

Countryside Recreation Network
Annual Report
2013-14



Introduction

CRN is a network which:

- Covers the UK and the Republic of Ireland
- Gives easy access to information on countryside and related recreation matters
- Reaches organisations and individuals in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Networks thousands of interested people

CRN is funded by a range of Government Departments, Agencies and other bodies who share an interest in countryside recreation issues. CRN contracts its administration to Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland (ORNI), Belfast.

Aims and Objectives

To work together for people outdoors, to:

- Share knowledge
- Gather evidence
- Develop ideas
- Promote good practice

Management:

Chairmanship	Jo Burgon, Independent
Vice Chair and N.Ireland representative	Mike McClure, Sport Northern Ireland
Budget Officer and England representative	Wendy Thompson, Natural England
Communications Officer and Scotland representative	James Ogilvie, Forestry Commission Scotland
Research Officer	Alison Darlow, Natural England
Ireland representative	Sharon Roulston, Waterways Ireland

Staff:

Secretariat	Kathryn Callaghan, ORNI
Finance Manager	Sylvia Watson, ORNI

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Reflections from the Chairman

Jo Burgon

We have just welcomed 80 people to our annual conference to exchange ideas and good practice in increasing participation in Outdoor Recreation. This was the first event under our new name of the Outdoor Recreation Network. But this report covers our activities in 2013/14 under the old name.



The focus for the year in our spring and autumn meetings and in the theme of the journal was on the importance of urban green space for outdoor recreation. The visits to Lisburn and Belfast in the spring and then to Glasgow in the autumn, where we viewed some of the venues for the Commonwealth Games, stimulated a debate not only about a name change but more importantly made us realise, if we didn't know already, how vital access to high quality green space close to where people live is for the daily fix of fresh air and exercise.

A return visit for me to Divis above west Belfast with marvellous views to the west of Lough Neagh and to the east the city gave me great heart as I discussed with the National Trust ranger how this site, once in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence, now meant so much to local people as an accessible and safe place for walking, running and an increasing range of outdoor activity.

One of the key developments for the network this year has been the opening up of the seminar sessions, which have been a key feature of network meetings for many years, to local supporters. It has been very heartening to see the interest in our seminar sessions which included a day considering research topics in outdoor recreation. Early days, but I hope these seminars will become a key part of our programme and will attract much interest. We shall share these events through the normal web channels.

Glenn Millar from the Canals and Rivers Trust and Sean Prendergast from the Peak District National Park, were two long standing and loyal advocates of CRN. They brought much to our meetings through their humour and wisdom. The deaths of these two stalwarts in a year has been hard. In professional networks losses of this kind are deeply felt but memories of good times together are lasting.

My thanks to Kathryn Callaghan and her colleagues in ORNI for keeping the Network in good administrative order and for the member management group in providing the planning and development steer as we seek to offer opportunities for subscribing members and supporters to examine and share good policy and practice in outdoor recreation. I also extend my thanks to sportscotland, Sport NI, Lisburn City Council and Natural England for hosting our agency meetings and seminars throughout 2013/14. Without this sort of support from members we would find our gatherings difficult to organise.

Membership

The members of CRN develop its activities, and ensure that it continues to meet their needs and the needs of the sector as a whole. CRN has historically been at the forefront of identifying issues, barriers and emerging themes within outdoor recreation. The Network has been instrumental in developing new thinking in many facets of outdoor recreation and much of this is derived from the bringing together of experts within the field for round table discussions, site visits and collaborative thinking and working. CRN exemplifies joined up and strategic thinking between organisations and each of the nations represented.

During the year CRN reviewed and revised its membership categories to reflect the nature of its current activities. There are now 3 categories of membership:

1. Network members - 1,547
2. Support members - 9
3. Executive members - 12

The following organisations were members of CRN during 2013/14:

Executive members:

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Representative</u>
1. Association of National Park Authorities	Ally Kohler Vacant
2. Canal and River Trust	Tony Harvey
3. Forestry Commission England	Paddy Harrop
4. Forestry Commission Scotland	James Ogilvie
5. National Trust	Philip Broadbent-Yale
6. Natural England	Wendy Thompson
7. Natural Resources Wales	Elinor Gwyn
8. Northern Ireland Environment Agency	Maia Taylor
9. Scottish Government	Helen Jones
10. Scottish Natural Heritage	Rob Garner
11. Sport Northern Ireland	Mike McClure
12. Waterways Ireland	Sharon Roulston

Support members:

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Representative</u>
1. Heritage Council Ireland	Beatrice Kelly
2. Historic Scotland	Martin Gray
3. Lee Valley Regional Park	Nigel Foxall
4. Northern Ireland Tourist Board	Rosemary Lightbody
5. Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland	Caro-lyne Ferris
6. Scottish National Parks	Douglas Stewart
7. Sport and Recreation Alliance	Martin Key Simon Butler
8. Sport Scotland	Campbell Gerrard
9. Welsh Assembly	Manon Philips

Outputs

Events

During 2013-14 CRN organised a number of events to allow its members to network with each other and with regional and national industry experts. The overarching aim of these events is to share information, knowledge, best practice and ideas.

The following events were delivered during 2013-14:

Agency Meetings

1. May 2013, Lisburn, Northern Ireland

Theme: Urban outdoor recreation
Host: Sport Northern Ireland
Attendance: 13

On 9th and 10th May, CRN members met in Northern Ireland to explore developments in the Lagan Valley Regional Park and in the Belfast Hills. Members cycled the towpath between Lisburn and Belfast, explored a section of the new mountain bike trails in Barnett Demesne and walked to the summit of Divis Mountain - all doorstep opportunities for Belfast and Lisburn residents.

Speakers:

Jim Bradley	Belfast Hills Partnership
Dan Clarke	Lagan Valley Regional Park
Noel Maguire	Belfast Activity Centre

Site visits guides:

Liam Baxter	Outdoor Recreation NI
Dermot McCann	National Trust

2. September 2013, Glasgow, Scotland

Theme: Urban outdoor recreation and the Commonwealth Games legacy
Host: Sportscotland
Meeting attendance: 16
Seminar attendance: 30

This event also explored the theme of urban outdoor recreation but with the additional theme of the Commonwealth Games and its legacy running through the visit.

Day one site visits included the new mountain bike trails that were developed in Glasgow for the Commonwealth Games; the redevelopment of Cunningar Loop (next to the national sports arena for informal recreation), which aimed

to create an attractive green resource in a deprived areas of Glasgow; and finished with the £100m Emirates Sports Arena (including the Sir Chris Hoy velodrome) and athletes village that was developed for the Commonwealth Games.

On day two, the seminar delved into how Scotland's access rights are delivered and addressed across Glasgow; followed by a presentation on Forestry Commission Scotland's Commonwealth Community Woodlands Initiative (part of the Commonwealth Games national legacy plan); and lastly, Scottish Canals' work on recreation provision in and around Glasgow on the canals network, with a focus on their paddlesport facility in the heart of the city.

This was the first time since 2011 that CRN made its meeting seminar available to a wider audience. Via CRN's e-newsletter database, the wider network of subscribers were invited to attend. This resulted in an additional 14 delegates joining the event, which in turn improved the networking and information sharing opportunities.

Speakers:

Andy Watt	Pinkston Paddlesports
Hugh McNish	Forestry Commission Scotland
Richard Millar	Scottish Canals
Sue Hilder	Glasgow City Council

Site visits guides:

Allan Maclean	Glasgow City Council
Tom Wallace	Forestry Commission Scotland
Bob MacFarlane	Scottish Cycling

3. January 2014, Leeds, England

Theme: Countryside Recreation Futures: towards a new research agenda
Host: Natural England
Meeting attendance: 6
Seminar attendance: 41

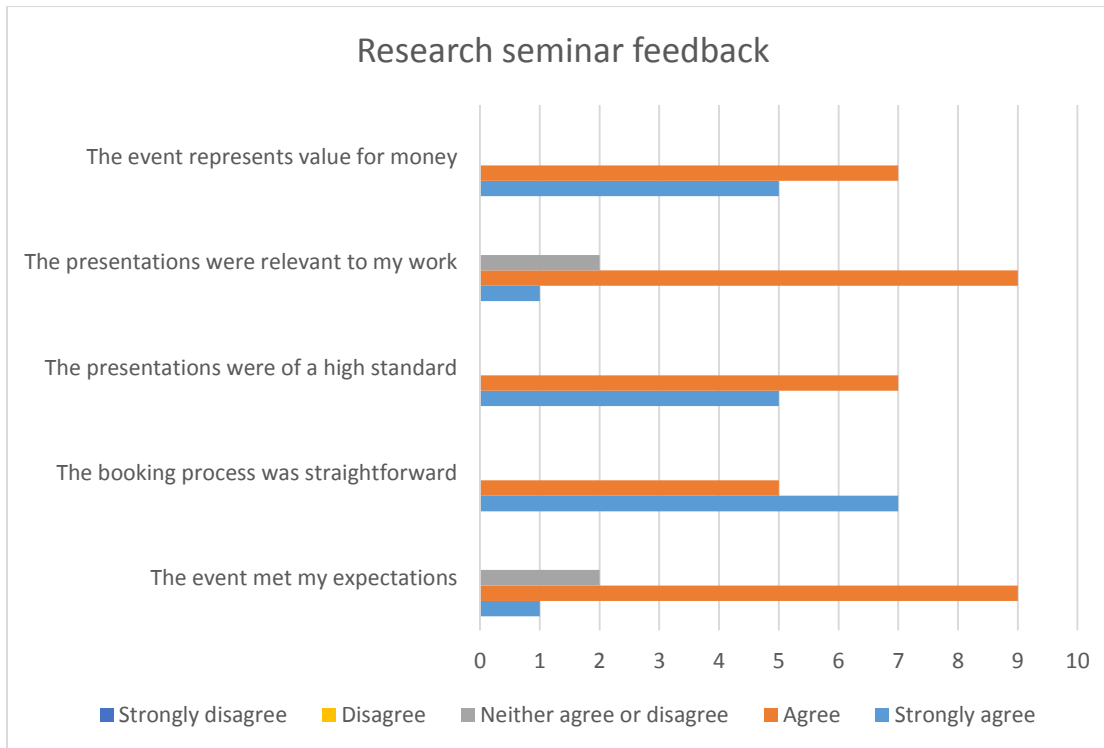
This event was designed to bring together the academic, policy and practitioner communities to find and share common ground in respect of future research priorities for CRN.

Summary of the event here (to be taken from proceedings)

Speakers:

Lynn Crowe, Sheffield Hallum University
Dave Stone, Natural England
Simon Butler, Sport and Recreation Alliance

Delegate feedback:



Additional comments:

“Do again! Very useful day, my first time with CRN, will come again”.

“Good event, well done”.

“Very informative. Well run”.

Annual Conference - March 2014, York, England

Theme: Participate Outdoors
Host: Forestry Commission England
Attendance: 80

This conference examined the changing trends in participation in outdoor recreation and sport and explored why and how to deliver increased opportunities for participation. The event was designed to help delegates learn what motivates people to participate and the way in which participation trends are being shaped and changing. Two keynote presentations set the scene and 8 workshop sessions provided ample time for discussion, learning and information sharing throughout the day.

Speakers:

- Simon Bell, Openspace Research Centre
- Andrew Denton, Outdoor Industries Association
- Simon Hodgson, Forestry Commission
- Urusla MacPherson, Mountaineering Ireland
- Catherine Miles, Snowdonia-Active
- Kelly Brindley, Forestry Commission

- Clare Parsons, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority
- Amanda Searle, Walk Unlimited
- Alan Eves, Forestry Commission
- Wendy Thompson, Natural England
- Philip Broadbent-Yales, National Trust
- Rob Joules, National Trust

The proceedings from the conference have been collated into a special edition of the journal to be published in April 2014.

Delegate feedback:



Comments from the delegates:

“Great networking events. Has given a lot of ideas for future and ideas to try. Learnt a lot of new ideas/companies”.

“Good venue, well organised, good food”.

“This was a great chance to share experiences and hear how others dealt with similar challenges”.

“Very useful overall. Networking is the most valuable part”.

“Good to catch up with people and developments. More ORN events please!”

Communications

Journals

In September 2013 volume 22 of the CRN journal was published. It was guest-edited by James Ogilvie of Forestry Commission Scotland. The theme was Accessible Greenspace on your Doorstep, which contained articles and brief reports from a range of industry specialists from the following organisations:

- Natural England
- RSPB
- Belfast Activity Centre
- Dartmoor National Park Authority
- Forestry Commission England
- Box Moor Trust

- Countryside Mobility
- Venture Outdoors
- University of Copenhagen
- The Steel Valley Project
- The Woodland Trust
- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Forest Research
- OpenSpace Research Centre
- Greenspace Scotland
- Canal and River Trust

1,129 copies were mailed to the CRN database and 1,547 were emailed. The journal was also made available as high and low res files on the CRN website.

Volume 23 is planned for completion by the end of April 2014. This will include the March 2014 conference proceedings as well as articles from each of the conference speakers.

E-newsletters

During 2013-14 2 e-newsletters were published and disseminated in May 2013, October 2013. These were based on CRN agency meeting seminars and linked to guest speaker presentations. The winter edition was not sent because the seminar proceedings have not been completed from the January meeting.

Website

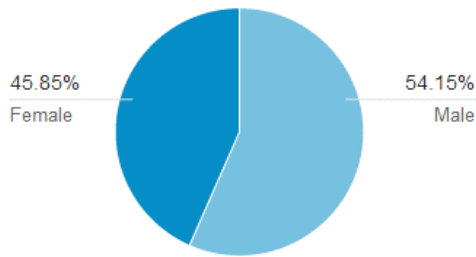
Google Analytics show that from April 1 2013 to March 31 2014, www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk received 3,607 unique visitors, who spent an average of 2 minutes and 6 seconds on the site per visit. 73% of these people were first-time visitors. The 10 most popular pages were:

1. Home
2. Journals
3. Events
4. Research Archive
5. News
6. Other reports and publications
7. E-newsletters
8. Participate outdoors conference
9. Member updates
10. Contact us

Gender breakdown of visitors:

Gender

100% of total visits

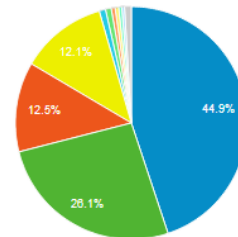


Visitors by country (top 10):

1. UK – 3,949
2. USA – 167
3. Ireland – 84
4. Germany – 57
5. Canada – 39
6. France – 39
7. Australia – 34
8. India – 31
9. Brazil – 25

Browsers used by visitors:

	4,769 % of Total: 100.00% (4,769)	4,769 % of Total: 100.00% (4,769)
1. Internet Explorer	2,140	44.87%
2. Chrome	1,246	26.13%
3. Firefox	595	12.48%
4. Safari	575	12.06%
5. IE with Chrome Frame	42	0.88%
6. Android Browser	38	0.80%
7. Safari (in-app)	26	0.55%
8. Konqueror	23	0.48%
9. Opera Mini	21	0.44%
10. http:	18	0.38%

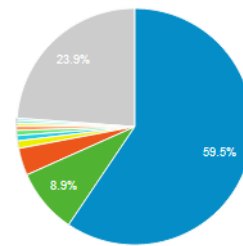


Devices used by visitors:

1. Desktop – 4,373
2. Mobile – 200
3. Tablet - 184

Visitors found the website using the following top 10 search keywords:

	2,662 % of Total: 55.82% (4,769)	2,662 % of Total: 55.82% (4,769)
1. ■ (not provided)	1,583	59.47%
2. ■ countryside recreation network	236	8.87%
3. ■ countryside recreation	99	3.72%
4. ■ growth in outdoor recreation	27	1.01%
5. ■ countryside recreation journal	20	0.75%
6. ■ http countryside recreation org downloads conference flier layers	18	0.68%
7. ■ countryside recreation jobs	15	0.56%
8. ■ outdoor recreation network	11	0.41%
9. ■ green connect	10	0.38%
10. ■ contryside recreation network	8	0.30%



Unaudited Accounts 2013/14*

Balance brought forward from 2012/13	£22,263.00	
Income	£26,275.00	See table 1
Expenditure	£31,326.96	See table 2
Balance carried forward to 2014/15	£17,211.00	

*Fully audited accounts will be published later in 2014

Table 1 - Income

Income	Amount £	Notes
Membership Fees	19,400.00	
Income from one conference	4,994.00	
Income from two seminars	1,175.00	
Other income	295.00	Bike hire
	161.50	Accommodation
	250.00	Journal advertising
Total	26,275.00	

Table 2 - Expenditure

Expenditure	Budget	Spent	Notes
Travel and Subsistence - Chairman	1,200.00	955.17	Cost to attend agency meetings and conference
Travel and Subsistence - Secretariat	1,800.00	887.77	Cost to attend agency meetings and conference
Conference journal (electronic)	1,800.00	1,057.40	
Journal (printed)	4,150.00	3,855.70	Published September 2013
Salary of Secretariat	16,201.00	16,514.27	
Overheads (15% of salary)	2,430.00	2477.14	
Web/IT	250.00	200.00	
		35.00	Information Commission
		720.64	Laptop
		367.63	Rebranding
		3,161.24	Meeting and conference costs
		295.00	Bike hire for site visit
Miscellaneous	572.00	800.00	Solicitor
Total	28,403.00	31,326.96	