

Action Plan 2019 – 2022

For the Outdoor Recreation Network



Outdoor Recreation Network

BACKGROUND

The Outdoor Recreation Network (ORN) is an unincorporated network of public agencies and non-governmental organisations across the United Kingdom (UK) and Republic of Ireland (RoI). ORN grew out of the Countryside Recreation Network (CRN) that was established in 1968. Benefiting from a long history of partnership, ORN member organisations are involved in outdoor recreation and related fields such as the natural environment, outdoor activities, tourism and health.

INTRODUCTION

This strategic document sets out the overarching framework for the activities of ORN for the period April 2019 – March 2022. It is an ambitious plan which has been developed by ORN's Executive Committee in consultation with its members. In the interests of keeping its work fresh and relevant, the time was right for ORN to collaboratively create a new and focused vision, mission, and strategy for its development over the next three years.

VISION

“Encourage more people to enjoy and engage with the outdoors.”

MISSION

“Collaborate with members to share research, facilitate information exchange, and champion sustainable use and good practice.”

PROCESS

This Action Plan will take ORN up to 2022 and was developed through consultation with ORN members and the Executive Committee. Through “revisioning” meetings and an online survey, members contributed ideas on the future direction of ORN. During this process there were many proposed themes put forward, and these fell under eight categories, as listed in the table below.

THEMES

Themes were then prioritised to highlight those that should be addressed first and deemed to be the best way to implement ORN’s vision and mission. These primary themes, along with accompanying key actions, will ensure there is focus to the work of ORN over the lifespan of this Action Plan. Over the next three years ORN will deliver 6 seminars and 3 conference, with the Executive Committee determining the theme of each selected from the primary themes and key actions listed below. Additional actions will be taken as ORN moves toward the delivery of secondary themes.

PRIMARY THEMES AND ACTIONS	
Theme	Research and Knowledge Sharing (including monitoring and evaluation)
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Scope out an Apprenticeship Programme in Recreation Management – Pilot and trial a Young Leaders Forum (for mentoring of early career staff in member organisations) – Explore potential of undertaking collaborative research between member organisations on “Future motivations and trends in outdoor recreation”
Theme	Environment Sustainability
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Collate and share good practice on waste management in the outdoors (including dog waste, single-use plastics, and dry toilet technology) – Deliver a seminar/conference focussed on sharing good practice case studies on managing increased visitor and recreation pressure – Explore the opportunity to run a seminar on “How to encourage environmentally responsible behaviour?” (with the inclusion of the Countryside Code, Leave No Trace campaign, and Scottish Access Code)
Theme	Health and Wellbeing
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Collate/promote research on outdoor recreation benefits (e.g. BOSS project) – Deliver a seminar/conference on linking evidence to practice by implementing models/interventions that bring about behavioural change – Facilitate information exchange on the evolving language of health and the outdoors: e.g. Our Natural Health Service, social prescribing, green prescription, self-referrers etc.
Theme	Engaging Children and Young People in the Natural Environment
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consider the best ways to gauge views of children/young people given the logistical/ethical challenges of doing research with this stakeholder group – Deliver a seminar/conference on effective mechanisms in engaging children and young people with the natural environment (cycling, volunteering, Junior Parkrun, natural play, outdoor learning, Duke of Edinburgh Award etc)
Theme	Resource Management (including funding and income generation)
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Host a conference/seminar on “What is the next “big thing” in outdoor recreation?” exploring future user/consumer trends and forecasting – Host a conference/seminar on “Funding outdoor recreation into the future: Who pays?” exploring the idea of people investing in their outdoor recreation while removing economic barriers for those economically disadvantaged.

SECONDARY THEMES

Marketing, Promotion, and Engagement

Digital Development

Reducing Barriers to the Outdoors

Research and Knowledge Sharing (including monitoring and evaluation)

ORN has always been committed to exchanging and sharing information to the development of good policy and practice in outdoor recreation, across the UK and RoI. This has largely focused on organising seminars and conferences; regular e-zines with event information and news items on new research and monitoring and evaluation tools etc; published journals, and; a library of conference proceedings, presentations and reports that date back to 1974. While these components will remain and evolve as part of how ORN shares research and knowledge, the actions listed below will drive innovation in ORN's capacity to share research and facilitate information exchange:

- Scope out an Apprenticeship Programme Develop in Recreation Management
- Pilot and trial a Young Leaders Forum (for mentoring of early career staff in member organisations)
- Explore the potential of undertaking a collaborative research project between member organisations on “Future motivations and trends in outdoor recreation”

Environment Sustainability

ORN is passionate about championing the sustainable use of the outdoors and aspire for people to value the natural environment and behave responsibly towards it. By supporting and promoting good practice on protecting and sustainably managing the assets within our natural environment this will ensure that people can enjoy the outdoors for the many health, social, and economic benefits that it offers. ORN are cognisant, however, of the pressures that increased levels of participation in outdoor recreation can have on the natural environment, such car travel, waste management issues, unsettling natural habitats, and surface erosion. To champion sustainable use, the following actions will be undertaken:

- Collate and share good practice on waste management in the outdoor (including dog waste, single-use plastics, and dry toilet technology)
- Deliver a seminar/conference focussed on sharing good practice case studies on managing increased visitor and recreation pressure
- Explore the opportunity to run a seminar on “How to encourage environmentally responsible behaviour?” with the inclusion of Countryside Code, Leave No Trace campaign, and Scottish Access Code)

Health and Wellbeing

Robust evidence on the benefit of the outdoors to people's health and wellbeing has grown substantially over recent years. As a result, the importance of physical activity in the natural environment has grown in prominence within government policies focused on improving health, including the wider factors and causes of ill health. However, more work is needed to collate research

and effectively communicate the positive outcomes of physical activity and being in nature, including the many physical health benefits as well as the significant improvements to mental health and well-being. Outdoor recreation has a significant contribution to make in prevention and early intervention, addressing deprivation and health inequality, reducing sedentary lifestyles, and responding to the challenges of aging societies. To this end, ORN over the lifespan of this Action Plan will deliver the key actions listed below:

- Collate and promote research on the benefits of outdoor recreation (e.g. BOSS project)
- Deliver a seminar/conference on linking evidence to practice through implementing good practice models/interventions that bring about behavioural change
- Facilitate information exchange on the evolving language of health and the outdoors: e.g. Our Natural Health Service, social prescribing, green prescription, self-referrers etc.

Engaging with Children and Young People

With a reduction in outdoor time there are significant negative impacts on the physical, mental, and social development and well-being of children and young people. While sedentary behaviour is connected to screen time, apps and gamification have been used to great effect to encourage engagement with the natural environment (e.g. Pokemon Go). With younger generations “growing up online”, technology (e.g. apps, fitness and activity trackers) and the data that it captures will play a huge role in shaping how they will engage with the outdoors going into the future. Deprivation barriers also need addressed so that all children and young people have the same opportunity to engage and enjoy the outdoors. To create more effective policy and practice, the views of children and young people need to be effectively gauged. To encourage greater engagement the following key actions will be undertaken:

- Consider the best ways to gauge the views of children and young people given the logistical and ethical challenges of conducting research with this stakeholder group
- Deliver a seminar/conference on effective mechanisms for engaging children and young people with the natural environment (cycling, volunteering, Junior Parkrun, natural play, outdoor learning, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Guides, Scouts etc)

Resource Management (funding and income generation)

With increasing visitor numbers *to* and expectations *of* the natural environment (which requires development, maintenance, management and promotion), the dilemma of who will fund outdoor recreation into the future will require solutions from a wide range of stakeholders. Some pertinent questions are: how can outdoor recreation be positioned more centrally within policy to ensure it receives adequate funding and investment, given the health, social, and economic benefits? What relationship should asset holders (government departments and agencies, and non-governmental organisations) and landowners (who bear the costs of recreation but without remuneration) have with outdoor recreation industries who may have a better understanding of the user/consumer and forecasting trends? What role can social enterprise play and can people/employers be expected to pay for outdoor recreation facilities given the health and well-being benefits? How can emerging payment technologies enable people to more easily invest in the upkeep of natural environment assets they enjoy, and, how to ensure that economic barriers do not prevent those on lower incomes

from engaging with outdoor recreation? To address the theme of resource management, ORN will deliver on the following key actions:

- Host a conference/seminar on “What is the next “big thing” in outdoor recreation?” exploring future user/consumer trends and forecasting
- Host a conference/seminar on “Funding outdoor recreation into the future: Who pays?” exploring the idea of people investing in their outdoor recreation while removing economic barriers for those economically disadvantaged.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

To put this plan into action between 2019 – 2022 and deliver on the priority themes and key actions, ORN will rely on strong partnership between its Members and Executive committee, and facilitation from the Secretariat. The successful execution of this Action Plan will grow the size and influence of ORN, and more crucially, achieve its vision to “encourage more people to enjoy and engage with the outdoors”.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The measures of success put forward by ORN’s Executive Committee do not directly relate to the themes and key actions presented above. They are, however, outlined in the “New Action Plan Measures of Success” document and relate more broadly to the growth of ORN and its influence.



Web: www.outdoorrecreation.org.uk

Email: enquiries@outdoorrecreation.org.uk

Tel: 028 9030 3930



@ORN_official



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