived the tradition of 'egg rolling' in a particular field (once called paste egg field, from Pasch, Easter); and by suggestions on how to better understand and enjoy fields.

Both publications communicate their message with enormous verve, zest, and an obvious love of life and sense of fun – if only everything (or a tenth of everything) that arrived on my desk was as well written, as beautifully illustrated and as uplifting. Thanks again Sue Clifford and the team at Common Ground.

My copies will sit on my window sill, within arm's reach. I strongly urge you to buy your own copies too.

The pamphlets are available for £3.50 each, from: Common Ground, Seven Dials Warehouse, 44 Earlham Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9LA.

'Health Walks'

Rob Fairbanks, Countryside Commission, reports on the 'Health Walks' project in Oxfordshire



Local rugby man Nigel Stamer-Smith setting off for a walk

Photo: Jeff Pick

The need to raise the general fitness level of the British public is perhaps the greatest challenge facing the health service today. Government and health agencies now realise the urgency of encouraging people to become more active in order to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, strokes, obesity and many other conditions.

What the health sector is slow to realise, however, is that the countryside and urban green spaces are the largest and perhaps most cost effective health promotion facility in the UK. Yet the countryside is more than just a place to exercise.

Being outdoors can provide many mental health benefits, like feeling closer to nature, relaxing, enjoying the scenery and sharing experiences with others. The importance of the countryside to people's health and well-being is reflected in the title of the Countryside Commission's Strategy document, 'Quality of Countryside, Quality of Life'.

This article describes the pioneering 'Health Walks' project which the Countryside Commission has been supporting with Dr William Bird, a GP in Oxfordshire. The aim of the project is to improve people's fitness and well-being by encouraging them to use their local countryside.

Walking and fitness

The Allied Dunbar Fitness Survey (1993) revealed that 64% of men and 75% of women are either sedentary or only moderately active on an irregular basis. Walking briskly on a regular basis has been shown to be a highly effective way to increase and sustain physical fitness. The main advantages of an exercise programme based on walking are:

- It is a practical form of exercise relevant to everyday activities

- It is free and readily accessible
- It is a safe way of improving cardio-vascular fitness.

The Royal Society of Health (1995) estimates that brisk walking as part of a healthy lifestyle could halve a person's risk of coronary heart disease, reduce obesity and help prevent osteoporosis (bone weakening), colon cancer and other diseases. In England it has been estimated that over 125,000 people will die in 1997 from coronary heart disease alone. The social and economic consequences of this are staggering.

It is for these reasons that many health authorities and local authorities are now keen to promote the benefits of walking. What is often lacking however is a practical demonstration of how walking can be encouraged and sustained in the community.

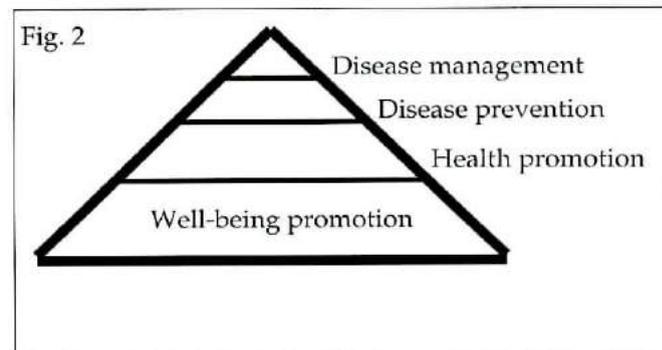
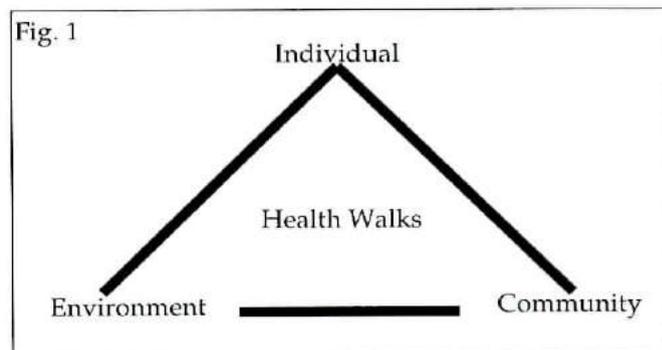
Health Walks - The Theory

The Health Walks project, inspired by Dr William Bird at Sonning Common Health Centre in Oxfordshire, encourages walking as part of a fitness or treatment programme for people of all ages. It is a holistic approach to health care which stimulates an awareness of the local countryside and provides a focus for the community.

The project is based on the belief that the community and local environment have a major impact on individuals' well-being. This can be represented by the image of a triangle in which each point is dependent on the other two (fig. 1). The theory is that standard approaches to health promotion focus largely on eradicating disease. If, however, people live in a place with poor community spirit and no recreational opportunities then, even without disease, many people will remain in what Dr Bird describes as a 'neutral' state. By actively involving the community the Health Walks approach attempts to take the individual beyond this state into a positive state of well-being.

In this respect, Health Walks offer the transition from health promotion to promoting well-being, an area which the National Health Service cannot usually afford to address. Well-being is not just a 'nice addition', rather it is the

foundation on which the health of a nation should be based.



The pyramid (fig.2) illustrates that the Health Walks approach can contribute to the well-being of the wider population, whereas the vast majority of health resources are focused on the smaller numbers towards the top of the pyramid.

Health Walks - The Practice

The project is divided into four main parts, with each part being integrated with the other.

a. *Circular routes* are carefully selected, mapped out and colour-coded according to their difficulty. Walks are further divided into 'softop' (i.e. un-surfaced footpaths) and 'hardtop' (e.g. pavements). These walks are signed with Health Walk waymarkers.



photo: Jeff Pick

Hundreds of local people have taken part in the Health Walks initiative

b. *Health Walk Guides* are published to accompany each walk. These are designed for people who are not regular walkers. Local history details, a three dimensional illustrative map and drawings are added to raise awareness of the local environment and to engender a sense of pride and ownership of the scheme. On the back of each leaflet is an innovative medical table indicating the calories used and a MET value (a measure of the energy used by exercising compared to resting) for each walk.

c. *Daily organised walks* are programmed in order to motivate individuals to continue exercising and because many individuals, particularly women, feel vulnerable walking alone. Each walk is led by two volunteers who have been trained to provide appropriate exercises before the walk. The front leader sets the pace while the back marker remains with the slowest member. The walking groups are graded according to the fitness of the members. Grade A is for fast walkers, Grade B for the moderately fit and Grade C for the unfit.

d. *Annual fitness assessment* is the goal for people to aim for and is open to everyone in the community. People's fitness levels are calculated and converted to a fitness index using 100 as the ideal average fitness. This allows individuals to follow the progress of their fitness year on year.

Four hundred local people took part in the first Sonning Common event last June.

People's increasing awareness of their local environment improves the well-being of communities and opens up new opportunities for a range of physical exercises. In this respect the countryside can be seen essentially as a 'Green Gym'. For example, on Sonning Common there is now a proposal to work with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers to refer walkers to undertake practical conservation work.

Evaluating the success

Evaluation of the scheme has been co-ordinated by Professor Helen Bartlett, at Oxford Brookes University School for Health Care Studies. Data collected by the health centre during the life of the scheme was analysed and was augmented by data from a questionnaire survey of participants.

The results are very encouraging. Over 75% of participants reported a positive impact on their health. Over 25% said their stress levels were reduced, and 20% reported a reduction in weight. Stamina and energy levels were reported to be higher amongst 63% and 56% of people respectively. Health Walkers also tended to start off with lower walking speeds than others in the same community but over time became faster.

This may be a real and independent measure of increased fitness.

Most people preferred walking in the countryside to walking in the village, because of the scenery, lack of pollution and easier terrain. Some women said they were inhibited from taking country walks on their own because they felt vulnerable, so the regularly organised nature of the Health Walks was a real bonus.

Overall, the evaluation showed Health Walks to be a very sustainable form of exercise, with 85% of people committed to continuing after more than a year's involvement. Dr Bird expects that the number of people taking up Health Walks will keep increasing with growing awareness of the benefits. This is in stark contrast to many gym-based fitness regimes where high drop-out rates are common.

The Thames Valley Health Walk Initiative

Further development work is now proposed in the Thames Valley area. This will be a major initiative based on a healthy alliance between BUPA, the Countryside Commission, the British Heart Foundation, Berkshire Health Authority, Berkshire County Council, Wokingham District Council and a number of local communities.

This initiative could potentially form the basis for advising and promoting a model Health Walks programme throughout the country.

Health Walks



For more information about the Health Walks initiative please write to:

*Rob Fairbanks (Countryside Officer)
Countryside Commission
South East Regional Office
71 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6ST.*



Photo: Jeff Pick

Health assessment in action

Tourism in Partnership

Catherine Bowmer considers some of the local community benefits of sustainable tourism



Photo: Countryside Commission

Areas such as the Peak District are popular tourist destinations

Introduction

What are the benefits of tourism to local communities? We could debate this question endlessly and still come up with no correct answers. How do we define tourism? Who is the local community? And there are many more questions that we could ask. But tourism here is rural tourism; visitor activity in rural areas, including countryside, villages and small towns.

The countryside is an important tourism resource in the UK. British people make over 1,000 million day visits to the countryside each year; 10 million holidays are taken by British people in the UK, and a similar number again visit from overseas. The Rural Development Commission estimates that tourism is worth at least £8 billion a year to England's rural areas, and supports some 400,000 jobs. Tourism thus plays a significant role in the rural economy and can bring a range of social and environmental benefits to local communities.

Involving the local community

If sustainable tourism is to be achieved, or even approximated, local communities need to be involved in its planning and management. Accordingly, the formation of effective working partnerships, between statutory agencies, landowners, local businesses and user groups, is an essential element. Through such a structure, on-going communication is made possible and a healthy trust can be built up with the local community. The 'local community', however, often incorporates a wide variety of different groups, and getting everyone to work together can be very time consuming. Thus if communities are to be involved in planning and management decisions, it is imperative that adequate time is allowed and that everyone is given the opportunity to be involved from the outset.

The Peak District Tourism Partnership (PDTP) has worked extensively with local groups, amongst other things, to develop visitor management and local interpretation plans. The sort of direct participation advocated by the PDTP conveys a sense of ownership and encourages and

enthuses local residents to find new ways of drawing sustainable visitor income into the area.

Increasing local benefits

The primary objectives of sustainable tourism are to encourage:

- visitors to spend more in the area;
- tourism operators to buy locally;
- people to stay longer;
- stable employment;
- visitors to buy local produce;
- visitors to use public transport and other local services

The North Pennines Tourism Partnership (NPTP) is a consortium of local interests, local authorities and national statutory agencies which is endeavouring to put these principles into practice. One example is the way in which the Partnership has worked with local transport operators and local authorities to produce a public transport map and timetable which encourages visitors to explore the area. This has a number of advantages; as well as being a more environmentally-friendly way for visitors to enjoy the area, the campaign has also strengthened local public transport services, thereby enabling them to continue to operate when they might otherwise have ceased.

The Hope Valley Rail Line in the Peak District is likewise a good example of creating a leisure experience by using public transport. Here a promotional leaflet and linking shuttle bus service have helped to increase the number of passengers using the line. An added bonus is the free carriage of bicycles to encourage visitors from the nearby cities to explore the countryside in a 'green' and sustainable way.

Another effective means by which increased tourism benefits can be brought to an area is to set up local producer groups. This increases an area's marketing power and provides valuable additional revenue for small businesses. Both the PDTP and NPTP promote local products this way. The Peak has a more formal way through Peak District Products, who as a group, produce a directory of members and hold open days where people can visit workshops/outlets and buy

locally-made produce. In the North Pennines, local producer groups have published a 'Produce Trail' leaflet which encourages visitors to follow a specific route and visit a variety of local businesses.

Defining the limits and explaining examples of good practice goes a long way towards winning over the co-operation and trust of local communities who might be sceptical about the benefits of tourism – and there are quite a few! As experience in the North Pennines and Peak District has shown, if local communities are involved comprehensively in managing and planning for tourism, major financial and social benefits can be achieved.

Catherine Bowmer is an Interpretation Officer in the Peak District National Park. She can be contacted at:

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Losehill Hall
Castleton
Sheffield
S30 2WB*

Editor's note:

Just a reminder – please inform me of any changes to your address or personal details so that I can keep the data base in good order (yes it's spring cleaning time already!).

Rights of Way: Path Densities and Networks

Harry Kingham, takes a technical look at path networks

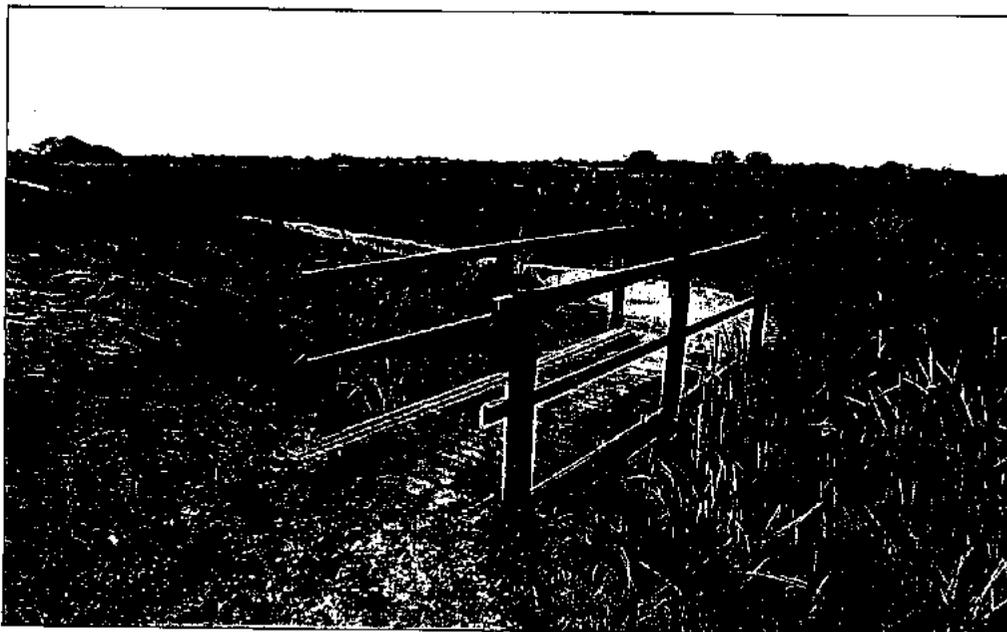


Photo: English Nature

Knowledge of path densities and networks helps in the creation of new paths

Path density is a convenient term to describe the total length of paths within a given area. When countryside access is under discussion, the existing or proposed path density is important factual information which may support or refute statements about the adequacy of existing paths or the need for new ones. So what kind of densities are found in practice, and how do they relate to access needs?

For comparative purposes, a useful standard is the average path density for rural England. This can be calculated in the following way. The total length of rural rights of way in England is usually quoted as about 190,000 kms. The total non-urban area of the country is subject to various estimates, but using the 'consensus' estimate of Sinclair (1992), with subtractions for recent urban growth, it can be set for convenience at 11 million hectares or 110,000 km². Using these figures the average path density in England can be calculated thus – $190/110 = 1.73$. Let us call it 1.7, a number easier

to remember. The calculation allows us to ask a useful first question about any given area – is its path density greater or less than the national average of 1.7kms per km²?

To envisage what this national average implies, consider that if all the paths in England could be rearranged to order, a square grid of paths spaced at 1.17kms apart would be formed – very convenient for countryside access, although the rearrangement could be traumatic! Further, if all paths could be arranged in such an ideal square grid aligned North-South, no point within the network would be more than 0.585kms from a path running either East-West or North-South.

Of course, not only are we interested in the national average for path density, but also in the range of densities which occur and their relation to countryside access. Obviously, if one considers only small areas, the lowest density encountered is nil. In a recently completed map survey of rights of way in East Anglia (based on a 4 km²

sample size) the author found that 30% of fen samples and 2.4% of non-fen samples had no rights of way recorded on the current OS map. The highest recorded density for a single sample of 4 km² was 4.95. In practice though, one is rarely dealing with a single km², and for larger areas one could expect figures as low as 0.4 (the average of all fenland samples) and at least as high as 2.8 (the figure from a 50 km² path-rich area in north Essex) and probably higher. So it seems safe to assume that a distribution curve for the average path density in areas of 50 km² or more would have a mean of around 1.75.

The path density within an area obviously influences the spacing between paths. In areas of high path density (say 2.5 or more) there is almost always a nearby path in the direction you wish to travel, and quite often a choice of paths. In low density areas, such as fen country (say 0.6 or less), you might travel a long way on a road before you found a path giving access to the fields beyond. The best way of illustrating this relationship between density and path spacing is to take as an example a square grid of paths. In this grid the path density and the size of the grid squares are related by the formula:

$$\frac{2}{\text{path density}} = \text{size of squares in grid square (i.e. spacing between paths)}$$

From this formula we can construct a simple table that shows very well the relation between density and path spacing:

Path density	0.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	kms per km ²
Path spacing	4	2	1.33	1	0.8	0.7	kms between paths

Of course these figures only relate to square networks which rarely occur in practice, except perhaps in some woodlands where the tracks must provide for logs to be hauled economically. But the formula does provide a quick snapshot of the likely distances between paths in the same orientation, even when the network is far from square. So if an area has a path density of 0.5, as

in fen country, you are likely to find distances of at least 4kms between paths in the same orientation, and the maximum distances are usually greater than this because paths rarely run in straight lines.

So, what practical use can be served by consideration of path densities and spacing? Firstly, it is clear that when additions or improvements to path systems are being considered, managers will find it helpful to compare path densities with the national average, or at least with densities from similar areas, if only for help in assessing the strength of the case. Secondly, when new path systems are being planned, and before more expensive ground surveys begin, the path length available within budget can be used to give a quick overview of likely path spacing within the eventual network. This may be helpful in balancing results against costs. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the value of these concepts is surely in providing a factual basis for managers to exchange ideas on path systems, for example, path layout and maintenance, visitor management and the problems of waymarking. All of these aspects are enlightened if the path density of an area is known.

References

Sinclair, G (1992) *Land Use Change in England* (ISBN 0 946044 08)

Harry Kingham is an ex-ADAS advisor involved in research on footpaths.

Countryside Recreation Training and Events

GIS & Countryside Management

Theory and Application

Thursday 3 July

University of Leeds

Cost: £75.00

During the last few years there have been dramatic developments in the sophistication and power of computers and software. Particularly striking has been the rapid evolution of Geographical Information Systems (GIS), especially within the area of countryside / environmental management. In view of these exciting developments, this workshop aims to:

- *raise awareness of the amazing potential of GIS within different areas of countryside management;*
- *demonstrate how GIS can be used to best effect within your organisation, to help meet your needs.*

What aspects of GIS will be covered?

- *Organising and Handling Environmental Data*

Jonathan Bud (English Nature) gives an overview of the range of environmental data available for use with GIS and explains the processes of data input, manipulation and output.

- *Strategic Scheme Management*

David Askew (Farming and Rural Conservation Agency) looks at how different environmental data can be combined to assist with the management of the Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Stewardship schemes.

- *Analysis and Modelling*

John Clayson (Lake District National Park) gives an insight into the way that National Parks are using GIS to assist with such things as conservation, visitor management and development control.

- *Constraints and Considerations*

Pete Allan (Ordnance Survey) reviews some of the practical and legal constraints of GIS.

Afternoon discussion sessions will look at the application of GIS in four main areas of countryside management:

- (i) *environmental design*
- (ii) *rural development and tourism*
- (iii) *routeways and access*
- (iv) *the natural environment*

The aim of these sessions is to pool people's experiences and knowledge to inform a series of briefs designed to help you, as managers, policy-makers and practitioners, assess whether (and in what way) GIS can best be used within your organisation.

Who should attend?

This workshop will appeal to those whose organisations already use GIS (and are looking to extend its use) and to those wishing to adopt GIS as a management and planning tool for the first time. In short, if you, as decision-maker, manager or practitioner want to know how GIS can help your organisation achieve its objectives then you should attend this workshop.

For further details contact either Matthew Jones (Network Manager) or Sian Griffiths (Network Assistant)

Tel / Fax: (01222 874 970)



COUNTRYSIDE
RECREATION
NETWORK

Countryside Recreation Training and Events

May

Really Involving People

A two-day CRN workshop for countryside managers, foresters, recreation staff and others interested in finding out what people really want from the countryside.

(CRN)

Contact: 01222 874970

3rd – 5th May

Walk in the Woods

(Esso / Tree Council)

Contact: (0171 828 9928)

10th – 18th May

BT Environment Week

Contact: (0171 930 0914)

12th – 16th May

Environment For All: Special Needs in the Countryside
(SFSa)

Venue: (tba)

£350 (£175 for rangers and others grant-aided by SNH)

15th May

Ponds, People & Planners
(IEEM)

Developing pond rehabilitation techniques

Venue: Widness area, Cheshire

Contact: John Campion
(0161 928 7715)

17th – 18th May

Free Your Paths Weekend

Contact: (0171 582 6878)

22nd May

Developing a Parks Strategy
(IEEM)

A look at how local authorities should tackle the production of public park strategies.

Venue: Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Members (£110 + £19.25 VAT)

non-members (£135 + £23.63

VAT)

Contact: (01491 874 222)

29th May

Introduction to the National Vegetation Classification for Grasslands
(IEEM)

Venue: Cambridgeshire

Contact: (01223 811 190)

June

2nd – 4th June

Involving People in Access to the Countryside

(CEI England & Wales)

Working with local people on improving access provision

Venue: Wirral (to be confirmed)

£385 (£192.50 subsidised)

Contact: (0161 247 1067)

3rd – 6th June

Visitor Safety

(SFSa)

Venue: (tba)

£290 (£145 for rangers and others grant-aided by SNH)

Contact: (01250 881286)

7th – 8th June

CPRE's National Picnic Weekend

Contact: (0171 976 6433)

7th – 15th June

National Bike Week

Contact: (01483 411556)

8th June

World Oceans Day

A day of celebrations

Contact: 0171 924 2355

9th – 13th June

Grazing Management for Nature Conservation

(Plas Tan y Bwlch)

£346 (subsidised £225)

Contact: (01766 590324)

23rd – 25th June

Landscape – What a Character
(CEI England & Wales)

An introduction to landscape character assessments; how they are carried out and why they are important

Venue: Maccelsfield & Surrey Hills (to be confirmed)

£385 (£192.50 subsidised)

Contact: (0161 247 1067)

23rd 24th 26th 27th June

Interpretation Seminar and Workshop

(CEI Scotland)

looking at the latest thinking in interpretation, and how to make it effective.

Venue: to be arranged

Contact: (0131 650 8017) or

(01463 244435)

23rd – 27th June

Woodland Conservation Management

(Plas Tan y Bwlch)

£380 (£190 subsidised)

Contact: (01766 590324)

29th June

Family Rambling Day

Contact: (0171 5826878)

Countryside Recreation Training and Events cont..

July

GIS & Countryside Management
A CRN workshop exploring the use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in a range of countryside management contexts.
(CRN)
Contact: (01222 874970)

10th - 13th July
Celebrating Nature
A workshop exploring methods and ideas for events organisers to develop public activities as 'celebrations'.
Venue: Monkton Wyld Court, Dorset
£180 (50% grant aid pending)
Contact: Gordon McLellan
(0161 226 8127)

11th July
Creating Wildflower Landscapes in Urban Areas
(IEEM)
Venue: Knowsley, Merseyside
Contact: Richard Scott
(0151 728 7011)

14th - 15th July
Moorland Restoration and Management
(IEEM)
Venue: Peak District National Park
Contact: Penny Anderson
(01663 750 205)

August

4th - 8th August
Introducing Rights of Way a foundation course for rights of way officers
(Losehill Hall / Countryside Commission)
£470 (£235 subsidised)
Contact: (01433 620373)

September

Making Ends Meet
A CRN workshop looking at funding issues, particularly the opportunities afforded by the National Lottery and money from Europe.
(CRN)
Contact: (01222 874970)

4th - 7th September
Interpreting Historic Places: Images, Myths and Identity
(CEI England & Wales)
Venue: York
Contact: (Terri Tooms or Linda Hethrington on 01904 433982)

8th - 10th September
Map and Surveying Skills for Public Rights of Way
Losehill Hall
£425 (£212.50 subsidised)

17th - 19th September
How Successful Are You? Evaluating the Visitor Experience
(CEI England & Wales / Losehill Hall)
£390 (£195 subsidised)
Contact: (0161 247 1067)

November

I Never Thought of Going There! ...Making Access for All a Reality
This year's CRN Annual Countryside Recreation Conference considers the physical, psychological, cultural and economic barriers to access to the countryside.
(CRN)
Contact: (01222 874970)

Training / events organisers

CEI (England & Wales)
Centre for Environmental Interpretation
Tel: 0161 2471067

SCRA
Scottish Rangers Association
Tel: 01250 881286

Plas Tan y Bwlch
Tel: 01766 590324

SESA
(Scottish Field Studies Association)
Tel: 01250 881286
CASS
(Centre for Applied Social Surveys)
Tel: 01703 594548

CEI, Scotland
(Centre for Environmental Interpretation)
Tel: 0131 650 8017

CMA (Countryside Management Association)
Tel: 01565 633603

IEEM (Institute of Economic and Environmental Management)
Tel: 01635 37715

ILAM (Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management)
Tel: 01491 874222

Losehill Hall
Tel: 01433 620373

CEE
(Council for Environmental Education)
Tel: 0118 975 6061

FSC
Field Studies Council
Tel: (Head Office) 01743 850 674

ETO
Environment Training Organisation
Tel: 01452 840825