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Countryside Recreation Network

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# Countryside Recreation



## This issue... 'Diversity and Equality'

- 30 Years to Tourism for All • Equality and Diversity in the Countryside: A disability perspective • Diversity in the Outdoors
- The National Trust Divis and the Black Mountain - the story so far • Engaging Minority Groups in Scotland with Natural and Built Heritage
- Tackling the Motorbike Problem on Towpaths and Improving Access for All • Councils Strive for Equality of Access for Rural Residents
- Walking with Dogs: New approaches to better management • Results of the communications survey • News • CRN Events • Publications



# Countryside Recreation Network

## Countryside Recreation Network (CRN)

### 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

The Network helps the work of agencies and individuals in three areas:

#### Research:

to encourage co-operation between members in identifying and promoting the need for research related to countryside recreation, to encourage joint ventures in undertaking research, and to disseminate information about members' recreation programmes.

#### Liaison:

to promote information exchange relating to countryside recreation, and to foster general debate about relevant trends and issues.

#### Good Practice:

to share information to develop best practice through training and professional development in provision for and management of countryside recreation.

**Chair:** Geoff Hughes

**Vice-chair:** John Watkins, Countryside Council for Wales

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Visit CRN on the Internet! See our home page at:  
[www.countrysidecreation.org.uk](http://www.countrysidecreation.org.uk)

## Countryside Recreation Editorial Policy

Countryside Recreation is the journal of the Countryside Recreation Network. The purpose of the journal is to act as an exchange for sharing information, ideas and practical solutions that promotes best policy and practice in countryside recreation across the UK and Ireland. Countryside Recreation is free and is published three times a year. We welcome articles and letters from all readers. The editorial policy for the journal is to provide a platform for a fair and honest discussion on issues relating countryside recreation.

Articles will be accepted from anyone from the Network organisations and other organisations and individuals who wish to share their knowledge, research findings, practical experiences or promote policies and strategies in the provision and management of access, recreation, sport and active tourism.

The Journal is not a lobbying or campaigning platform. We will not accept articles that are defamatory and potentially libellous. Rights of reply will be offered when organisations' actions are brought into question.

The Response section is used to enable comments to be made on specific articles. Articles offered for this section may be edited for length.

The journal is managed by the CRN Network Manager and guided by an editorial panel made up of representatives from organisations in the Network. The editorial panel and CRN Network Manager reserve the right to reject articles; and curtail discussion on specific subjects if the panel feel that the issues have been appropriately and satisfactorily dealt with. We will always discuss with authors the reason for rejecting articles.

The CRN Network Manager will commission articles related to the specific themes that are part of each journal. We will also accept articles on a range of subjects for each issue but they must be related to the business of the Network members' remits.

### The Spring journal will be based on the theme of 'Water recreation'.

If you would like to submit an article or a news item for consideration by the Editorial Board, please email the document in word format to the Network Manager [m.bull@shu.ac.uk](mailto:m.bull@shu.ac.uk).

### Please note the following submission deadline dates:

Articles for editorial board consideration to be submitted by 5th January 2007.

Commissioned articles to be submitted by 31st January 2007.

News items to be submitted by 14th February 2007,

Chair of Editorial Panel: Jo Burgon, The National Trust





'Countryside **Recreation**' is provided free by the following organisations to promote good practice:



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Countryside Recreation goes out to over 2700 individuals working in the field of countryside recreation, tourism and leisure. If you would like to have a flier or advert distributed with the journal, please contact the Network Manager for further details and pricing policy.

# Editorial

Jo Burgon, National Trust

The main theme for this issue is equality and diversity, an area of activity for the outdoor recreation sector that has in parts a considerable tradition of removing barriers to access to open spaces and routes. These are not just physical barriers but increasingly tied to cultural and psychological ones too. There is a growing body of experience in making connections with community needs and interests as the articles in this issue illustrate.

I remember the first meeting of a CRN network members group that began to draw up a brief for a piece of research into Social Exclusion in Countryside Leisure. The meeting took place in a room with stained glass windows in Cheltenham Ladies College. From this rather incongruous setting in 2000 we have now arrived at DEFRA's Action Plan - Outdoors for All? Yes, you can trace this plan's origins to that meeting in Cheltenham. The research was sponsored by the Countryside Agency, Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, The National Trust, Sport England and the Wales Tourist Board. A conference was held in London's Guildhall and from there the Countryside Agency began its preparatory work for DEFRA.

I make this point to indicate the role CRN has played in moving the access for all agenda on. In fact on scouring the CRN archive there are proceedings of a conference held in 1997 - Making Access for All a Reality and earlier than that in 1978 the precursor to CRN - CRRAG (Countryside Recreation Research Advisory Group) had as its annual conference theme in 1978 a Countryside for All?

So with this considerable history of countryside, sport and tourist organisations intent on improving the access for all the context and climate for making this happen for a more socially inclusive society has moved on, not least with the arrival of new access and disability discrimination legislation.

The series of articles in this edition of Countryside Recreation on equality and diversity illustrate some current practice and approaches to providing access to the outdoors, as well as some useful reminders, not least in Jenny Stephenson's and Mike Bruton's pieces that the journey to get to this point has been long and at times tortuous.

Natural England as the new agency for the natural environment in England has set as one of its first priorities Health. The recent study which provoked the 'fatman of Europe' tag gives further impetus in making the case for the role the outdoors can play in providing space for frequent informal exercise. We shall wait to see how the results of the consultation on Outdoors for All translate into an action plan for England.

Thank you to those who responded to the readership survey. We publish the findings of the survey and set out the issues which the communication group of CRN will be considering in improving both the journal and the website. We are always pleased to hear from the readership on how we can make improvements.

**Jo Burgon**  
National Trust

# 30 Years to Tourism for All

Jennifer Stephenson, Tourism for All UK



This year, in which "Outdoors for All?: the Draft Diversity Action Plan" from the Countryside Agency has been circulated for consultation, also sees the 30th anniversary of the publication in 1976 of a report entitled "Holidays: the Social Need". This report, commissioned jointly by the English Tourist Board and the Trades Union Congress, was the catalyst in its time for a number of actions to address the holiday and leisure needs of those facing barriers to their enjoyment of a holiday break. Many of the issues it raised are the same as those in the Countryside Agency report and clearly remain pertinent today.

The issues should concern all UK citizens who, leaving aside the need for a shared culture, support the case for equal opportunities to leisure and recreation, or share the belief that contact with nature and the countryside provides an important ingredient to wellbeing. (The view that without contact with nature human beings suffer detriment - hence giving rise to an economic and social cost - was endorsed by the University of Essex in a report published in 2003 by the

Centre for the Study of the Environment, which collated evidence of the direct effect of contact with nature and ranked it in importance with healthy eating and exercise.) The benefits of a break to people facing social exclusion in one or other of its guises was a key finding of the 'Holidays: the Social Need' report. Another finding - that the potential of opening up new markets for visitors can bring dividends to those local authorities who embraced them with imagination - also remains as relevant today.

In the 1976 report, the needs of older and disabled people were highlighted in particular, forming a group with specific information needs and requiring physical as well as attitudinal barriers on the part of providers to be overcome. They remain one of the under-represented groups in the Countryside Agency report. In 1976, the finding was the catalyst that led directly to the formation in 1978 of the charity Holiday Care. One of its chief objectives was to establish an information service to assist people needing to find accommodation and other visitor needs, and Holiday Care became established as the main source of independent advice, helping provide information to over half a million enquiries since its inception.

In 1989, Holiday Care and the English Tourist Board

co-published a new report, *"Tourism for All"*, which made over 60 recommendations to the industry to improve the welcome offered to disabled customers. Subsequently a lobbying group - the Tourism for All consortium was established, bringing together the hospitality industry, disability organisations and the tourist boards. The emphasis was on gaining industry engagement with the desire of disabled people for an integrated mainstream environment, getting away from the culture of dependency and segregation of the past. In 1993, the first National Accessible Scheme (NAS) for the inspection of tourist accommodation by the tourist boards and Holiday Care was launched, a scheme which has since been taken over by the national tourist Board, Visit Britain, and revised into its current form, which provides for inspection to a standard by which people with mobility, hearing or visual impairments can be assured that their needs will be met.

In 2004, Holiday Care and the Tourism for All consortium merged, along with a grouping of hotels concerned with access (IndividuALL), to form Tourism for All UK (TFA). The re-formed charity continues to offer an information service for older and disabled people, providing information in paper form, through a helpline - 0845 124 9971 - and is in the process of putting its data online via its website, [www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk). This year saw the publication of an attractive new guide, *"Britain's Accessible Places to Stay"*, published jointly by Tourism for All and the national tourist board, Visit Britain, listing all the accommodation providers who have received a rating under the National Accessible Scheme (NAS). An entry in the guide is a marketing benefit to those who join the NAS and is an important incentive for small businesses to make the investment in having the independent NAS inspection, which can cost between £250-400. (TFA is the only body licensed to provide an inspection other than the main contractors to Visit Britain for all their quality ratings - the difference with TFA is that they tend to also provide helpful advice as well as the inspection). All those in the NAS are awarded a symbol, are identified within Visit Britain's website, and will feature prominently on the new Tourism for All site. In the longer term, it would seem preferable that the quality ratings - stars or diamonds - include accessibility as a matter of course, but in the meantime, greater recognition and promotion of the NAS ratings is needed. Further NAS information can be downloaded from [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk).

TFA receives a small grant from the Department of Culture,



Media and Sport to give advice to businesses, and its consultant, Brian Seaman has been advising the sector since before the creation of the NAS and is highly knowledgeable. Most of the sources of guidance are published on the TFA website, [www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk). Many of the business enquirers are small rural businesses who are seeking to create accessible accommodation or facilities such as a self-catering cottage or a barn conversion. In seeking funding, they are often asked to provide figures to demonstrate the demand from disabled visitors to their area. Better data such as that proposed in the Outdoors for All consultation would greatly assist in this.

The advent of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 has given a legal framework and impetus towards the creation of an accessible and inclusive visitor industry in the UK, whether it be in the country or the town. Most of the larger hotel companies have invested to ensure they are observing the requirement of the DDA to have made 'reasonable adjustments' to remove barriers to disabled customers. There has also been widespread participation in training programmes for staff, offered both by the tourist boards - the excellent "Welcome All" training courses which frequently use disabled trainers - or TFA, who have a handy CD Rom based training which provides accreditation and a training audit, as well as many other awareness training sessions offered by disability organisations and educational establishments. Great efforts are being made around the country to deal with barriers such as stiles, and for access to be opened up to visitor attractions, whether they be stately homes or country parks. The hosting of the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012 provides a further incentive, with a great boost to disabled sport and recreation, and a favourable environment for investment in access. However,



TFA's view remains that there is still a long way to go, especially with pubs and restaurants, shops, public toilets and leisure facilities.

The new 2005 version of the Disability Discrimination Act, which comes into force in December this year, imposes an obligation on all public sector bodies including local authorities to not only ensure that their services are not discriminatory, but to actively promote disability equality. It is vital that the disabled visitor and tourism services are not neglected in local authorities' plans to implement their Disability Equality Schemes, which tend to focus on the disabled resident. This would not just be a problem for the visitor, but it would mean missing out on an important benefit or bonus to the community. This is because becoming 'welcoming to all' tends to create not just world class hospitality standards but the opportunity to attract new tourism pounds into the local economy.

A major factor in this is demography - it is predicted that there will be 2 million more people in the UK over 60 by 2009 than there were five years ago. There is a similar trend across Europe. There were 64,000 more people over 85 in the UK last year alone. While we are living longer, and are better off than previous generations, age brings an increasing chance of a disability - although many older people do not identify their age-related impairments as 'disabilities'. The Disability Rights Commission, which does, estimates that there are 10 million disabled people in the UK today, with an annual spend of over £40billion. Then there are the carers, families and friends. Some 6 million people in the UK are carers, and at least 3 in 5 of us are expected at some stage to become a carer.



Tourism for All's emphasis now is on destination management. In the past, it was a difficult task enough to get individual businesses, attractions, countryside managers and retailers to take access seriously. Now many have made adaptations (although there is still a long way to go), but the information is not 'joined up' or easily available to the visitor, or there may be a major barrier beyond the direct environment of the individual enterprise which will undermine their efforts. A holistic approach has huge advantages - by viewing itself as a destination, whether a part of the countryside or a town or village - and adopting the viewpoint of the potential visitor, all sorts of problems and issues can be addressed, and it becomes possible to offer a genuine 'welcome to all'.

Tourism for All recently undertook an exercise looking at Brighton in this way, and has developed a model for a 'destination access audit' which can be used by any destination including a rural one. This can now be offered along with some supervisory advice from TFA's access consultant at a very reasonable cost, or TFA itself can be commissioned to undertake the audit. Following the exercise, the information collected can then be fed into the various networks used by disabled people for information, including TFA's website and guides. This helps overcome the twin problems of small businesses that make adaptations and then complain that they are not getting the visitors - usually (a) because no-one knows they are there, or (b) because there is some barrier beyond their control.

There are other pilots in Europe - a project called CARE (Accessible Cities in the European Region) has looked at creating 'the welcoming or friendly city', and created the 'Charter of the Hospitable City' which builds in principles which could equally be extended to the countryside when looked at as a destination. The small town of Limburg in Belgium is another example, where the local citizens became engaged in a process of looking at how to welcome disabled visitors, and in the process became enthusiastic about what they could achieve both for the visitors and themselves.

So far, this article has dealt with the needs of disabled and elderly people. Yet both the 'Outdoors for All' report and the original 'Holidays' report highlighted the needs of a wider section of the population: BME groups and young people in the case of the former, and the 'economically disadvantaged and lone parent families' in the latter. These groups represent substantial parts of the population who in general



would like to access the countryside, but currently do not. The government Department of Culture, Media and Sport, which covers tourism, committed itself in its major 1999 review 'Tomorrow's Tourism - a Growth Industry for the new Millennium':

"The Government is determined to help people - the elderly, people with disabilities, single parent families, families with young children, carers, and people with low incomes - who find difficulty in taking holidays or leisure breaks."

It went on:

"The priorities are to:

- Highlight growing market opportunities;
- Make English tourism the most accessible and welcoming in Europe
- Widen access to tourism opportunities
- Improve access to employment in tourism, and
- Widen access to our culture, heritage and countryside."

There is no doubt about the benefits to individuals if they do: in 2000, the English Tourism Council published a report "Just What the Doctor Ordered" surveying the views of GPs, who stated they would often prefer to prescribe a break rather than medication, and listed the following benefits:

"Physical relaxation; Stress relief; Emotional/mental wellbeing; Better relationships/family bonding; Taking a longer view/ considering change; Feeling socially included"



In France, the government has taken this seriously, and funded a programme called 'Bourse Solidarité Vacances (BSV)', which helps 11,000 people each year from 'excluded' groups to enjoy a holiday which they otherwise would not be able to afford. This is in addition to a holiday voucher scheme for employees in a huge range of jobs, covering 1 in 10 of the population. TFA is floating the idea of a similar scheme to the BSV, whereby those accommodation providers with un-booked rooms and accommodation, or country cottages often left empty, for example, numbered in many thousands, can offer these either free of charge or at cost only, through a form of 'holiday bank' on a special website only available to GPs, social workers and carers' organisations. Thus these professionals could offer a break to their over-stressed clients, rather than medication or more expensive forms of intervention, such as residential care and support for family breakdown. This is something that might benefit any one of us - it is a case of 'there but for the grace of God...'

Too often in the past a kind of jealousy - 'why should they have special help' - has obscured the very real advantages to society of making a break available to those who currently do not have access to one and yet are the very people likely to derive the most benefit. The various physical, cultural and social barriers - and benefits - to a more free participation are clearly mapped in the Outdoors for All consultation, and Tourism for All would wholeheartedly support the measures proposed to overcome them, with one addition - a scheme such as the Breaks for All proposal or the French BSV that unlocks the potential of so many empty bed-nights around the country to kick-start the initiative. TFA would be ready to play its part. After 30 years, it could not be too soon.

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#### Photographic References

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## Access Ratings

Proprietors of accommodation taking part in the National Accessible Scheme have gone out of their way to ensure a comfortable stay for guests with hearing, visual or mobility needs. These places are full of extra touches to make everyone's visit trouble-free, for example handrails, ramps and stepfree entrances (ideal for buggies) level-access showers and colour contrast in the bathrooms. Members of the staff may have attended a disability awareness course and will know what assistance will really be appreciated.

Appropriate National Accessible Scheme symbols are included in the guide entries (shown opposite). When you see one of the symbols, you can be sure that the accommodation and core facilities have been thoroughly assessed against demanding criteria. If you have additional needs or special requirements we strongly recommend that you make sure these can be met by your chosen establishment before you confirm your reservation.

The National Accessible Scheme forms part of the Tourism for All campaign that is promoted by VisitBritain and national/regional tourism organisations. Additional help and guidance on finding suitable holiday accommodation for those with special needs can be **obtained from:**

#### Tourism for All

c/o Vitalise,  
Shap Road Industrial Estate,  
Kendal LA9 6NZ

information helpline: 0845 124 9971  
reservations: 0845 124 9973 (lines open 9-5 Mon-Fri)  
fax: (01539) 735567  
email: [info@tourismforall.org.uk](mailto:info@tourismforall.org.uk)  
**[www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk)**

The criteria VisitBritain and national/regional tourism organisations have adopted do not necessarily conform to British Standards or to Building Regulations. They reflect what the organisations understand to be acceptable to meet the practical needs of guests with mobility or sensory impairments and encourage the industry to increase access to all.

#### National Accessible Scheme Symbols Mobility Impairment



Typically suitable for a person with sufficient mobility to climb a flight of steps but who would benefit from fixtures and fittings to aid balance.



Typically suitable for a person with restricted walking ability and for those who may need to use a wheelchair some of the time and can negotiate a maximum of three steps.



Typically suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair and transfers unaided to and from the wheelchair in a seated position. This person may be an independent traveller.



Typically suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair in a seated position. This person also requires personal/mechanical assistance to aid transfer (eg carer, hoist).



Access Exceptional is awarded to establishments that meet the requirements of independent wheelchair users or assisted wheelchair users shown above and also fulfil more demanding requirements with reference to the British Standards BS8300:2001.

#### Visual Impairment



Typically provides key additional services and facilities to meet the needs of visually impaired guests.



Typically provides a higher level of additional services and facilities to meet the needs of visually impaired guests.

#### Hearing Impairment



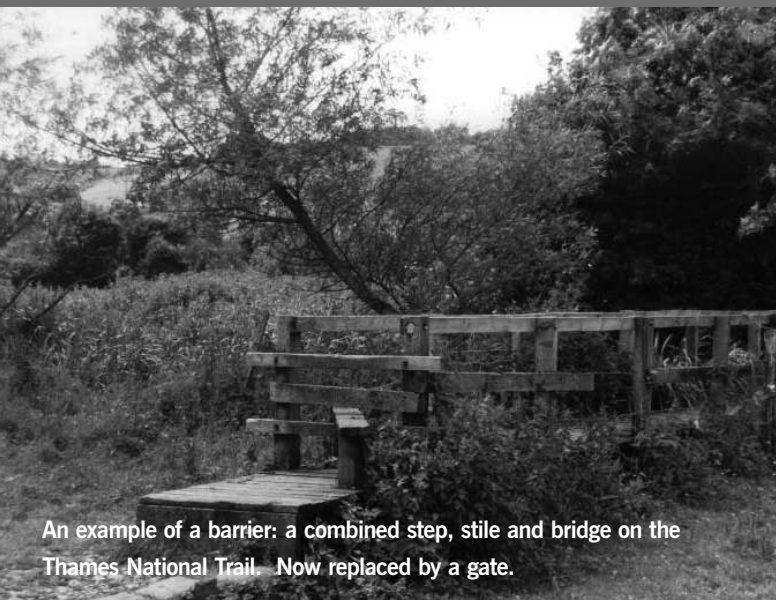
Typically provides key additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with hearing impairment.



Typically provides a higher level of additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with hearing impairment.

# Equality and Diversity in the Countryside: A Disability Perspective

Dr Mike Bruton MBE, Disabled Ramblers



An example of a barrier: a combined step, stile and bridge on the Thames National Trail. Now replaced by a gate.



An example of an accessible gate (Centrewire Ltd)

Mike Bruton has been involved in championing disabled access in the Countryside for 14 years. As the Executive Director of the Disabled Drivers' Association from 1991 to 1995, Mike established a special interest section (the Countryside Access Group) within the parent organisation. Initially this group organised an annual wheelchair rally along the Ridgeway National Trail in Wessex.

In parallel with this work, and working with local disabled activists in the Windsor and Maidenhead area (WAMU - Windsor and Maidenhead Users' Network), much work was done studying the usability of local footpaths and trails by disabled people. A National Conference was held at the Ascot racecourse in 1996 assisted with funds provided by BT, and a report produced 'The Way Ahead'. Following the production of the BT Countryside for All Access Guidelines, Mike joined the informal 'Countryside for All' Forum: He remains a member to this day.

During the late 1990's the original Countryside Access Group expanded and became the Disabled Ramblers, an independent Charitable Company, (Charity No: 1103508). The Disabled Ramblers organises an annual programme of supported rambles primarily for wheelchair and electric

buggy users, totalling, in 2006, 17 rambles occupying 26 days spread across England and Wales. Mike Bruton remains Chairman of this company. Mike has also worked extensively with other bodies including the Countryside Agency where he has actively encouraged and supported research work and several publications.

In 2005 Mike was awarded the MBE for his work on disabled access in the countryside.



Zone A: A disabled ramble in Great Windsor Park in September 2006

## Introduction

In the summer of 1990 I organised an unusual sponsored charitable event to raise money for a medical charity concerned with a specific disabling neurological condition, known as CMA (Chariot Marie Tooth disorder). I have this condition, and over my quite long life I have gradually become disabled, and now retain much freedom solely by use of a series of wheelchairs and pavement scooters.



I had always loved the Countryside but by 1990 I was becoming reconciled to more limited visits, usually in or near my motorcar. My sponsored event changed all that and proved a decisive turning point affecting my whole life ever since! In those days I worked for British Airways and working with an influential friend, we persuaded the airlines engineering apprentices to build for my sole use a novel single seat rickshaw, designed to be pulled (and pushed) by teams of able bodied ramblers. The rickshaw featured an economy class aircraft seat mounted on a two wheel carriage, with stainless steel pulling bars and stamped by the BA logo. We even had an aircraft registration - proudly displayed as 'G-CMT1'



With this machine and with four teams of pullers, we tackled the western section of the Ridgeway National Trail, covering 50 miles in a single weekend from Avebury to Nuffield.

It was a fantastic success and I enjoyed a unique countryside experience: I realised that I could still really enjoy a country ramble, away from roads and motorcars, even when virtually unable to walk.

This experience really made me determined to promote countryside rambling for disabled people, and an obvious way opened through use of wheels, wheels attached to wheelchairs and the new generation of pavement vehicles, familiar in town centres, powered by environmentally friendly electric motor technology.

In 1992, under the aegis of the Disabled Drivers' Association, I established the first in a continuing series of supported disabled rambles, based upon wheelchairs and pavement scooters. We went back to the Ridgeway, and decided to tackle a 40 mile route again along the open byway stretch of the National Trail. The AA very generously provided 4x4 vehicle rescue and recovery service over our chosen weekend. Despite wet weather and atrocious conditions on the trail, the weekend was another great success and proved that disabled powerchairs and scooters could be used in some surprisingly difficult places!

### **Disabled Access in the Countryside in the 1990's**

The last quarter of the 20th Century witnessed a general upsurge in activity and concern over disability issues. Disabled people became increasingly vocal and it became widely recognised that massive discrimination was the norm. In whichever direction disabled people went, or tried to go,

barriers confined them to limited places.

In 1995 the Disability Discrimination Act finally made the statute books, offering new hope in areas of access to goods and services, employment opportunities and protection and access even to public transport. It is fair to say that most emphasis was placed on basic survival and financial issues, and physical access matters were mainly addressed in the built environment. The Countryside was seen as specially problematic and mainly of concern to a small minority of disabled people.

Local work in the Windsor and Maidenhead area, carried out under the aegis of the local voluntary organisation WAMU (Windsor and Maidenhead Users Network) showed that difficulties in gaining physical access were even more severe than in towns. Paths and trails were blocked by many types of manmade barrier, notably stiles and 'kissing' gates, steps and broken gates. The very concept of disabled access, whether on foot or using wheelchairs or buggies seemed strange and difficult for land owners and managers to comprehend.

During this time, we watched the evolution of the Thames Path National Trail with great interest, and were thrilled to learn about a new footbridge to cross the Thames near Bourne End. However no one mentioned the design was 'steps only' with no ramping. When we learned the truth and protested vigorously, it was too late and this new piece of Thames path remains inaccessible to most mobility impaired people to this day. Maybe the day of building new discriminatory structures has finally passed? We hope so, but recognise the need to remain vigilant.

It was an exciting moment and a possible breakthrough when BT announced sponsorship for the 'Countryside for All' Project. Apart from our own local work, this was the first project exclusively directed at disabled access in the Countryside, and we had high hopes. WAMU was involved in an initial consultation meeting held in York, where we were able to talk about our local work involving classifying and improving existing paths and trails. However, when the report was produced and the Guidelines and Standards manual produced in 1997, amid much sensible and practical advice, it was disappointing to find little emphasis given to making best use of current paths and trails, including tackling the many existing barriers that so much prevented access by most disabled people. Instead emphasis was placed on basic path design and specification requiring conformance to new very high and very costly standards. To conform to the recommended standards paths were required to have very shallow gradients, to be all weather with a fine surface quality free from all except the smallest stones, virtually no cambers, plus passing and resting places etc. The BT 'Countryside for All' Guidelines and Standards document was a ground breaking publication, and raised awareness of the general need for access to the countryside



by disabled people. Its purpose and intention cannot be faulted, but in practice the emphasis on the need for a largely uniform set of very high 'standards' has limited the impact of the publication, perhaps to well funded new sites and other small and highly developed locations.

The Disabled Ramblers has also found cases where the BT emphasis on uniform high standards has proved counter-productive. There have been instances of land managers excluding disabled people on health and safety grounds because the paths could not be made up to 'standard'!

Late in the 1990's the Countryside Agency commissioned a further research exercise carried out by Alison Chapman, an independent consultant. A report called 'Sense and Accessibility' was subsequently produced in 2001. This looked specifically at issues of disabled access to National Trails, with special reference to four trails in the south-east of England. The work recognised inevitable differences to path quality in different locations, noting in turn the different capabilities and aspirations of disabled visitors. This concept is called 'zoning'. Zoning recognises that trails going through developed and heavily visited areas would be constructed and maintained to a higher standard than should be applied in remote countryside locations. At the same time 'Sense and Accessibility' identified the difficulties experienced by nearly all disabled visitors - notably the manmade barriers strung out along virtually all routes.

A second exercise carried out by Alison Chapman examined information needs. A huge difficulty experienced by most disabled countryside visitors is where to go and what to expect when they get there. So often disabled visitors will try out a promising path only to find the route quickly becomes impassible due to stiles or severe surface problems. This lack of helpful information is tackled with a limited number of site or area specific booklets, but generally the disabled visitor is left very much in the dark.

The Countryside Agency published '*Paths without Prejudice*' after the end of the millennium. In this Alison Chapman wrote about issues governing information and suggested the need for a standard methodology: as discussed later in this review this area needs much 'fleshing out' to go with general encouragement for the production of local information and local guidance targeted for use by disabled visitors.



**Zone B: A typical gravel forestry trail in the New Forest**

## Progress so far in the 21st Century

The turn of the Century saw an important new development towards improving countryside access for disabled people. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW Act) 2000 was enacted by parliament very much focused on defining new rules and freedoms for general public access to undeveloped open land. Such land is usually high moorland and mountain country where the public was to be allowed access to roam very much at will. A second part of the Act deals with the national Rights of Way networks, with an important requirement that all relevant authorities (mainly Highway Authorities) produce a Rights of Way improvement plan for their areas of control.

Improvement plans include a further important stipulation that account is also taken of the needs of disabled people with visual and mobility impairments. The timescale for production of the Rights of Way Improvement Plans allowed up to 2007 for work to be completed, but many authorities chose to work to a 2005 deadline to tie in with the requirement to produce revised local transport plans by that earlier date.

The Countryside Agency decided to help with more detailed guidelines designed to assist with this process and they produced a document called '*By All Reasonable Means*' in November 2005. Unfortunately publication of this document was delayed almost by a year due to objections from some disability organisations.

'*By All Reasonable Means*' is intended for land managers and aims to improve accessibility for disabled people on the understanding that access improvements benefit ALL visitors. The importance of audit and consultation are stressed, as well as looking at the visitor's total experience. Access is seen as a chain of events, with zoning used to provide the 'Least Restrictive Access' possible within the constraints of conserving the natural landscape.

Three zones have been detailed, with the aim of achieving a consistent approach to path surfaces, gradients, cross slopes, etc. Zone A is for developed sites with high visitor demand, where facilities may include a Visitor Centre, as well as ample parking, accessible toilets and even refreshments. This is very much in line with the 'standards' within the BT Countryside for All guidelines. Zone B embraces less developed areas, for example parts of the New Forest with extensive forestry trails and similar stone surfaced tracks. Zone C is for the undeveloped countryside, where paths are generally unsurfaced and go through a multitude of uses, including grazing and arable land. Zone C will embrace the majority of paths in the countryside, but even those outside Zone C will become accessible to many if the manmade barriers are removed.

'*By All Reasonable Means*' uses the social model of disability, with a need for inclusive planning at all times. A

fundamental principle is the removal of manmade barriers from all paths, not just on those paths deemed 'accessible'. Land managers should not presume what "the disabled" can or cannot do! It also emphasises the vital role that information plays in removing barriers. Visitors with disabilities especially need information on the condition of those paths that are accessible and what facilities exist, so that they can make informed decisions.

The Disabled Ramblers strongly endorse the guidance presented in the 'By All Reasonable Means' publication and urge that Rights of Way Improvement Plans identify areas of improvement across all three Zones.



**Zone C: An example of a naturally-surfaced path in the New Forest**

### **Working with Partners**

One of the most encouraging developments of the last ten years has been the involvement and committed support from many national voluntary and statutory bodies.

The Disabled Ramblers has been very much supported by the Forest Enterprises and Sustrans organisations. Both are committed to opening access possibilities, making accessible forest tracks and haul roads, and off-road cycle routes. These routes are now widely open to access by disabled people and provide excellent recreational opportunities.

British Waterways has also helped with miles of canal tow-path easily accessible to disabled visitors.

The Ramblers' Association has often supported our activities with many local initiatives improving physical access and by providing invaluable support on many disabled rambles.

The National Trust is very supportive, and many sites provide specific support by loaning to visitors wheelchairs and powered buggies.

The National Parks have become very supportive and much work has been done identifying suitable paths and trails in places like the Peak District and the North York Moors. There are the coast path trail organisations including Pembrokeshire and the South West Coast Path.

Then there are the many smaller organisations like the Sensory Trust and also the many Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Thankfully this list is virtually endless!

### **Where next?**

As discussed earlier in this paper, much has been done and achieved in raising awareness of the needs and expectations of disabled people in the Countryside. However, much still needs to be done.

An encouraging growth area is the increasing provision of loan buggies at many country sites. The role of the National Trust has already been referred to, but their provision is now being complemented by provision from other sources including local authorities like Lancashire County Council. One of the biggest areas yet to be tackled in a systematic way is the matter of providing information. Information is needed to help disabled visitors know where to go in the countryside, and then, having got there how to use the facilities present.

A start has been made with the Countryside Agency 'Paths without Prejudice' project, and a project with similar objectives called 'Breakfree' is in use in parts of the Country. Excellent work is being done by the South West Coast Path Team and published on their web-site, especially the detailed information provided on accessible sections. However, there is much work to be done standardising approaches and encouraging the production of local information across our land.

Overall? The situation regarding disabled access to the countryside overall is improving, and a momentum is gathering which offers great promise for the future!

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[www.southwestcoastpath.com](http://www.southwestcoastpath.com)

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# The National Trust Divis and the Black Mountain - The Story So Far

Dave Morton, The National Trust



Youth Volunteers on Divis

When presented with the topics of equality and diversity on which to write an article about The National Trust site of Divis and the Black Mountain, I cheerfully accepted without hesitation and set out to think about the many things I could or should say. At a glance, the topic seems perfect for the site, and, as I had initially thought, the wealth of material and inspiration Divis provides, should make for a pretty straightforward stint of writing. On reflection however, it is not so simple. The problem, especially with diversity, is that by its very nature it is a massively broad topic. True equality on the other hand, no matter how hard we aspire to achieve it, can be hard to spot.

In this article I hope to give a sense of the diversity on Divis in terms of history, landscape and site use, and how we may further promote it and make it accessible to all into the future.

It may be wise to put things in context a little, start at the beginning, and tell a little of the story of Divis so far.

## Landscape

The Divis and Black Mountain site consists of a rich mosaic of around 1480 acres of upland heath, blanket bog and

unimproved grasslands rising to 1500 feet above the City of Belfast. Views stretch across the UK and Ireland as far as Cumbria and Wales, as well as the Inishowen peninsula of Donegal. The unpredictable climate on the hills creates an amazingly changeable landscape, and as the seasons pass, the landscape changes from the reds and browns of the winter bogland, to contrasting purples, blues and yellows of the summer orchids and wildflowers.



What it's all about....

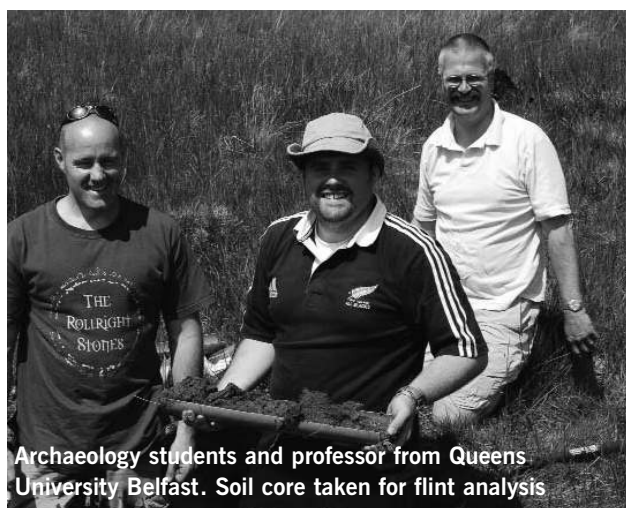


These imposing basalt hills stretch along the length of the City to the North and West, and have formed the iconic backdrop to the happenings below, from the days when man first settled here, to the more recent and well publicised troubles of recent times. This framing of a City with hills and open space may not seem unique to the casual onlooker, it is replicated many times across the UK, but here one thing has been missing from this landscape for several hundred years - its people.

## History

Without the enclosures acts of the 1800's, Northern Ireland was left devoid of a network of public rights of way and common land, and all land that was in private ownership remained just that - private. There was and is no right to roam across open spaces or field boundaries, so legal access to the countryside, and areas like the Belfast hills was impossible. It is with this in mind, and also remembering the backdrop of the troubles and urban deprivation that did and still does exist, that The National Trust purchase of this area from the Ministry of Defence starts to become something quite remarkable. It is so much more than conservation, it is The National Trust rediscovering its Victorian roots and ethos of one of its founders Octavia Hill, by purchasing amazing open spaces to provide access for the physical and mental benefit of the people of industrialised urban environments.

It is however more than simply opening the gate and allowing passive access to our traditional audiences. It is about being wholly proactive in the Divis vision to involve anyone and everyone in a real and meaningful way in the Divis site and project; it has been about encouraging diversity of users and diversity of use.



Archaeology students and professor from Queens University Belfast. Soil core taken for flint analysis

This process which began with the build up to purchase some six years ago, saw the then Belfast warden engaged in dialogue with the leaders of all the main political parties in the area and as many community representatives as he could find. It was essential at this early stage, especially given the low profile and preconceptions of The National Trust in this area and indeed in the region as a whole, for this grass roots support to be in

place.

After support had been pledged, the acquisition, funded by The Heritage Lottery, Environment and Heritage Service as well as the National Trust was welcomed and went ahead.

## Community Developments

The second major step, which came post acquisition in February 2005, was the appointment of a dedicated Community Engagement Officer whose sole role it would be to proactively engage with all communities who had, or had the potential to have a connection to the site. This commitment to broad spectrum community involvement by the appointment of a dedicated post is central to the success of the project vision. It recognised that in an organisation dedicated to both conservation and public access, staff were needed for both - conservation doesn't happen passively and requires a body of suitable staff, so why should engagement of our communities be any different?

On and around the Divis site, the shroud of the troubles has hidden decades of illegal landfill, fly tipping etc. The months running up to the opening saw a huge effort, much of which came from community volunteers, to get the property ready and safe to open. Several thousand tonnes of rubbish were removed to make way for a car park, along with around 2500 car tyres, concrete debris and burnt out vehicles. Up to 1200 volunteer hours a month went into this astounding effort, and involved young and old, men and women from all sections of society. It really was a case of the people reclaiming what was theirs, and reinstating Divis as an extension of their community space.

## The Opening

The decision had been made, given the legacy of zero access in the past, that the property would be opened to the public as soon as safe to do so. It was essential given the desire for access that The National Trust were seen as the body who bought and opened the site for the people, not the body who bought the site and kept the gates locked! Therefore, in June of 2005 with only the most basic of facilities, the property had its official opening to the public.

## Where we are now

Much has happened in the year and a half since the site was opened, with the Divis vision of diversity of involvement and experience being exercised and developed more than ever. On the mountain, we are trying, where possible to use our lack of developed facilities as a resource and opportunity for involvement. In the case of infrastructure like paths and signage we are engaging with user groups, both disabled and able bodied to plan out how and where we cross the bogland, place signage, design interpretation and the like. Following this then, local community groups and individuals help us to build the structures and install features. At times, it is fair to say that



the work invested in the involvement of some groups outweighs what our joint labours achieve, but it does provide us with a unique opportunity to engage with new and broad ranging groups, and offer audiences from urban areas the chance to reconnect with their local landscape and environment and hopefully learn a little of the work of The National Trust on the way. The time they spend with us, and what they learn about the site, the environment and indeed each other is what is vital, work in this case is simply a useful by-product.

Off site, engagement with other groups and partners is just as vital as the man hours invested on the hills. The community officer now sits on various local partnership boards covering issues from environmental concerns to local tourism bodies, and even a large festival organisation committee. It has been amazing for The National Trust to be part of a new era in these urban areas, as a real vibrancy and enthusiasm grows within the community spaces of a post troubles Belfast. By engaging with people both on and off site, we can increase the diversity of what we do, and broaden the spectrum of who we engage with.

Much has been learned in the short time we have been on site, and much has gone well with the site and its community partners clinching local, regional and even national awards for community engagement. We do not believe however that we have all the answers or the secret to success, and we are well aware that what we have achieved is merely the tip of the community engagement and involvement iceberg.

There is much work still to do, and we are planning and working alongside our new community partners, learning from each other, and bit by bit expanding what has become a joint vision to broaden what we do with this resource, and who we can include.

As one senior member of staff put it when looking at what had been achieved in partnership with communities over the first year -" look at what can be achieved with what is essentially a big field and a signpost, just wait until we have a building, a toilet and a proper car park!"

We are at the start of a project on Divis, and as such look forward to the months and years ahead in what is a long term vision, to bring Belfast out of itself, and bring The National Trust to new and diverse audiences across Northern Ireland.

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Working alongside blind visitors to train staff and volunteers, as well as inform better site policies for all users

# Engaging Minority Groups in Scotland with Natural and Built Heritage

Judy Ling Wong OBE, Black Environment Network



BEN stall at Melas

## The BEN Discover Heritage Project, Scotland

Black Environment Network is established to enable full ethnic participation by ethnic minority communities to the built and natural environment. The overall aim of the Discover Heritage Project is to enable equality of access by ethnic communities across Scotland, thereby laying down the basis to make heritage participation part of ethnic minorities' lives

The objectives of the project are:

- To create awareness among ethnic communities across Scotland that the natural and built heritage sectors are areas of major opportunity to improve the quality of their lives
- To create awareness among heritage organisations about the potential for ethnic communities to contribute to the sectors
- To create opportunities for the natural and built heritage sectors and ethnic communities to work together
- To provide advice, training and support to the heritage sector to enable organisations to work effectively with ethnic communities

## Making it happen

BEN connected with ethnic communities in the following ways:

- Running a stall, representing not only BEN but partner environmental and heritage organisations, at Melas to publicise what is on offer. BEN created give aways such as branded caps and balloons. Partners brought environmental fun packs, historical artefacts and replicas such as armour and chain mail for dressing up for photographs to create interest and fun.
- Running stalls at community events with a range of information and publicity materials, including mini-exhibitions showing images of ethnic minority people enjoying themselves at different natural and built heritage destinations, and participating in interesting activities such as canoeing, fishing or walking a gun-dog demonstration. Being present to talk about opportunities and answer questions is crucial.
- Specially organized urban events, at locations where people live, such as a local green space with activities that illuminate the meaning of elements of the local area and establish opportunities for locally connecting with aspects of nature and heritage.
- Reaching out and building working relationships with ethnic community groups
- Attention to distributing information materials at a range of key places where ethnic communities congregate or work, including places of worship or

libraries is important. Ethnic minority restaurants and take-aways.

At the same time, environmental and heritage organisations were supported with training so that they can work effectively with ethnic groups in an aware and relevant way. The experiential learning provided through facilitated engagement with ethnic groups is key.



The project worked to provide a varied programme that mixed activities with exposure to landscapes and different elements of the natural environment. Many heritage sites provide a mix of these elements. It is important to recognise that the popular vision of nature is often not a purist one, so that the pleasure of seeing plants in a historic garden or magnificent single trees in the grounds of a castle is experienced as being in continuity with contact with nature. BEN also tapped into an often neglected aspect of the 'natural' environment; the connection of natural elements with ways of life, for example exploring the coastline at Culzean Castle connects to fishing as a way of life. For communities such as the Vietnamese, with their history of having been the boat people, it also brings out the sharing of stories of their arrival - their history legitimising their presence in Britain. The history and individual artefacts in an historic house often represent the craft and artistic achievements of various countries of origin of ethnic groups. These bring back fond images and memories, as well as provide a basis for learning something new, being seen in the context of British history. The experience of visiting the National Trust's David Livingstone Centre resulted in learning, the sharing of stories and practical experiences that developed better intercultural understanding.

Many private historic properties have a more relaxed attitude to the use and development of their grounds. An example is Kelburn Castle. It has an adventure playground as well as varied activities can make learning about heritage a rich

multi-faceted enjoyable experience, mixing the popular with the strictly historic approaches. Different settings can reveal hidden skills and knowledge among ethnic minority participants. BEN has witnessed members of ethnic groups 'taking over' from workshop leaders to show them the finer points of basket weaving, or give advice about creating a better habitat for an 'exotic' plant from their native country.

Many of the organisations that BEN worked with, such as Tolquhon Castle, were extremely generous in being willing to bring activities into different venues or combine them with other activities to suit the groups' needs. Such goodwill is not lost on ethnic groups, who become enthused to return and build ongoing working relationships.

For ethnic minorities that are in the main urban-based, the local connection of elements of nature at large and aspects of history in between visiting dramatic historic and natural sites is vital. New areas of interest need to stay on the agenda of everyday life in order to promote habits of interest that integrate new ranges of activities, knowledge and interest into a way of life. The project therefore purposefully worked to make learning fun and practical in different settings. A range of arts, craft and other skills, and employment possibilities in the sector were also introduced into programmes of activities. Destinations such as People's Palace were promoted. Negotiations with different organisations brought new activities into schoolgrounds.

The Royal Museum combined activities that compliment each other - a visit to one of their exhibitions was followed by workshops in jewellery making & storywriting. Pollok Park was identified as an accessible urban green space that gives opportunity to a range of activities linking nature and history near to where people live. The park managers worked with BEN to carefully introduce the huge range of activities and possibilities for the development of activities to young people in the area, who knew parts of the park and who were not aware of all that was on offer.

### Partners and funders

Over the 3 years, the project worked with a wide range of organisations within the natural and built environment sectors including:

- Scottish Museums Council
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- National Trust for Scotland
- RSPB
- Council for Scottish Archaeology
- National Museums of Scotland
- Historic Scotland
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Forestry Commission

The Discover Heritage Project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, alongside in kind contributions in terms of personnel time and facilities from partner organisations and ethnic communities themselves. It has been highly successful



in reaching out to engage ethnic community groups not only in Southern Scotland where most ethnic communities are, but also much further afield, including Sterling, Dundee, and Irvine. Although good practice and methodology has been substantially developed, the element of supported experiential learning, for both environmental organisations and ethnic communities is a crucial element for establishing new activities and relevant ways of working to engage meaningfully with ethnic communities.

As a result of this project, substantial commitment is in place. However the consolidation of the work is reliant on the continuity of resources into the future. A supportive funding framework for strategically enabling full ethnic participation in the environmental and heritage sector is much needed. For example, the key funder for new audience development in relation to natural and built heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund, has a policy of not considering continuation projects at all.

The funds needed are not enormous compared to the whole range of benefits including increase quality of life, the release of a missing contribution to the natural and historic heritage by ethnic communities, countering social isolation, capacity building, new knowledge, interests and skills, and so topical for today's society, social cohesion. It is a matter of reasonable steady strategic investment over a period of 5 to 10 years.

This is true, whether it is for ethnic communities or the range of diverse and disadvantaged groups. It is the front end of the process that needs putting into place and consolidating. There is an end to such investment if continuity can be guaranteed instead of a stop start scenario. Beyond the vital initial phase, once engaged, the future will have a momentum of its own.

### **Photographic References**

*All photographs are credited to the Black Environment Network*

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The Scottish Ethnic Minority Sports Association (SEMSA) visit to Kelburn Castle.



# Tackling the Motorbike Problem on Towpaths and Improving Access for All

Jim Langridge, British Waterways and Andy Johnson, Fieldfare Trust



Bike being lifted over a barrier on the canal towpath

## Introduction

British Waterways (BW), in common with many other land managers, has to deal with the misuse of its paths and trails by motorcyclists. This can cause damage and nuisance and is a potential danger to both legitimate users and neighbours. A standard response has been to erect barriers to try to prevent access to the towpath or inhibit progress along it. However, barriers have often proven to be not very effective in dealing with the problem; they can be too easily circumvented and are subject to vandalism and unauthorised removal. There is no doubt, though, that many of them are pretty successful in inhibiting or preventing access by legitimate users such as wheelchair and mobility scooter users, other disabled people and families with pushchairs or buggies. There is a need to balance access for all and the safety issue that has to be addressed, particularly on narrow, confined pathways such as canal corridors.

## Providing access for all

An important part of British Waterways' Corporate Social Responsibility is to ensure that the waterways network is as accessible as possible to all and British Waterways is mindful also of its responsibilities as a service provider under the Disability Discrimination Acts (DDA). The Code of Practice to the DDA 1995 says where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of any service which is offered to the public (whether paid for or not), a service provider must take reasonable steps to:

- remove the feature; or
- alter it so that it no longer has that effect; or
- provide a reasonable means of avoiding the feature; or
- provide a reasonable alternative means of making the service available to disabled people.

If a barrier is erected, a service provider may be particularly vulnerable under the DDA as they form an obstruction which has been put there by design.

Apart from corporate and legal responsibilities, there are strong commercial reasons for trying to ensure that everyone who wants it has access to the waterway network. Part of BW's Vision is that by 2012 the number of visits to the waterways will have doubled from the 2002 level. Increased visitor spend will contribute to the goal of making the network largely self sufficient in financial terms. It is estimated that up to 1 in 5

people may be disabled in some way and that their spending power could be as much as £80 billion a year. That is a lot of potential visitors, particularly if you add in friends and family who will visit with them. Families and older people are key markets for British Waterways and they must be able to access towpaths without difficulty.

### Guidance on managing motorcycle misuse

With these matters in mind, British Waterways commissioned a piece of work from the Fieldfare Trust to suggest ways of managing motorcycle misuse whilst trying to ensure that access for legitimate users was not compromised. British Waterways initially hoped for a resulting design for access control that fulfilled both these criteria, which was well-designed and which looked good in the waterway environment. However, it rapidly became apparent that this was a chimera. The variety of motorbike shape and size and the differing needs of disabled people ensured that no such beast was likely to exist.

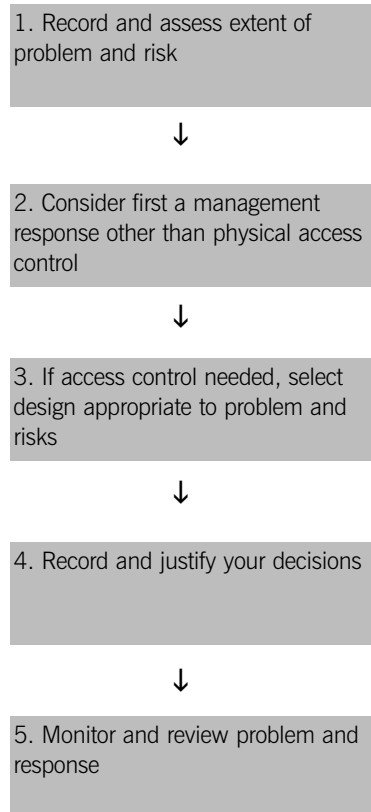
At the heart of the Fieldfare report of July 2005, *Motorcycle Barriers on Waterway Towpaths*, is a process to assist in decision-making on how to tackle the problem through alternative management approaches. An access control or barrier should be the last resort, and if absolutely necessary should be of a type appropriate to the extent of the problem and the risks created. The report also reviews various types of access control currently available, their strengths and weaknesses and the management implications of using them. It includes drawings for potential designs, with the dimensions necessary for access by different types of user.

British Waterways has distilled working Guidance from the Fieldfare report for managers, bank-based staff and customer service people. The work on motorcycles has raised a good deal of interest both inside and outside BW and an 'external' version of the Guidance, entitled *Motorcycles on Towpaths: Guidance on managing the problem and improving access for all* has been produced without the detail of BW internal procedures. It remains a towpath guide, but can be easily adapted for use by other organisations.

The main message of the Guidance is that the extent of motorcycle activity and the possible risks should be carefully assessed and an appropriate response formulated. The 'knee-jerk' reaction to stick up a barrier should be avoided; the problem may be minimal or sporadic, it may be short-lived or it may move elsewhere. The nuisance and risk could be relatively low and you may be able to live with the problem. The number of complaints received is not always directly related to the reality of the problem and it is important to ensure that the land manager knows the nature and extent of what is actually going on.

A simple decision flowchart suggests how to proceed.

### Decision Flowchart



### Assessment of risk and an appropriate response

Risk may be assessed as minimal, moderate or severe. In cases of minimal or moderate risk, management responses other than a physical access control should always be considered first. The Guidance outlines a number of measures including increased patrol or presence in a particular trouble spot, discouragement through making the perpetrators know that you are aware of their activities, installation of CCTV and other means. Information and education is important, particularly for young people who are likely to be the main motorcycle users. Signage, posters, leaflets and contact with organised groups such as local motorcycle clubs, schools or youth organisations can all ensure they are aware of the nuisance, damage and danger they could be causing, that motorcycling is not allowed in the area in question and that what they are doing is illegal. The message can also be spread through retail outlets such as petrol stations, motorbike dealers etc.

A stronger option is involvement of the police and eventual prosecution; a well-publicised court case may have considerable effect, as may large scale confiscation and crushing of machines, which has been effectively employed in some areas. A number of legal powers have been used

successfully; for example:

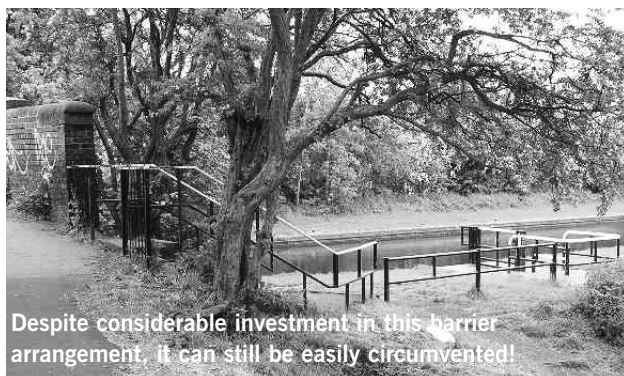
- S34 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 gives a general prohibition of driving motor vehicles other than on roads without lawful authority
- S59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 gives police power of confiscation of vehicles being misused
- S143 of the Road Traffic Act together with the Compulsory Motor Vehicle Insurance Regulations 2000 prohibits use of vehicles without insurance on roads and other public places.

Other possibilities could include ASBOs, Noise or Nuisance Neighbour legislation. Local authorities have Community Safety Officers or Anti Social Behaviour Officers who could be important partners. Recently, in Greater Manchester, Trading Standards officers have been successful in preventing the sale of mini motorbikes (against which, of course, any sort of barrier is virtually ineffective) except recognised brands through established motorcycle dealers. Outlets selling imported mini bikes have had products seized resulting in around 1000 bikes being impounded. These don't meet current regulations and are considered dangerous.

A longer term approach could be to consider creating diversionary activities such as setting up or supporting legitimate clubs and venues for off road activities or at least collecting information on these to give to motorcyclists that you may encounter. Partnerships with police, youth services, probation service, various local authority departments and others such as Groundwork Trusts may be fruitful here.

The presence of people is likely to be a strong deterrent and by ensuring that the environment is well-managed and welcoming for all users, the sense of safety felt by legitimate users will be enhanced. Increasing levels of use can have a discouraging effect on motorcyclists.

Some of these measures may appear to be resource-hungry, both in staff time and financial cost, but this must be balanced against the cost of installation and maintenance of barriers, including repairing the frequent damage and vandalism they attract, and their actual likely effectiveness.



Despite considerable investment in this barrier arrangement, it can still be easily circumvented!

### The last resort; selecting an appropriate access control

Where there is greater risk, nuisance or damage, a barrier or other access control may be deemed necessary. The Guidance raises a number of considerations. Importantly, the access control must be appropriate and proportionate to the problem. For example, a wide chicane which slows motorbikes (and incidentally pedal cycles) may be sufficient in some circumstances and will freely allow wheelchair users and children's buggies to pass. If the situation is severe, a barrier that aims to completely exclude motorcycles may be considered necessary. This will inevitably exclude many legitimate users, and both local consultation and explanation plus clear documentation of the decision-making process are necessary - you may need this if called to account under the DDA.



A delighted visitor uses a newly widened chicane at Kirkintilloch on Forth & Clyde Canal

Whatever type of barrier you use, and a great variety are to be seen in countryside locations everywhere, they should be well-designed and look good in their context. They could incorporate artwork, perhaps involving young people or other local community members, and could act positively as gateways. They must be well-maintained; poor maintenance will only increase the difficulty of their use and good maintenance and prompt repair sends a clear and important message. Consideration should be given to easily adjustable or removable designs which can be modified or removed in response to the motorcycle problem which is likely to change over time or shift in location.

The Guidance should also be used to review the need and effectiveness of existing barriers. Too often barriers that no longer serve their purpose remain in place long after the problem has gone away. They continue to spoil access, are prey to damage and contribute to unnecessary clutter.

The importance of consultation and monitoring and review We would like to emphasise two very important final points. Firstly, consult with users. They are the best judges of their own needs and should be constructively involved in helping to develop an appropriate solution. They will better understand the often conflicting demands put upon the land manager. They are likely to be more supportive of the difficult decisions that may have to be made, particularly important where a total-exclusion



method is considered necessary. Secondly, record and justify plans and actions, monitor their effectiveness and any change in the scale of the problem. You should review the response in respect of its impact. You may be able to relax measures if the problem diminishes, or you may need to step it up if it gets worse. The use of adjustable and flexible designs will facilitate this.



This chicane with RADAR key operated gate has been damaged, remains an eyesore and clearly no longer serves its purpose

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*Bike being lifted over barrier credited to Birmingham City Council*

*Complex barrier by bridge credited to Fieldfare Trust*

*Woman with children's buggy in wide chicane credited to British Waterways*

*Rusty chicane with open gate credited to Fieldfare Trust*

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## MOTORCYCLES ON TOWPATHS:

**Guidance on managing the problem and improving access for all**



June 2006

**Picture of front cover of Guidance**



# Councils Strive for Equality of Access for Rural Residents

Richard Greening, Improvement and Development Agency



Cycling the Mercian Way

The rural idyll can be a myth, according to some rural local authorities. Rural industries are in decline, the average wages of rural communities are below the national average and access deprivation is a key issue. Residents and visitors find local transport unsatisfactory, running at inconvenient times and not actually going to where they want to go, for example council offices or recreation areas. Local authorities can implement policies and practice to address these issues and improve access to their services. Getting the community involved in the decision taking process can help to ensure that services and policies reflect the needs and wishes of the community. Carefully considering equality and diversity issues can also help councils address the needs of their community.

Four local authorities have been recognised for their success in round seven of the Department for Communities and Local Government's Beacon scheme under the theme of Improving Rural Services: Empowering Communities. Shropshire County Council, West Berkshire Council, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (MDC) and South Somerset District Council

were all awarded Beacon status in March 2006 for their innovative work in engaging with their communities. The Improvement and Development Agency supports the Beacons throughout the application process and their Beacon year, during which the winning authorities share their best practice with other local councils.

All of the Beacon authorities have demonstrated excellence in engaging with their rural communities. Using parish plans to contribute to the council's community plan is a good way of achieving this. Parish plans can identify and propose solutions to local issues that affect residents, which may be missed by a larger authority. For example, 66 percent of parish councils in West Berkshire are contributing to the Community Plan through their parish plans. West Berkshire Council holds Best Practice workshops for parish plans that are attended by community representatives and local voluntary and community groups. The council also holds open sessions to discuss community plan issues, has published two toolkits and provides grants to help communities get involved in the long term planning process. The City of Bradford MDC hosts a Parish Council Liaison forum that brings representatives from the parishes together to discuss issues affecting their locality. South Somerset District Council held a play audit with their parishes and revealed a lack of facilities for teens, which lead to a programme to install over 100 BMX tracks, skating areas and multi-use games areas to the district.

Each Beacon council also employs a number of initiatives to further engage with the variety of groups represented in their

communities ranging from the young and the old to those with learning disabilities and minority groups. West Berkshire Council hosted a 'Big Buzz Challenge' to engage young people in the parish planning process. The event included project competitions, which resulted in proposals for youth projects such as skate/BMX facilities. Bradford Council utilises a variety of community and customer engagement tools. The council hosts neighbourhood forums, an annual rural issues conference and rural issue workshops, which are often part of other consultation events. Bradford Council also holds a Parish Council Liaison group, which enables the council to engage with parish representatives. Shropshire County Council hosts pub clubs for older people in many of the villages in the county. These clubs provide social interaction for older people near to where they live. Shropshire also has two purpose built mobile youth centres, which are used to engage with young people as well as provide them with a place to 'hang out' with their friends.

Transport is a major issue for rural communities. In the summer of 2004, Shropshire County Council introduced the Shropshire Hills Shuttles, a weekend bus service that provided 4,000 people with lifts to, from and around Shropshire's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The council also integrated local transport services using subsidized bus services with non-conventional community and voluntary sector services. Three new demand responsive bus services were introduced in 2005, and are now connecting communities from 83 parishes with their market town. Approximately 70 per cent of the county is covered by a community car scheme. Over 65,000 passenger trips were made in 2005, covering 217,000 miles. These figures show an increase of over 50 per cent in two years and the council is looking forward to seeing an increase in 2006 as well.

Bradford Council found that there was a lack of public transport at appropriate times for younger people to access training and employment. For example, a 22 year old from Denholme could not access public transport to get to his job that started at 6am at a bakery five miles away. Bradford worked in partnership with Bingley Voluntary Action, the Learning and Skills Council, Parish and Town councils and the Airedale Partnership to develop a 'wheels to work' scheme. This scheme provides a subsidised scooter and training, which allows young people to access jobs and education. The scooter has given the 22-year-old independence, which has had a positive effect on him and his family.

South Somerset District Council found that access to rural transport was poor, with 40 per cent of its residents expressing a need for improved services. The council promotes partnerships that provide both community based and public transport schemes to meet travel needs flexibly in remote areas. These include the Community Accessible Transport Bus, Nippy Bus, Langport Travel Share and the LINKS buses.

The Beacon councils all have strong equalities and diversities

policies to ensure that all members of the community are provided with the services they need. The equalities and diversities policies make certain that the councils routinely consider equality of access to services, the various needs of different communities and develop strategies to address diverse views. Shropshire used a dynamic community art form called 'Runga Rung' to help a small Asian minority integrate in a rural community. 'Runga Rung' means colour of colours and is an ambitious, large scale production which had previously only been performed in urban areas. Over 200 residents of all ages attended arts workshops and on the night carried their lanterns, flags, giant flowers and puppets through the streets to celebrate their community and rich cultural heritage. The procession led an audience of over 3000 to a finale performance site where the show unfolded with a fusion of images from different countries and cultures. In Bradford, the riots of 2001 created a division between communities with many seeking to disassociate themselves from what had happened in the inner urban areas of Bradford. The development of the Parish Council Liaison Group has brought together urban and rural councils in discussion on a range of issues and increased understanding of concerns and problem solving. Breaking down the urban rural divide has been difficult but school twinning programmes and joint youth activities are helping develop understanding and positive relationships for the future.

Local authorities throughout the country can use the projects, policies and best practice to ensure that they are providing the best possible services for their residents and visitors. Communities are empowered to contribute to decisions that affect them and better, more suitable services are provided as a result of their input. Improved access to rural areas benefits those who live there as well as those who visit for pleasure. For further information and best practice examples from the Improving Rural Services Beacon councils please visit the IDEa Knowledge website [www.idea.gov.uk/beacons](http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacons).

### **Photographic References**

*Photograph of cyclists on Mercian Way credited to Shropshire County Council*

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# Diversity in the Outdoors

Marie Brobyn, Diversity Review, Natural England



**Finding Common Ground Action Research Project: Families from Plymouth visit a small farm in Landrake to learn about growing vegetables and caring for animals**

England's natural environment is there for everyone to enjoy. So why is it that some people don't feel that it's theirs to enjoy? From 2002, The Countryside Agency, on behalf of Defra, began an innovative programme of research to find out.

The Diversity Review was born out of a government commitment highlighted in the Rural White Paper 2000, to increase the number of young people, disabled people, people from black and minority ethnic groups and people from inner city areas, using and enjoying the countryside.

These research findings reflected a desire from these groups of people to visit the countryside more, together with issues such as feeling vulnerable and unwelcome when they got there. Countryside recreation providers also lacked confidence in dealing with these new audiences. The research findings are summarised in *What about us? Parts 1 and 2* ([www.countryside.gov.uk/diversity](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/diversity)).

At the same time, we established four action research projects to test novel ways to address under-representation by key groups and in a way that sustained their interest. The four

projects, which span three years, conclude in their current form in Autumn 2007. There is a robust evaluation of what we are testing, what worked well and, crucially, how participants have benefited.

Two projects address whether twinning urban and rural communities around a common interest would lead to increased participation. As well as seeing whether increased knowledge of outdoor activities and the availability of public transport makes a difference to participation, we are investigating whether this approach assures a welcome and increases cultural understanding.

The remaining two projects address ways of fully engaging disabled people and those who care for people with mental health issues. Both projects have impacted on the attitudes and behaviour of the staff and volunteers providing access, bringing them into contact with people they were previously nervous of engaging with.

For participants in all the four projects, the benefits to date have been: improved health, social contact and the confidence to venture out independently into new environments.

## Beyond the Boundary - Yorkshire

This project is testing whether the barriers of confidence and lack of information by people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds can be overcome through supporting urban and



rural communities to twin with one another. A shared interest in youth cricket is the bridge between the residents in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and inner city Bradford. Designed around the cricket matches are a programme of visits and activities in both the National Park and Bradford, designed to increase the information available to each community.

"We're trying to break down some barriers between rural and urban areas, there's a lot of people in Bradford and around there, who just don't know that this is a place that they can come to" - project worker

"Little things like getting to know each others names and offering each other fries or a drink, having concern for others, it made me happy inside" - Bradford resident

"People will eventually get integrated, and I'm talking it both ways, you mentioned about going back into Bradford, wouldn't think twice about it." - Yorkshire Dales resident

"The walk up the hills was tremendous, really good exercise. That's what we are trying to encourage not just the young but also the older generation. We had grandmothers, granddaughters and grandsons, it was really good to see them all together walking up the hills" - participant

"We don't know these people, so we're just making new friendships" - young cricket player

### By All Means - Kent

This project is testing whether a measurable increase in the level of access to Kent's countryside routes and sites can be achieved through working closely with disabled people and their representative organisations through all phases of planning, development and management.

"We haven't built things and assumed that we knew what people wanted, we've tried to engage them before that to help us plan and create all the routes within the park" - Shorne Wood Country Park



Stepping Out Action Research Project: River Avon Walk. Organised for a group of Asian Carers



Stepping Out Action Research Project: Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve. Group of mentally ill adults and their carers carrying out arts projects related to Flora in the Nature Reserve.

We like the camp and we enjoyed building the camp and the countryside is lovely, and we're all here together, and wonderful sunshine, what more could you want?" - participant with learning difficulties

"Well it's feeling the wind on my face and the springyness of the ground under my feet, feeling that kind of power that you have when you're outside. At first I started skipping, then started jogging, then started running to try and experience that freedom that a lot of people take for granted. I say to people run, because it's the most unleashing feeling. It gives you a sense of power, that kind of openness and being at one with nature." - participant with a visual impairment

"A lot of people's view of keeping people with disabilities indoors in a safe environment I think is totally unfounded. They can be just as safe outdoors with obviously proper tools put into place. You're also talking about their health as well, it's a lot more healthy being outdoors, getting some sunshine and fresh air than it is being stuck in a stuffy classroom" - project worker

### Finding Common Ground - Plymouth

This project is looking at whether engaging with women and their families in inner city Plymouth, and linking them with women in rural communities, increases their confidence and unlocks their ability to access the Devon countryside. They have already discovered that one of the fundamental issues effecting participation in the outdoors is a lack of confidence in using the public transport system.

### Stepping Out - Coventry

Testing whether engaging with carers of people with mental

health problems in Coventry in accessing activities through a graduated, 'stepping stones' approach, leads to an improvement in their quality of life, raised awareness levels in service providers, and increased capacity within community organisations.

"It's something I can really get into, I have got a lot out of it. It stops you going "in", because you are literally going out" - participant

"The natural environment is a good release from a persons stressful environment" - participant

"It's an outlet for our problems" - participant

These quotes from those involved in the projects demonstrate how creating opportunities for people to access the natural environment, has a significant impact on their quality of life. These projects have been continually evaluated for good practices and lessons learnt and will be subject to a final evaluation in Autumn 2007.

As a result of the Diversity Review research the Countryside Agency has drafted Defra's "Outdoors for All?" diversity action plan.

Barry Gardiner Minister for Landscape, Biodiversity and Rural Affairs launched the action plan for public consultation at a groundbreaking conference in May 2006. The event attracted lively press attention, which has continued throughout the consultation period; particularly at a regional level as the Countryside Agency has embarked on a series of workshops, throughout September, in order to engage those working at a more local, community level.

The consultation ended on 30th September and feedback from the consultation will inform development of the final action plan.

Defra plans to launch the action plan in Summer 2007, with Natural England championing delivery of the action plan on its behalf.

### Photographic References

#### *Finding Common Ground Action Research*

*Project: Families from Plymouth visit a small farm in Landrake to learn about growing vegetables and caring for animals.*

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#### *Stepping Out Action Research Project: River Avon Walk.*

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#### *Beyond the Boundary Action Research Project: Cricket*

*Competition, Settle. Organised between Bradford and Settle Cricket teams. Copyright: Natural England, Photographer McCoy Wynne*

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**Beyond the Boundary Action Research Project: Cricket Competition, Settle. Organised between Bradford and Settle Cricket teams.**

# Walking with Dogs: New Approaches to Better Management

**Jo Hale**, Hampshire County Council, **Paddy Harrop**, Forestry Commission, **Stephen Jenkinson**, Kennel Club Access Advisor, **Abigail Townsend**, Natural England



The special bond between dog and owner is key to developing effective access management

## Introduction

This paper highlights new advances, research and partnerships over the last 3 years, that are leading to a more engaging and balanced approach to walkers with dogs, as one of the most frequent, year-round visitors to the countryside and open spaces around towns.

## Background

The motivation, security and companionship that dog ownership brings, gives people a year-round commitment to the healthy activity of walking, in many cases in excess of Sport England's target (2004) for 30 minutes of exercise, 5 or more times per week. One third of all visitors to the countryside are accompanied by a dog (Countryside Agency, 2004). Conversely, land managers are all too aware of the potential for conflict between pet dogs and other access users, wildlife and livestock, especially on intensively used sites.

Established in 1873, the Kennel Club (KC) works to promote the dog's varied roles in society through its long established canine media contacts, education programmes and 1,000 UK-wide Good Citizen dog training schemes; it is the non-governmental organisation responsible for the regulation of dog breeding, health and competition. Around 3 years ago, the

KC was becoming increasingly concerned about approaches to managing walkers with dogs, particularly where open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) was being implemented. Engagement with dog owners on-site and during policy development was often approached from a one-sided perspective of them being a 'problem' group, with a corresponding emphasis on restrictive, negative, and - at times - misleading messages, as recently highlighted in the National Audit Office report (National Audit Office, 2006).

## The Forestry Commission's approach

The KC decided to develop a partnership response to address this imbalance, and approached the Forestry Commission (FC) as the biggest governmental manager of land with public access - around 240,000ha, of which 68,000ha are Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Dog walkers are the single largest visitor group to FC land in England, with around 40% of all visits taking place with a dog. The FC sees dog walking as a healthy activity that is particularly popular with target groups - such as women and elderly people - and which complements other activities, such as mountain biking and active play that take place in FC woodlands.

The Forestry Commission also recognised that little was being done for dog walkers, amidst increasing pressure to restrict their access due to actual or perceived conflicts; the Commission's experience showed that a proactive approach would help address both these issues. As a first step, a joint FC/KC





Canine community notice-boards build rapport and support with local staff

concordat was signed at Crufts dog show in March 2005 (FC/KC, 2005) which sets the standard for a balanced, measured approach. Developing a more welcoming approach with better facilities and services for dog walkers, provides a platform for promoting responsible dog access in general, and addressing specific points of conflict.

The Commission's current practical work with the Kennel Club includes dog activity trails, which encourage dogs and their owners to take longer and more active walks, as part of the FC's Active Woods campaign. As the lead body for woodlands in England, the FC is also developing guidance and case studies to help other woodland owners and organisations manage dog walking in a more effective, positive and welcoming way.

### Open access requirements

Around the same time, the former Countryside Agency (CA) - now part of Natural England - was considering how best to communicate with dog owners about their new access rights and responsibilities from CROW Act, across 1 million hectares of designated open access land. The CA realised it knew little about walkers with dogs; it seemed that because dog walkers tended not to be represented as an independent user group, their needs were sometimes missed out in the development of management strategies and policies.

Through a partnership approach with the Kennel Club, the Agency has started to explore the benefits of positively engaging with walkers with dogs, and the physical, psychological and social well-being that dog ownership can provide. One early success was the publication of *Your and Your Dog* in the Countryside in 2005. Produced jointly with the Kennel Club and English Nature, this free booklet incorporates messages about responsible dog ownership, alongside positive information of particular interest to dog owners, such as canine first aid, training tips and safe car travel.

### Delivering local action

Whilst this strategic progress was well-received and seen as a worthy, innovative approach by an international audience, there remained the need to turn these national developments into action on the ground.

As front-line local authority access managers of 4,500km of rights of way, 6,700ha of open access and 7 country parks, Hampshire County Council had also realised the importance of dog walkers as a major user group through its Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) process. Studies undertaken with landowners and managers in the preparation of the Hampshire ROWIP (referred to as the Countryside Access Plan) highlighted the concerns typical of those managing land with public access. Dog fouling was found to be a particular problem for managers of smaller sites and rights of way, where dog bins were unlikely to be provided due to, in part, the costs of emptying and siting difficulties.

Rights of Way Improvement Plans attempt to identify the changes required to meet the needs of the public, both today and in the future. Consultation forms a major part of the preparation of such a plan and whilst many interests are voiced through user groups or landowner organisations, it was realised that the needs of dog walkers were often under-represented. Equally, many landowners reported problems with dogs chasing livestock or disturbing wildlife, and there was also some evidence to suggest detrimental impacts on the enjoyment of the countryside for other access users without dogs.

### The need for greater understanding

All these partners agreed there was a need to trial new visitor management techniques to help resolve conflict on the ground. This was viewed as particularly important, as whilst various studies have attempted to observe and quantify the impact of dogs with limited success, there has been even less scientifically-valid work done on exploring how best to actually engage with walkers with dogs and influence their behaviour to everyone's benefit.

A relevant model was highlighted through a CA funded seminar in 2005 led by Professor Sam H Ham, that explored the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); this provides a framework for understanding why people behave the way they do in the countryside. By understanding the reasons why people exhibit certain behaviours, land managers can challenge these beliefs and eventually change behaviour.

Whilst it can seem difficult to rationalise the behaviour of some dog walkers, general visitor management principles tell us there is always a reason why people do what they do, be it to provide a pleasurable outcome, or avoid a negative experience. And although countryside managers will point to 'issues' surrounding the UK's 6 million dogs, in truth this is a people management issue, given that the nation's 15 million walkers

of these dogs are ultimately responsible for their companion's behaviour.

### The Hampshire research

In December 2005, a jointly-funded research contract was let to the University of Portsmouth and a steering group formed, chaired by a member of the Hampshire Countryside Access Forum. This used the theory of planned behaviour to explore why dog walkers might behave in certain ways, through a multi-disciplinary team making use of the University of Portsmouth's psychology and land management expertise.

Data were collected from dog walkers visiting Hampshire's countryside sites through focus group meetings, where they were encouraged to rationalise their attitudes and behaviours. A group of site managers also met to discuss dog walkers who visit their sites.

The findings of this research were published in August 2006, and can help access managers better understand why dog walkers behave as they do, and thus provide useful guidance when developing documents such as site management strategies, community plans and ROWIPs for the benefit of all concerned.

More specifically, this study revealed that dog walkers' behaviour is influenced by attitudes and beliefs relating to three key factors: their dogs, other site/access users, and land managers; these factors are outlined below, along with details of related practical steps that are now being actively developed and delivered through partnerships with the Kennel Club by Hampshire County Council, Forestry Commission and the Moors for the Future Partnership in the Peak District.

### The human-animal bond

As dog-owning readers will know, the relationship between dog walker and dog, is of great importance and a major influence on dog walker behaviour, given the physical, psychological and social benefits stemming from dog ownership. A dog's preferences and needs influence where people choose to walk; favourite sites are those where dogs are perceived as most happy - where they can be off-lead and socialise with other dogs away from traffic.

Steps now being taken to better engage with dog walkers using this bond include:

- canine community notice-boards, where responsible access information appears alongside details about lost dogs, local vets and charity events etc.
- woodland activity trails, where dogs and owners can keep fit and learn greater control through specially designed 'natural' obstacles

- increasing accessibility for dog walkers at visitor centres and other interpretive opportunities
- a podcast 'dog-blog' where canine characters explain responsible behaviours that benefit themselves and the environment

Special events have successfully engaged with dog walkers, even on sensitive sites

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### Interactions with other access users

Turning to the relationship between dog walkers and other path/site users, participants chose to walk where they believed their dog could enjoy socialising with other dogs. This also provided beneficial social opportunities for dog walkers to interact with each other, and provided a sense of safety not experienced when walking in more remote areas.

As a group, dog walkers reported occasional conflict with other people such as walkers without dogs, cyclists and joggers. Consequently - given the choice - dog walkers often avoided walking at certain locations or times to minimise such conflict. Practical projects to reduce this conflict now include:

- on-site dog training sessions to improve recalls and walking on-lead without pulling

- trial 'flick it off the path' schemes in less intensively used areas, to reduce poo bin costs and the landfill of a biodegradable waste product
- special 'dog day' events with stalls and competitions intertwined with messages about responsible behaviour

### Relationships with site managers

Relationships between dog walkers and site managers were mixed. Dog walkers presented positive attitudes toward site staff, but often perceived more senior officials as 'anti-dog'. Site managers discussed negative impacts of dogs (mainly fouling and control issues that affect people, wildlife and livestock) alongside positive aspects; dog walkers were described as unofficial countryside wardens, and said to pick up litter and report problems that may not otherwise be identified.

Current initiatives aimed at improving this relationship include:

- awareness raising workshops and good practice guidance for staff
- doggie 'pit stops' where free dog food samples build dialogue between rangers and dog walkers
- ensuring signs about sensitive times and places - e.g. lambing and nesting birds - are clear, credible and promptly removed



### Strategic management recommendations

This research suggests implementing management measures - such as those above - that embrace a positive approach to dog walkers, will in turn deliver increased mutual respect, a cleaner environment, happy customers, and happy dogs. Such measures acknowledge how dog walkers as a group can promote good behaviour and better mutual understanding.

In strategic terms, this research supports the development of

integrated policies and practices that:

- improve communication with dog walkers
- provide clearer and more consistent messages about expected behaviours of dog walkers and other visitors
- encourage dog walkers to take responsibility for ensuring their dog's good behaviour and to promote this with their peers
- make dog walkers feel valued and welcomed at sites using dog-related facilities, products and events
- provide alternative locations for some activities to draw dog owners away from sensitive sites

Whilst the practical steps already being taken may seem far too 'puppy hugging(!)' for some managers faced with intensively used sites, the reality is that a number of current management methods are failing to sufficiently resolve issues. The need to acknowledge such limitations of past approaches is a key precursor to developing new solutions, which - above all else - crucially need to firstly secure engagement through themes that are important to dog walkers themselves; messages about responsible behaviour can then be delivered once you have your audience's attention.

Such measures are also far more likely to win the respect, hearts and minds of dog walkers through an approach that is perceived as promoting "responsible dog ownership", rather than reinforcing current "anti-dog" perceptions, arising from traditional reliance on negative and restrictive messages.



### The future

Our monitoring of behavioural change over time will help to identify the most effective engagement 'tools' in a given situation - be it a regional rights of way network, forest district or individual country park - and we fully expect that local circumstances will have a great bearing on issues and solutions. And in truth, such engagement will still need to be balanced with formal enforcement at times, against owners



who, e.g., wilfully and persistently allow their dogs to foul children's play areas etc.

However, we believe the success of these new positive approaches will not just be measured by a reduction in complaints or abandoned dog poo. In these times of shrinking budgets, user satisfaction surveys and political pressure through the ballot box, countryside managers can also reap the benefits of increased political support from one of their biggest groups of customers.

### Further Information

- Understanding the psychology of walkers with dogs, published August 2006 is available on the websites of Natural England, Hampshire County Council and the Kennel Club - or just Google the report's title.
- Losehill Hall is running the course "Managing dogs and their owners" on 14-15 March 2007, to help countryside managers benefit from this latest research, case studies and emerging good practice - tel 01433 620373.
- You and Your Dog in the Countryside (CA205) is available free of charge from [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) or tel 0870 120 6466.
- Thanks also to Phil Buckley, Victoria Edwards, Sarah Knight and Mark Braggins for their contributions to this work.

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*Canine community notice-boards build rapport and support with local staff - credited to Stephen Jenkinson, Kennel Club*

*Special events have successfully engaged with dog walkers, even on sensitive sites - credited to Forestry Commission*

*On-site dog training classes help improve owner control and communication with site managers - credited to Forestry Commission*

*Offering alternatives can draw dog owners away from sensitive areas in a positive way - credited to Stephen Jenkinson, Kennel Club*

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# Agency Profile

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

## Natural England

**Wendy Thompson**, Senior Specialist, Outdoor Recreation and Access  
Policy Team, Natural England



### About Natural England

It's been a while coming but Natural England has arrived! This new organisation came into existence on 1 October 2006 to conserve and enhance the natural environment not only for its intrinsic value, but also for the well-being and enjoyment of people and for the economic prosperity that it brings.

Natural England has been formed by bringing together English Nature, the landscape, and recreation functions of the Countryside Agency, and the environmental functions of the Rural Development Service. It has a budget of £500 million and employs 2,500 people.

The creation of Natural England is an exciting opportunity to approach the natural environment in an integrated way. We have

defined four strategic outcomes and these will be used to focus our activities and resources. For each of these outcomes we have identified themes around which we will develop campaigns, to draw attention to particular issues we want to tackle as our early priorities.

### Outcome 1: A healthy natural environment

To ensure that future generations can enjoy England's rich geology, landscapes and biodiversity means we must significantly improve the protection and management of what we have today. We need to improve the condition of the natural environment to ensure that everyone benefits from the services it provides.

#### Campaign:

We will champion improved access to the coast and a network of Marine Protected Areas to recover and enhance the marine environment.

### Outcome 2: Enjoyment of the natural environment

Seeing nature and being out of doors reduces

stress and improves well-being. And it saves money! Research for the British Heart Foundation shows that exercise costs 28p per year of life saved compared to £28 for the cheapest prescription drug. But this outcome is not only about improving health. In an age increasingly dominated by concern over the use of natural resources and climate change, it is more important than ever that the connections between people and their natural environment are made and translated into greater levels of support, resources and action. Improving the opportunities for people to enjoy the natural environment is an essential contribution to encouraging healthier and more sustainable lifestyles.

**Campaign:**

We will champion preventative health solutions and the provision of good quality green space within 300m of every home.

**Outcome 3: Sustainable use of the natural environment**

Farmers and land managers have a major role to play in achieving the Government's targets to improve England for wildlife. Amazingly, our gardens now support more biodiversity than intensively farmed countryside. We want to offer a range of incentives designed to reward farms that work in an environmentally positive way. Natural England will be directly involved in delivering two exciting new agri-environment schemes. These will provide simple, low-cost measures like maintaining hedgerows, ditches and in-field trees and creating new features like buffer strips, pollen and nectar mixtures for bees and butterflies, wild bird areas and conservation headlands.

**Campaign:**

We will campaign to promote public understanding of and support for the benefits and services of good land management.

**Outcome 4: A secure environmental future**

The factors that affect the natural environment are complex and changing rapidly. We will ensure that there is a strong evidence base to inform choices across society on the best ways to protect and enhance the natural environment. We will be a trenchant champion of these options and if necessary be a strident critic of choices which fail to adequately take the natural environment into account.

Climate change poses a serious long term threat to England's natural environment. There is already clear evidence that plants and animals, including those characteristic of England's countryside and seas, are being affected. This includes changes in populations, ranges, migration patterns, and seasonal and reproductive behaviour of certain species.

**Campaign:**

We will campaign to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change on England's wildlife and landscapes.

We know we will need to work closely with a whole range of partners in delivering an integrated approach to the natural environment. Partnerships with land managers, the scientific community, business and community based organisations at a national, regional and local level will be central to how we work. They will also be at the heart of our work to connect people with the natural environment, particularly in urban areas.

*More information about Natural England including Strategic Direction 2006-2009 can be found on our web site:*

[www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)



# An Evaluation of the Countryside Recreation Network Journal and Website

Melanie Bull, Countryside Recreation Network Manager

A summary of the Communications survey carried out during Summer 2006

## Introduction

The effective communication of the Countryside Recreation Network is paramount to its success and the two main communication tools for the Network are the journal, *Countryside Recreation*, and the website. Both are used to communicate information about the Network, and to advertise the seminars and publications.

The aim of the research was to evaluate these tools through a survey of the journal readership and also to establish whether the website is well known, being well used and accessible to its audience. Another issue for the Network is the cost of producing the *Countryside Recreation* journal and the research focused on the feasibility of having an online journal only.

Online reading is becoming more popular as journals and newspapers and other print based products move into the electronic era. This research addresses whether the Countryside Recreation Network journal, traditionally a paper based document, is being read online and whether the readers of the printed version of the journal access the website for information. It also focuses on their usability factors and whether the journal and the website are perceived as an effective communication medium by countryside professionals?

The report evaluates the journal and website as communication tools for the Network, and also addressing factors such as where people read, how they read, and whether the journal section of the website is being used.

To address these questions, a questionnaire was compiled and focused down into three sections:

## The Countryside Recreation Journal

- o Design and layout
- o Reading style
- o Content
- o Preferred method of receiving the journal

## The Countryside Recreation Network Website

- o Website use and frequency of use
- o Design and layout
- o Accessibility of the journal online
- o Content

## Demographics

- o Gender and age
- o Country of residence
- o Type of organisation, job role and income

## Key Findings

### Journal

- 255 people completed the questionnaire - 90% confirmed they read the journal
- 95% of respondents felt the journal raised awareness and 88% felt it promoted new initiatives
- 79% agreed that the journal was accessible to the reader
- 21% stated they read the journal at their desk, whilst 82% never read the journal online.
- The four most popular suggested changes to the journal included:
  - o More practical management articles - 40%
  - o More research based articles - 36%
  - o More news items - 31%
  - o Open forum for discussion and debate - 29%

- Out of 182 respondents - 73% of readers would prefer to receive a printed version of the journal, whilst only 17% would prefer to receive the journal via email. Although in the qualitative data several people specified that if the electronic version was free they would prefer to receive the journal electronically rather than paying for a printed copy.

- Out of 110 respondents - 51% stated they would be prepared to pay a subscription rate of £6-£10 per annum.

## Summary

The journal is offering countryside professionals a useful and worthwhile publication, although the majority of readers prefer a paper version of the journal to reading online.

As Shaikh's (2004) "Paper versus Pixel" research highlighted, shorter news articles were more likely to be read online whereas the percentage in her survey that read a full journal online was only 20.3%. Her results confirmed that document size was one of the major reasons for not reading online.

Respondents were also given the chance to feedback any individual comments on the journal and some of the qualitative comments included:

*"Keeps me up to date with current thinking, policy and practice nationally and the research articles have helped me understand many topics from a different perspective and are excellent. I would not know where to find research material like this was it not for your publication."*

*"The journal is an excellent reference source and is helpful in keeping abreast of issues with countryside recreation. While not specific to my own area of work - marketing - it is helpful when considering policy papers from the board responses to government papers and looking for best practice."*

*"I value it very much even if I don't always read it cover to cover. I find references to other papers/reviews etc. useful as I can look them up when they become relevant to me."*

*"It fills a useful niche within countryside management/ recreation and helps spread good ideas through a scattered community of professionals"*

## Website

- 208 people responded to the website awareness question and 59% confirmed they were aware of the website
- 16% used the website once a month, 49% less often than once a month with 28% stating they never use the website.

- The publications and events pages on the website are the most popular with the sponsor's page being the least popular.

- The three most popular uses of the website:
  - o 24% of website users stated they had downloaded and read the website online;
  - o 35% of website users used the information directory; and
  - o 37% used the links page

- 55% of website users stated they found the journal easy to locate on the website and 61% would recommend the website to others

- There were no respondents that stated they regularly read the journal online; although 35% stated they sometimes read the journal online; and 27% read specific articles online.

## Summary

The overall use of the website is not as great as the Network may have anticipated. The number of people that were unaware of the website enhances the point that the website needs to be marketed more effectively with the journal readers and the wider audience.

The website, in comparison with Krug and Nielsen's usability studies, needs further work to be carried out on the readability of the pages, and also the accessibility to ensure we are offering a "website for all". There are areas however, such as navigation, where the website is meeting the criteria.

The survey highlighted that use of the website and gender difference is minimal even though there would appear to be more men using the website, this could be because our audience includes predominantly more males than females, and this possibly needs further exploration.

## Demographics

- Out of the 255 respondents 73 women and 125 men completed the gender question with 57 choosing not to answer
- The highest age bracket of respondents was 41-45 with 18%
- 72% of respondents were from England, with 13% Scotland, 8% Wales, 5% Northern Ireland and 1% Republic of Ireland.
- 28% of the respondents work for a local authority and/or a country park; whilst 18% work for a Government agency.

- 14% identified that they were PROW/Access Officers; 12% consultants; and 10% for both policy and business managers.
- The majority of respondents are earning over £20,000 per annum with 19% earning under £19,999, whilst 14% earned over £40,000.

## Key recommendations for consideration by the Countryside Recreation Network Communications Group

### Journal Recommendations

#### General

1. To retain the printed version of the journal
2. To identify whether people would prefer to receive a free electronic copy or a paid for printed version.

#### Content

1. To add training information to the journal as this was rated one of the key reader recommendations, and this has recently been removed from the layout
2. To ensure the articles are of varied length and include a good mix of research and practical management articles.
3. More editorial comment has been requested and this needs to be further considered by the Network's communication sub group as to how this need can be catered for.
4. Include profiles of relevant organisations - this will be introduced in the Autumn/Winter edition with a piece on the new amalgamated agency, Natural England and needs to be continually monitored for relevance.
5. The news section needs to continue to grow and relevant information should be provided by the Network sponsoring agencies as well as sourced through press releases.
6. The layout should be continually monitored and updated to avoid the journal becoming dated.
7. The website should be advertised and promoted throughout the journal and at events, including a short piece in the CRN news section about the facilities available online, i.e. booking events, purchasing publications and downloading the journal.

#### Journal Online

1. The journal should be saved online as individual articles as well as in its entirety to allow for easier searching and readability.
2. Other options should be explored of how the journal can be formatted online - rather than just in PDF format; to allow for easier reading, and annotation as suggested in the study by O'Hara and Sellen (1997).
3. Ensure text is of a reasonable size, or can be adjusted by the reader, to enhance the journal reading experience and ensuring 'access for all'.

### Website Recommendations

#### Layout

1. A search capability should be added to the website in the top right hand corner as recommended by Nielsen (2006).

2. Ensure text on each page is kept to a minimum and monitor on a regular basis.

#### Content

1. A section should be added to the website to allow news items and the addition of key Government policy documents to be accessed. This page would have to be carefully maintained to ensure it was kept up to date and remained relevant.
2. Training information is available on the website currently, but there are only Network and sponsoring members' seminars advertised. The possibility of creating extra revenue for the Network by advertising other events should be explored.
3. Further exploration is required into the possibility of a discussion forum on the web.

#### Marketing

1. Advertise the website at events and in the journal
2. Market the website's information directory as a "one stop shop" for information - need to ensure that sponsoring members help to keep their information up to date
3. Suggest using the online seminar booking form in future event fliers

Thanks to all the readers that participated in the survey. The Communications sub group will be analysing the results and implementing improvements. If you do have any further comments about the journal or our website, please do not hesitate to email [crn@shu.ac.uk](mailto:crn@shu.ac.uk)

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# News



## COUNTRYSIDE JOBS SERVICE (CJS)

### CJS has a New Editor

After 30 years as a Countryside Ranger and as Editor of Countryside Jobs Service for the past 12 years, Niall Carson has decided to retire. From 1 November the Editor will be Kerry Humphreys who has been CJS Office Manager for several years and whose organisational skills and computer expertise have already benefited CJS, its readers and advertisers. "I know that she will look after the CJS well and I wish her every success in her new role." said Niall Carson. CJS will continue to serve the environmental conservation movement relying on the same staff and you can be sure of our continuing dedication to the countryside, conservation and environment sectors and that our service standards will continue to rise. Readers will not notice any change in the high quality service CJS has always offered.

Employers will always be able to advertise vacancies for free in CJS Weekly, while CJS Monthly and CJS Daily Online will always be free to read online and the online content will keep growing. "There are lots of ideas in the pending tray", said new editor Kerry Humphreys, "however, please give us a little time to adjust to the new routines but the whole CJS Team is looking forward to working together to continue helping the conservation movement."

In explaining his decision outgoing editor, Niall said, "Having started work in 1970 with a burning ambition to

save the world and all of its species, I will now lower my sights a little. I plan to enjoy managing the small oak wood my late wife Anthea and I planted. My new burning ambition is to keep my log pile 2 years ahead of my wood burning stove." adding "As for 'saving the world and all its species?' Well - that's your job now and I wish you Good Luck..."

Kerry finished with, "I, and I'm sure all the users of the various CJS services, want to thank Niall, and his late wife Anthea, for creating CJS and for all their hard work over the years to build up the Service and we hope his log pile is always ahead of schedule!"

*For more information contact Kerry Humphreys - [ranger@countryside-jobs.com](mailto:ranger@countryside-jobs.com) or visit the website [www.countryside-jobs.com](http://www.countryside-jobs.com)*

## WWW.GREENANDEASY.CO.UK

### New 'Green' Website is a Big Hit with the Ecofriendly Public

[www.greenandeasy.co.uk](http://www.greenandeasy.co.uk) gets 300,000 hits in first month!

If there was any doubt that people these days are keen to do their bit for the environment, the reception that a new web site has received has dispelled it emphatically! [www.greenandeasy.co.uk](http://www.greenandeasy.co.uk) was launched in early August this year and in its first month, had more than 300,000 hits.

Web site co-founders David and Jackie Smethurst are delighted if mildly amazed at the warm reception their brainchild has received from right across the UK and even further afield, right around the globe. They are able to track where visitors come from, from those who have registered on the site, and they can see regular visitors from the USA, which is perhaps not so surprising, but also from many European countries, Australia and New Zealand, Malaysia and even from China! Proof that the environment is important to people wherever they live.

The new site has had loads of publicity locally and regionally as you would expect, but also the length and breadth of the UK, with articles in newspapers, interviews on radio and glowing reports in many speciality magazines including Amateur Gardening: "When the article appeared in Amateur Gardening we sat and watched the hits mounting almost by the minute!" says Jackie Smethurst. "And sales of the Eco-kettle soared after an article appeared in the Independent!"

The site has grown impressively since the launch with between 40 and 60 new environmentally friendly products being added to the site every week. Companies that were perhaps a little sceptical about the new site initially have flocked to be part of it now they can see just how impressive it is - and how easy to use. Major brands associated with energy efficient products - like Samsung, Liebherr & Gorenje - are amongst the latest high profile manufacturers to be represented on the web site.

If you are one of the growing numbers of people who would like to do their bit for the environment but don't know where to start, you should take a look at the web site - [www.greenandeasy.co.uk](http://www.greenandeasy.co.uk) . The new portal offers a very simple way of finding 'green' products and services in a sensible and realistic way that doesn't demand that you change everything you do and everything you use. It gently makes you aware that there are ways of making a difference in many aspects of your life that can reduce the impact you and your family have on the environment and which can even have a positive effect on it.

Very gently, it helps you take simple steps to greener living.

[www.greenandeasy.co.uk](http://www.greenandeasy.co.uk) has been designed for people

of all ages who have a busy lifestyle and don't have time to spend searching for 'green' alternatives every minute of the day. Visitors to the new site will find an easy to navigate portal that takes them quickly to the area of their interest. The site has sections dedicated to everything from green weddings and green funerals, to greener gardening, environmentally friendly kitchen appliances, sustainable wood products, greener electricity, and even the most environmentally aware investments, mortgages and loans!

"More and more of us do want to do our bit to protect the environment we live in," says David Smethurst. "But at the same time we appreciate that going green to the extreme is neither desirable nor practical. Many of us are keen to make small but significant changes to our everyday lives and to do so without feeling pressurised into it through guilt or obligation. And with such a deluge of information out there, it is often difficult to know where to start. That's why we've set up [www.greenandeasy.co.uk](http://www.greenandeasy.co.uk)."

"We subscribe to the view that if everybody does a little, it's better than a few doing everything!" says Jackie Smethurst. "We've got solar panels on the roof of our home, we drive a relatively environmentally friendly car and we've switched to Ecotricity as our supplier of electricity. But we haven't got the time - or energy - to go through the home - and our lives - from top to bottom looking for ways of going greener. We will do what we can, but we won't do everything and that's the model for our new website."

So if you need to replace your fridge-freezer - and November is the time when many people in the UK buy new fridge-freezers in time for Christmas - perhaps because people need a reliable freezer for the turkey - and want the one that does least damage to the environment, or you are looking for something new or helpful for your garden, want to find out about environmentally-friendly holiday options, or would like to discover other ways of being green that you may not have even thought of, have a browse on [www.greenandeasy.co.uk](http://www.greenandeasy.co.uk).

There's loads of free, useful advice and an excellent selection of products that can help you make a difference.

## ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

### Voluntary Access to Rivers is the Way Forward

A two-year study by the Environment Agency into how landowners can open up more rivers across England for canoeing has been completed and the findings recently released.

The Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs, Barry Gardiner, and the Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn, heard about the successful conclusion of the project on the October 3rd 2006, and were handed the final report at the Riverside Centre, on the River Waveney, Bungay, Suffolk.

"The Voluntary Canoe Access Agreements report sets the watermark for future voluntary access agreements across the country," explained Environment Agency Acting Chief Executive Dr. Paul Leinster. "The Environment Agency has a statutory duty to promote the use of water and watersides for recreation, at the same time balancing the needs of the competing water users and the environment. The popularity of canoeing is increasing and if more water is made available, more people will be encouraged to take part."

Over 30% of the major rivers and canals in England provide access for various canoeing activities such as canoe touring and white-water paddling, and thereby generate additional income for local riverside communities and provide opportunities for physical recreation. The Environment Agency's study involved putting voluntary access agreements in place on four rivers and looking at how they worked in practice and could be used elsewhere.

"These voluntary agreements show what can be achieved when we all work together, and this spirit of co-operation between enthusiasts, landowners and government is the most effective way to reach our common goal - improved river access," said Barry Gardiner, Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape, and Rural Affairs. "We want to encourage people to pursue healthy activities like canoeing and other water sports and recreation, backed by agreements which let all concerned know what their rights and responsibilities are."

More than 70 kilometres of canoe access have been created as part of the pilot projects, including the River Mersey between Stockport City Centre to Carrington; the River Teme near Ludlow; the River Waveney from Brockdish to Ellingham; and the River Wear north and south of Durham from Houghall to the Sands.

"Canoeing is becoming an increasingly popular sport at both grass root and elite levels," added Minister for Sport Richard Caborn. "The voluntary access pilot projects, like the one in Bungay, have show how valuable the inland waterways are for recreational activities. By making access to these waterways easier more people will have the opportunity to enjoy canoeing and other water-based activities helping to drive up participation in sport."

The on-line Voluntary Canoe Access Agreements Toolkit will be available soon and will include details of funding opportunities, plus data on social and economic benefits of canoeing.

"Our next step will be to look for opportunities across our South West and Anglian regions. Working with all stakeholders we will create a plan that shows where new opportunities can be created and identify the social and economic benefits these can bring," said William Crookshank, the Agency's Recreation Policy Manager.

*For further information please contact Chris Marsh:  
[chris.marsh@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:chris.marsh@environment-agency.gov.uk)*

## FORESTRY COMMISSION

### Wild Harvests from Scottish Woodlands

Forestry Commission has recently published results of research exploring 'Wild Harvests from Scottish Woodlands'. The work conducted by Forest Research in collaboration with US Forest Service worked with the gatherers of fungi and plants in Scottish woodlands to explore the products gathered, their uses and the social, cultural and economic benefits. Implications for woodland policy and management and explored.

Full copies of the report are available to down-load from the Forestry Commission website ([www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)).



Hard copies of the report are also available for £12.50 (see Forestry Commission website for details).

*If you would like further information on the project or report, please contact Suzanne Martin on 0131 445 6930 or [suzanne.martin@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.martin@forestry.gsi.gov.uk).*

## FOREST RESEARCH

### New Publications from the Social and Economic Research Group

*It's a marvellous opportunity to learn: a participatory evaluation of Forest School in England and Wales*

Liz O'Brien and Richard Murray 2006

This publication brings together two studies that explored the impact of Forest School on the children who attend. Case study research in Wales and England is described illustrating how Forest School can improve children's confidence, knowledge of the environment, motivation and physical skills.

*Growing Places: a study of social change in the national forest*

Jake Morris 2006

This research explored the links between changes to the natural environment (restoration / landscape change through afforestation) and the changing lives of people who live, work and spend their leisure time in The National Forest. Landscape. Change is driving an emergent Forest 'sociality', with forested places providing the setting for the reconfiguration of social networks and the emergence of new forms of 'connectedness'. The research results also illustrate some of the social, economic and environmental benefits of this 'connected' Forest.

**And coming soon...**

*Leisure Landscapes: exploring the role of forestry in tourism*

Suzanne Martin

Tourism has an increasingly important focus within forestry policy. This report documents qualitative

research with tourism providers (in Scotland, England and Wales) to understand the current and potential contribution of forestry to tourism. Values and uses of woodlands for tourism are explored, as are the impacts of woodland management practices on tourism enterprises. Recommended actions for policy, practice and further research are identified and discussed.

Copies will be available soon to download from

[www.forestresearch.gov.uk/peopleandtrees](http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/peopleandtrees)

For hard copies email [research.info@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:research.info@forestry.gsi.gov.uk)

## MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PROJECT

### Moors for the Future Audio Trails

Unless you have just returned from a 10 year vacation on the moon, then it is very unlikely that you will not have heard about MP3 players. You may be one of the 40 million people worldwide who own the most popular version - Apples iPod, one of the many more who own another model or you may not own one at all, or you may think you don't.

Today, most mobile phones come with one fitted as standard and not long from now they will be firmly embedded in modern culture. MP3 technology is part of a rapidly growing market and they represent the future of interpretation.

With both the access to information the internet offers and the high speed download capabilities broadband provides, audio files can be downloaded with relative ease. Music downloads secure a greater percentage of music sales every quarter and now visitors to the Peak District moorlands can utilise this technology to discover 7,000 years of habitation.

The Audio Trails concept was derived following the desire to utilise new technology as a tool for delivering key messages to users.

Initially, using mobile phone text messaging alerts were investigated but the lack of reliable reception across many moorland areas threw up the risk of disgruntled users frantically waving their arms and jumping up and down to get the next message in a reception black spot.

As a result, the idea of offering an album of tracks to download from the internet was the preferred option. Five pilot walks were developed and along their length 6-10 points of interest were chosen. At these points users listen to an audio track approximately 3 minutes in length which helps promote a greater understanding into what has shaped the important heritage of our National Park and ultimately encourage responsible behaviour.

At Easter 2006, the Moors for the Future Partnership launched its first 5 MP3 led self guided walks. They vary in distance and difficulty and are all narrated by local experts. Listeners can experience the myths surrounding the nine ladies stone circle on Stanton Moor, hear tales of Dickies Skull and Blind Jack of Knaresborough and even encounter the panoramic views atop Kinder Scout and Cheshire's Matterhorn.

Where Audio Trails really come into their own is in their ability to deliver consistent messages and offer people the flexibility and freedom to do the walks at their own pace, in their own time with the added benefit of having no visual impact on the environment. By utilising the web, the information is accessible 365 days a year by millions of people and can help build confidence in new users by giving them an insight into what can appear to be a daunting place. In addition, for those who really love their gizmos, owners of Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers can download both the route and audio stop waypoints directly to their GPS.

Clearly there will be visitors who do not own these relatively new pieces of technology and provision has been made by Moors for the Future to accommodate them. A route card with a map and directions can be simply downloaded from the web for people to follow what are truly beautiful walks in their own right, but for those who would like to reap the full benefits of the trail, MP3 players can be hired from one of the participating venues close to the start of most walks.

Audio Trails are free to download by visiting [www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk) and clicking 'Audio Trails'.

*For further information please contact Dan Boys, Moor Care Project Officer, Moors for the Future. Email: [daniel.boys@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.boys@peakdistrict.gov.uk)*

## NATURAL ENGLAND

### Dedication produces results on the River Mersey

The first ever voluntary dedication of public access to a water way has been launched at a joint event between Natural England, the Environment Agency, and Stockport Council. Dedication of rights to the water by private landowners has fulfilled the ambition of local canoeists by enabling the creation of the 27km River Mersey Canoe Trail from Stockport to Carrington, Greater Manchester.

Richard Leafe, North West Regional Director for Natural England, Steve Moore, the Environment Agency's area manager, and Councillors from Stockport Council, paddled the new route in the company of members of the British Canoe Union. Richard Leafe said "Gaining support from the owners of the river banks and waterbeds along the route is a fantastic achievement. Thanks go to Trafford and Stockport Borough Councils, Manchester City Council, and the four golf clubs for dedicating their land. With access points to the river right along the route, opening up this Canoe Trail brings with it a future of possibilities for outdoor fun in the local area".

The Trail is already making a major contribution to the regeneration of the area, as local businesses recognise the benefits. Burnage and Trafford Metrovick Rugby Clubs, for example, are both planning to diversify their activities by providing canoe hire and changing facilities for canoeists.

The Project forms part of national research, being taken forward by Natural England, into how dedication under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 can be used to secure and extend public access to the countryside and greenspace.

*For further information contact Joanna Redgwell, at Natural England on 01242 533282; email [Joanna.Redgwell@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Joanna.Redgwell@naturalengland.org.uk)*

*If you would like to send in information for inclusion in the news section, please forward it to [m.bull@shu.ac.uk](mailto:m.bull@shu.ac.uk). Usual editorial policy rules apply.*

## RIVER THAMES ALLIANCE

### New Marketing Partnership for River Thames

Businesses along the River Thames from the Cotswolds to the outskirts of London are joining forces to promote days out, short breaks and holidays on or near the UK's royal river

Launching in October, the new River Thames Alliance Marketing Partnership is developing a marketing campaign for 2007 with leaflets, posters, a website, trade shows and e-marketing. Members already on board are boating businesses, visitor attractions, local authorities, the Thames Path National Trail, the Environment Agency and train operator First Great Western.

Actor and boating enthusiast, David Suchet, is chairman of the River Thames Alliance. He said: "This partnership is all about reminding people that the River Thames is more than just London - it's also the green, beautiful, relaxing, vibrant and quintessentially English river that flows outside of London. Places like Lechlade, Oxford, Abingdon, Streatley, Henley, Marlow and Cookham plus little villages, pubs and wonderful green spaces by the river are all within such easy reach. By working together we can really promote one of England's greatest assets!"

Founder member Angela Morris of the Environment Agency, which looks after the river and leisure activities on it, said: "Our research into potential visitors shows there are great possibilities for us as a group of tourism operators if we pool our resources to make our marketing more effective. We hope all businesses along the river will join us."

Around 10.5 million people live within 30kms of the rural River Thames but research shows that few of them are aware of the range of things they can do on or along the river. From fine hotels and restaurants to boating on hotel boats or day cruisers, there is plenty to enjoy, plus excellent shops and attractions, festivals throughout the summer, and, for the more active, walking and water sports.

Julia White, tourism officer of the Royal Borough of

Windsor and Maidenhead said: "The river is within easy reach of so many and certainly has the capacity - we just need to link the two opportunities together by promoting the river and providing clear information for visitors. This new partnership will do just that."

Richard Rowland, First Great Western's Regional Manager, says: "We are proud to be part of this important partnership. The beautiful River Thames runs right through the heart of First Great Western country and we hope to encourage more people to use our train services to visit the marvellous countryside, towns and cities through which the river runs."

The successful [visitthames.co.uk](http://visitthames.co.uk) website, launched by the Environment Agency in 2001, is being upgraded and will be the website for the new partnership. There's a new logo too, highlighting the green and rural features of the River Thames, distinguishing it from the better-known London stretch.

Membership fees for the new partnership range from £140 to £2000 depending on the size of the business and benefits provided. A joint membership with Tourism South East is also available for businesses which wish to be members of both.

*For more information about the new marketing partnership please call Sarah Fleming on 0118 953 5771 or see [www.riverthamesalliance.com/marketing](http://www.riverthamesalliance.com/marketing).*

*The River Thames Alliance is a 73-strong public/private sector partnership to improve planning, facilities and access along the rural river. Its chairman is David Suchet. The Marketing Partnership is being launched as a sub group of the Alliance. For more information about the River Thames Alliance please see [www.riverthamesalliance.com](http://www.riverthamesalliance.com).*

## Scottish National Angling Programme (SNAP)

### SNAP Launches Design Competition for Kids

CHILDREN across Scotland have been challenged to create a name and logo for the nation's first dedicated



angling association for youngsters.

The initiative, launched by the Scottish National Angling Programme (SNAP), will be a website-based club for young anglers and run by young anglers. It will focus on access to affordable fishing, tackle, and clothing, as well as advice on angling and its related skills. It will provide a club for young people coming into and currently involved in the sport.

To get the club up and running, SNAP has launched a competition to encourage kids to come-up with a catchy name and a striking logo.

First prize is a complete fishing kit worth £250, provided by Glasgow Angling Centre, the competition sponsors. Second prize is a complete fishing kit worth £100 and the winners can choose from either a sea fishing, game fishing or coarse fishing kit. The winning entry will, of course, take pride of place on the club website.

Ian Robertson, SNAP programme manager, said: "We want children to be involved in every aspect of the club and the name and logo competition is the best way to start things off. We hope that schools across Scotland will get involved and help us create a really great website.

"Angling is a fantastic pastime for young people. They learn great skills, they have a lot of fun and they can come away with a real sense of achievement. But best of all they learn to love the outdoors and to respect the environment."

Tony Andrews, Chairman of SNAP said: "SNAP has the potential to make a significant difference to all forms of angling in Scotland, and thereby improve quality of life for many people, rejuvenate the sport and increase its economic contribution."

#### **Competition Rules:**

Participants must be 18 years old or under on December 31st 2006. Entries will not be returned. Closing date for all entries first post on Friday 15th December 2006.

The Scottish National Angling Programme will have copyright on the name and logo. The winning entry may be edited to suit the web design. All entries must be

accompanied by a completed official entry form.

The Judges decision is Final. Entries must be received by first post on Friday 15th December.

All entries should be sent to :

Scottish National Angling Programme, West Mains Cottage, Royal Highland Show Ground, Ingliston Edinburgh EH28 8NF

The Scottish National Angling Programme is organised by the Scottish Countryside Alliance Educational Trust in association with: Angling Tourism Development Group, Institute of Fisheries Management (Scotland), Rivers & Fisheries Trusts Scotland, Salmon and Trout Association, Salmon Fishery Boards, Scottish Anglers National Association, Scottish Stillwater Fisheries, Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling, Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers.

#### **SNAP is made up of 4 separate and complementary projects:**

Setting up the Scottish Youth Angling Association 'for young anglers and run by young anglers'. This web-based project will concentrate on access to cheap fishing, tackle, clothing etc, and provide a club for young people coming into the sport.

Induction of a new generation of anglers through development of sustainable provision of coaches training to enable people to learn angling skills in all forms of the sport. This will then lead to induction centres throughout Scotland where qualified instructors can introduce 50,000 newcomers to the sport over the next decade.

Access to certificated courses in angling and related subjects to broaden horizons and provide career opportunities which will lead to Scottish Vocational Qualifications, Institute of Fishery Management and other recognised levels of achievement.

Social inclusion project, working with social services, police and youth centres (eg Arbroath's CAFÉ Project), focussing on reaching disadvantaged people who can benefit from the improved self-confidence and quality of life angling can bring.

*For more information and entry forms contact Ian Robertson on 07733 360 621 or at [ian@scaet.org.uk](mailto:ian@scaet.org.uk)*

# Countryside Recreation Network Events

**Title:** Outdoor Pursuits and Nature Conservation  
**Venue:** Centre in the Park, Sheffield  
**Date:** 24th January 2007  
**Cost:** £125 (£100 sponsoring agencies)

This seminar is intended for organisations with an interest in outdoor pursuits, event planning, nature conservation management, and the sustainable recreational use of sensitive natural environments and protected landscapes. It will explore how potentially opposing interests can be brought together through agreement and positive access management, using illustrated examples of good practice, research material, and discussion on the issues.

## Aims of the Event

- To understand today's demands for outdoor pursuits and future trends
- To hear about research on environmental impacts of outdoor recreation on species and habitats
- To appreciate how different parties can benefit from positive access management agreements, based on first hand experience from case studies
- To outline complexities of access laws and how it affects recreationalists
- Explore how environmental disputes can be resolved by policy, consensus, and on the ground solutions
- To learn techniques for handling difficult meetings/diffusing polarised views

**Title:** Activity Tourism: A Practical Approach  
**Venue:** Stranmillis University College, Belfast  
**Date:** 7th February 2007  
**Cost:** £90

This seminar is aimed at all those interested in activity tourism and in particular activity tourism businesses who wish to grow their business. It is also highly relevant to tourism agencies and local & central government who are involved in the development and promotion of activity tourism in their region.

## Aims of the Event

- To understand the growth areas in Activity Tourism in the UK and Ireland
- To give insight into how small businesses in the UK and Ireland in the Activity Tourism Industry have achieved success. Gain an understanding of the key success factors through the sharing of experiences of those businesses.
- To explore the customer segments present in the activity tourism market and understand how to most effectively market to each of these segments and subsequently meet their expectations.
- To explore how key marketing and business approaches can be best utilised in activity tourism

*For further information on either of these seminars, please email Helen English, CRN Assistant [crn@shu.ac.uk](mailto:crn@shu.ac.uk) or alternatively visit our website: [www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk/events](http://www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk/events)*

## Countryside Recreation Network Publications List

	Price (incl.postage)	Tick
<b>REPORTS</b>		
A Countryside for Health and Wellbeing: The Physical and Mental Health Benefits of Green Exercise (2005)	£20	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Exclusion in Countryside Leisure in the United Kingdom - the role of the countryside in addressing social exclusion (2001)	£10	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS</b>		
Removing Barriers; Creating Opportunities: Social Inclusion in the Countryside (2001)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing the Challenge of Access (2000)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the Honeypot Overflowing? (1998)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making Access for All a Reality (1997)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Today's Thinking for Tomorrow's Countryside (1995)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communities in their Countryside (1994)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS</b>		
Knowing Your Customer. The Joys of Statistics and Visitor Monitoring (2006)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Young People in the Countryside (2006)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteering. Strategies and Practice for Engaging Volunteers in Countryside Recreation and Management (2006)	£15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity Tourism: From Strategy to Delivery (2006)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrating the Economic Value of Countryside Recreation II (2006)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reasonable Access? (2005)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Question of Respect; Conservation and Countryside Recreation (2005)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delivering a Countryside for Health and Wellbeing (2005)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor Safety in the Countryside (2005)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
'And Your Evidence Is?' Evaluation Frameworks (2004)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor Information and Wayfinding Needs (2004)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrating the Economic Value of Countryside Recreation (2004)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible Greenspace (2003)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Country Parks II (2003)(Country Parks I & II can be purchased together for £20)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Country Parks I(2003)	£12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Rights of Way Improvement Plans (2002)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Funding for Social Projects (2002)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opening Up Access In and Around Towns (2002)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visitor Payback Schemes (2002)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Access Forums (2001)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fundraising and the Lottery (2001)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are We Getting There? Delivering Sustainable Transport in the Countryside (2000)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breaking New Ground in Sustainable Tourism (2000)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using Local Distinctiveness as an Economic Development Tool (1999)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Just Walking the Dog (1999)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sponsorship (1998)	£8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making Ends Meet (1997)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>
GIS & Countryside Management - Theory and Application (1997)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to Water - Sharing Access on Reservoirs and Rivers (1997)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do Visitor Surveys Count? - Making use of Surveys of Countryside Recreation (1996)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consensus in the Countryside I - Reaching Shared agreement in policy, planning and management (1996)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Brush with the Land - Art in the Countryside II (1996)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>
A Brush with the Land - Art in the Countryside I (1995)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing Safe? Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside (1995)	£6	<input type="checkbox"/>

Title \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Surname \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

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For more information, please contact: Helen English, CRN, Sheffield Hallam University, Unit 10, Sheffield Science Park, Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 2LX.

Email: [crn@shu.ac.uk](mailto:crn@shu.ac.uk) or order publications online from our website [www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk](http://www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk)

Cheques should be made payable to: Sheffield Hallam University