**Paper 2**

**Countryside Recreation Network – Discussion Paper May 2013**

**The Network’s key aims are to:**

1. Encourage cooperation between members in identifying and promoting the need for research related to outdoor recreation, to encourage joint ventures in undertaking research and to disseminate information about members’ recreation programmes.

2. Promote information exchange relating to outdoor recreation and to foster general debate about relevant trends and issues.

3. Share information to develop best practice through training and professional development in provision for and management of outdoor recreation

1. **What role should CRN play in relation to the research into countryside recreation?**

This paper poses a number of questions for CRN members to discuss. CRN is a network of agencies/organisations that to a greater or lesser degree individually have connections with researchers, research bodies and institutions. The challenge for CRN is several-fold:

* To provide a framework for research – to decide what is in and what is out;
* To access, utilise and disseminate the best research out there to a wider audience;
* To identify, and help to plug gaps in research

Countryside Recreation is a huge field. Research in this area will cover diverse subject matter including: participation in countryside recreation; outdoor education and active pursuits; environmental education; the ‘green’ gym; connecting people to nature; physical health and the outdoors; active and sustainable travel; management of land and conflict resolution; social inclusion; tourism and the rural economy, and the urban outdoors.

1. **What do we count as ‘research’?**

Research could be contained within any report or study concerned with countryside recreation, not only that linked to academic institutions. Should we be looking at all research and what are the implications of this?

Academic Institutions

What are the main schools within academic institutions that are researching any of the areas above e.g. Centre for Mountain Studies, University of the Highland and Islands; Moray House School of Education, Edinburgh University; James Hutton Institute? What are the key publications and journals that publish countryside recreation related research?

Evidence gathering

Work within our own agencies is also directed towards evidence gathering – getting baseline and monitoring data; compiling ‘lessons learned’ from projects and making the case for further resources or developments. Some of this work will be undertaken in-house although much will be contracted out to consultants.

1. **Knowledge Exchange**

*Knowledge Exchange is a process which brings together academic staff, users of research and wider groups and communities to exchange ideas, evidence and expertise. UK Research Councils e.g. ESRC promote Knowledge Transfer Partnerships* [*www.ktponline.org.uk*](http://www.ktponline.org.uk) *to promote Knowledge Exchange – these tend to be partnerships between universities and a company or organisation and with a strong focus on business competitiveness, productivity and performance.*

From my brief forays onto the internet, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships appear to have a strong business development focus. However it would be useful to ascertain whether there are KTP’s that are working for organisations within the countryside recreation industry and whether there are opportunities to connect with them? Potentially CRN could be a partner in a project – however this might not be practical seeing as we are in effect an agglomeration of organisations rather than a single entity.

1. **Capacity**

What examples can we draw on where CRN have worked collaboratively on research and other projects? What are the resources implications for this and do we still have that capacity as individual and /or organisations? If we lack capacity to have direct involvement in research, should we focus our efforts on keeping up with research agendas, identifying gaps and getting the information out there.

1. **Taking a themed approach**

We should continue to use the CRN Journal to focus and theme the research we are presenting to the CRN audience – this is a useful way of targeting a huge and complex area of work into bite-sized pieces. In addition to articles, should there be a research section that summarises the main pieces of current research relating to the theme?

**Recommendations**

* Audit of main departments within academic institutions that are researching CR related themes
* Audit of own organisations for reports/research as above
* Identify KTP’s (or other Knowledge Exchange projects) that are focusing on CR themes
* Incorporate a research update section into the CRN Journal