

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



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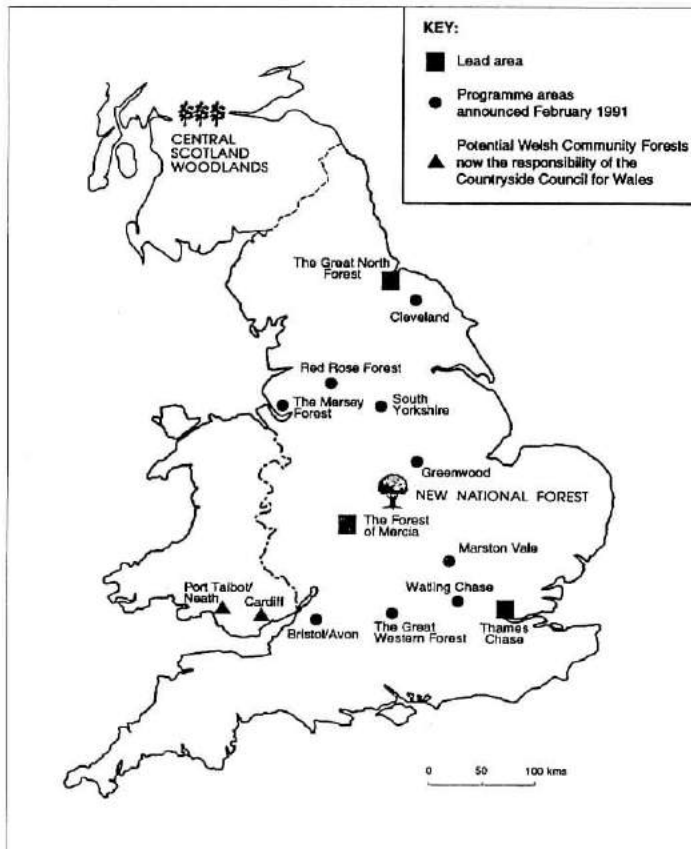
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Sport and Recreation in Community Forests and the National Forest

The Community Forests being planted throughout the country provide a natural medium for active sport and recreation of all kinds. The forests are to be specifically designed, developed and managed with recreation and leisure as a key element, set in a variety of landscapes—woodland, farmland, meadows and water features. The schemes, established under the 1989 Countryside Commission and Forestry Commission's national programme to create Community Forests, are shown opposite.

The development of Forestry Commission woodlands for recreational activity in recent years has amply demonstrated the ease with which varying, perhaps conflicting, sports and active recreation can be absorbed. This has traditionally been in the remoter areas of the country, however. Community Forests provide the opportunity for those living in urban and suburban areas to have ready access to a varied and attractive landscape,

sensitively designed with the needs of users a prominent consideration. This edition of CRN News has three major articles illustrating sport and recreation's place in Community Forest initiatives. Setting the scene is the Sports Council's perspective—the sponsor of two Community Forest Sport and Recreation Officers—by Audrey Brown. She outlines the rationale behind the role of sport and recreation and sets the context for the



Britain's New Forests

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Countryside Access Research and Training

Scottish Tourist Board: Questionnaire Surveys

Recreation in the South Wales Valleys

➤ *Exchanging and Spreading Information to develop best Policy and Practice in Countryside Recreation*

➤ Secretariat provided by:
Department of City & Regional Planning,
University of Wales College of Cardiff,
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following articles: the importance of utilising local attributes as a framework for developing the forest and the central role of partnership between a variety of agents in implementing the concept.

The Great North Forest is among the first to have its Forest Plan approved by the Secretary of State. Central to the promotion and development of sport and recreation is the establishment of a network of 'gateway' sites designed to "focus access to the countryside and act as centres for the provision of more intensive recreation facilities". Similarly, capitalising upon local enthusiasm, the establishment of the Great North Forest Trail, illustrates the degree of flexibility open to individual Forest teams.

Arguably central to success is the development of partnerships between interested parties—national, regional and local. This is the theme explored by the sport and Recreation Officer for the Red Rose and Mersey Forests, Keith Gerrard, who advocates gathering together the disparate opinion, needs and interests in order to exploit "identifiable need and site opportunity", as fundamental to making the most of the potential of the Community Forest idea.



COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION NETWORK

CRN is a UK-wide network of the agencies concerned with countryside and related recreation matters—exchanging and spreading information to develop best policy and practice in

A Plethora of Protection

At the latest count, there are some 28 ways of identifying parts of our countryside or adjoining seas for special measures of conservation of landscape or wildlife. We cannot accurately call them "designations" because some—like heritage coasts—specifically exclude a formal designation process. Nor can we correctly call them "protected areas" because some—like Countryside Stewardship—specifically exclude the drawing of lines on maps. A more accurate description, but a mouthful, would be instruments for the protection of special places.

The readership of *Network News* will be familiar with many of them—National Parks, National Nature Reserves or SSSIs for example. They may not be quite so sure what a Biosphere Reserve is, and how it differs from a Biogenetic Reserve; some may wonder how a Special Area for Conservation differs from a Special Protection Area—or indeed from an Area of Special Protection (no, honestly!).

How has such a situation arisen? How can it be that a single area could be a Ramsar site, an SSSI, a NNR, within a Heritage Coast, in a National Park (oh, and an SPA and maybe more besides)? Well, this is because our instruments of protection have grown like Topsy over the years, responding to different requirements. First, there are those like national parks and AONBs on the one hand, and NNRs and SSSIs on the other, that sprang from the division in conservation arrangements created by the post-war and later legislation. The separation between the countries of the UK complicated matters, as different countries have developed their own conservation arrangements. Then there are those instruments that came about through planning legislation (green belts, for example). Next, those that were

countryside recreation. Membership is drawn from the national statutory organisations, the local authority associations and the research councils. The Network served extends to include the clients and customers of the member agencies. The Network aims to assist the working of the agencies concerned with countryside and related recreation research by:

1. identifying and helping to meet the needs of CRN members for advice, information and research;
2. promoting co-operation between member agencies in formulating and executing research on countryside and related recreation issues;
3. encouraging and assisting the dissemination of the results of countryside research and best practice amongst the agencies and clients of the agencies.

CRN News is produced three times a year and welcomes submissions of articles and letters from all its readers. The deadline for items for the February 1994 edition is 7 January. The Newsletter, along with an annual Research Directory detailing research completed by CRN member agencies, is available free. If you would like to be on the mailing list, please contact:

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CRN Manager
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UWCC
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CF1 3YN

Tel./Fax: 0222 - 874970

The Sponsors have contracted the Dept. of City & Regional Planning, University of Wales College of Cardiff to provide the CRN Secretariat.

"invented" by the conservation agencies, like the Countryside Commission's Heritage Coasts, or CCW's Tir Cymen. Then there are the contributions which came from the agricultural sector, like ESA's. And finally those that are made under international agreements, in Brussels, in the Council of Europe or through global treaties or programmes (Ramsar, World Heritage and Biosphere Reserves). Nor is the process complete. The Scots have just created National Heritage Areas, Marine Consultation Areas have been proposed for England and Wales, and the Habitats Directive (certainly) and Biodiversity Convention (possibly) may lead to new sites being designated in Britain.

Does it matter? There is a school of thought that feels that the more defences there are in the countryside against the forces of destruction, the better. A rather more sophisticated view is that each measure serves a particular purpose and thus fills a niche. But against that it can be argued that the sheer complexity of instruments create confusion (pity the poor farmer getting to grips with the alphabet soup), and that the time for some rationalisation is overdue. Certainly, no-one, approaching this afresh, would possibly dream up such a complicated arrangement to conserve the beauty of our landscapes and the wealth of our fauna and flora.

So congratulations to the CCW for raising the question in Threshold 21, and asking whether the

Landowner Care in the Countryside

Nowadays nine out of ten people live in towns and cities, and because it is important for them to be able to 'escape' to the country, there is much emphasis on countryside recreation. Many groups have evolved to promote access to the countryside, and government organisations such as the Countryside Commission actively encourage public enjoyment of the land. The Countryside Commission now has a scheme called the Countryside Stewardship Scheme which pays landowners to create new open access areas or footpaths across their land, recently complemented by the Countryside Stewardship Education Access Initiative, targeted at schools and other education groups to raise awareness of rights and responsibilities when using the countryside.

Working closely with landowners

current system of protective instruments should not be simplified. But, before we try to work out a new arrangement better suited to our current needs, there are two very important caveats.

The most vocal critics of the present system of protection have been those who have most to gain from it being weakened. But any move to simplify and integrate the present system must have as its aim the *strengthening* of the overall effectiveness of protective measures.

Also, the scope for making changes is, in reality, limited. There has been a major investment of time and effort in the existing system which should not be lightly thrown aside. Furthermore, the UK is party to European and global agreements which—rightly—oblige us to meet international standards in designating certain areas.

So, this is not a plea for a radical "tear it all up and start again" approach, but for a bit of fresh thinking about the role of such instruments in these days when we want all land management to be based on sustainable principles, and to provoke a debate about how our over-complicated system might be a little simplified and better integrated, and made considerably more effective—and a great deal easier to understand.

Professor Adrian Phillips

*Environment and Countryside Planning Unit
University of Wales College of Cardiff*

and promoting this scheme has made me aware of some of the problems that face landowners who already have footpaths across their land and wish to provide new access. Sheep have been killed by dogs; a landowner was prosecuted because a gate was left open, allowing stock onto a road; two grown lambs were found shot dead, and on the same farm a filly died of its injuries after running into a gate as a result of the same shooting incident. Litter is another problem and walking part of the Shropshire Way last weekend I followed a trail of milk cartons, beer cans and chocolate wrappers. Another landowner found a couple picnicking on the patio in front of the farm house who were very put out when he asked them to leave! Although the vast majority of visitors use the countryside responsibly, as access to the countryside increases it is inevitable that these problems will also increase, and they may damage the relationship between the visitors and

landowners and spoil the enjoyment of others.

The 1993 Countryside Recreation Conference at the end of September was entitled "Customer Care in the Countryside". The emphasis is wholly on the visitor with no mention of the problems they may bring with them. The visitor/landowner relationship is inseparable and to be beneficial to both depends on the goodwill of both. The "new-age recreationalists" cannot afford to ignore this fact. So please, all you individuals, voluntary organisations, networks and government bodies, if you are going to promote ever greater access to the countryside, you should also be spending a greater proportion of your resources on educating the visitors about the landowners who manage the land in the first place.

Anne Sansom

*Conservation Assistant
National Rivers Authority
Northumbria and Yorkshire Region*

Caring for Britain's Waterways

The 1993 Countryside Recreation Conference was on the theme of Customer Care in the Countryside. This article looks at the research implications of setting up a customer care programme, drawing on British Waterways' experience in relation to recreation on inland waterways.

In recent years, customer care and quality management have become important issues for both the manufacturing and service sectors. As customers have become more knowledgeable, their expectations regarding products and services have increased. Managers now recognise that improved quality and customer service give organisations a competitive edge in attracting and retaining customers. For public sector recreation providers, a further impetus towards striving for quality has been the introduction of the Citizen's Charter and performance measurement. Over the past couple of years, British Waterways has been addressing these issues, with a view to developing a quality management programme for all leisure users, including non-paying visitors, such as towpath walkers and sightseers, as well as paying customers, such as boaters and anglers.

The results of the programme, and British Waterways' commitment to customer service, are reflected in the booklet *Caring for Britain's Waterways*, which was published this Summer. The quality management programme has considerable implications for research, related to the design of the programme itself, as well as the need to assess customer preferences and requirements, and to monitor performance.

Caring for Britain's Waterways sets out what British Waterways does and incorporates commitments to the country's canals and rivers and the people who use them. A wide consultation process took place for this. Comments obtained were analysed systematically to ensure that the views of users and other interested parties were incorporated as far as possible. In addition, in order to widen consultation, a series of focus groups were held to obtain the views of anglers and different types of informal visitors. This research resulted in substantial alterations to the original commitment, which was in the form of a catch-all 'Customer Charter'. It became obvious during the research that many informal visitors were unsure as to what British Waterways' role is with regard the management of waterways. The *Caring for Britain's Waterways* document reflects this by specifying general commitments, which are spelt out in more detail through supporting measures. These include local Waterway Standards, which specify the standards to which waterways and their environs will be maintained, taking account of their use and prospects of use. Other supporting documents include codes for waterway users, an environmental policy, a leisure and tourism strategy and structural maintenance standards. For the first time, the public will have access to all these



hitherto closed documents.

Also, you will note that neither the word "customer" or "charter" appears in the title of the booklet. This reflects a degree of cynicism which was detected in peoples' responses during the focus group sessions!

The need to relate the Waterway Standards to usage generates its own research needs, particularly in the context of open-access recreation, where obtaining accurate figures for visitor numbers is notoriously difficult. Over the past few years, British Waterways has developed methods to overcome these difficulties, using mathematical modelling to estimate boat traffic levels, and mechanical pedestrian counters to assess towpath usage at a local level.

Customer research is a key component of any system of quality management, both for finding out what customers want and for measuring how well organisations perform in meeting customer expectations. It forms an important element in monitoring the effectiveness of quality management systems. British Waterways has instituted a programme for undertaking this research systematically for the various groups of waterway visitors.

For example, in late 1991 and 1992, postal surveys of boat owners were carried out to measure British Waterways' performance in terms of upkeep and maintenance of the waterways and in terms of staff attitudes. This research also monitors how issues of concern to boat owners change over time, which enables us to take action to remedy the situation before major problems arise. It also feeds back into the actual standards to which we maintain the waterways, which need to reflect the views of users.

The results of the 1992 boat owners survey show that over three-quarters (79%) of boat owners thought the overall value for money provided by British Waterways' canals and rivers was satisfactory or better, with the main specific areas of concern being related to depth of water and the presence of rubbish, litter and weed. In general the condition of waterways was considered to be improving, with 49% of boat owners stating upkeep had improved over the past two years, compared with only 6% who thought things had got worse.

Staff attitudes were rated highly in terms of courtesy, helpfulness and efficiency. However, our response to complaints was viewed less favourably. In general, responses were often found to be polite and sympathetic, but the main problem was that complaints were not remedied. Part of the difficulty in this relates to the fact that complaints are often made to staff on the canal bank, and there has been no formal process to ensure that complaints are channelled through to waterway management. As a result of this we have introduced a 'comment card' system as part of the *Caring for Britain's Waterways* commitments, which gives visitors the opportunity to record their comments and ensures a response from management.

Similar research has been carried out in 1992 into the views of other main waterway user groups—anglers and informal visitors—and these survey results will form the basis of future monitoring of customer satisfaction.

In addition to these formal research measures, feedback from users will also arise through the mandatory consultation procedures set out in *Caring for Britain's Waterways* at local, regional and national levels.

As well as measuring how we are perceived to be performing by users, there is a need to ensure that actual performance meets the commitments we have set out through *Caring for Britain's Waterways*. Monitoring systems are being set up to provide information to local managers as to how far they are meeting the standards they have set themselves. Shortfalls can be identified and fed back into the business plan process as priorities for work to be carried out. This will also enable us to provide measures of waterway and towpath availability and other key indicators of performance, which show how effective we are in managing the waterway system.

Glenn Millar
Research Manager
British Waterways

Sport & Recreation in the Natural Environment: A GIS

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Sports Council for Wales (SCW) are now collaborating on the production of a sport and recreation Geographical Information System (GIS) database in Wales. This is an innovative project that has grown out of the SCW's natural facilities database.

In 1991 the SCW commissioned the creation of a natural facilities database relating to sport and recreation sites in Wales. In all, 37 land, water and air based activities were recorded. The first data gathering phase of the project necessitated extensive contact with governing bodies for a range of sports, with associations and clubs and with local authorities. The resultant database, which was the first of its kind in Britain, contained over 2000 records and was summarised in SCW's Sports Study No. 4 **Sport and Recreation in the Natural Environment (1991)**. Subsequently, the Welsh Office also published a map at the 1:500,000 scale detailing the location of the activities included in the database.

Whilst the database is of intrinsic value charting as it does the location and nature of numerous sport and recreation sites and activities throughout Wales, its full potential for strategic planning and policy formulation clearly necessitated the addition of further land-use information. The second phase of the project involved a spatial matching of the sport and recreation sites with a range of protected areas—these included National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts, SSSIs, NNRs, LNRs and registered tracts of common land. A summary of the results of this exercise was published by SCW under the title: **Sport, Recreation and Protected Areas in Wales (1992)**.

Recognising the strong and sensitive relationship between sporting activities and the various protected areas the SCW and the CCW collaborated to examine more detailed case studies of particular sites and activities. The aim of this study is to examine examples of good practice in the integration of sport and conservation interests. This third phase of the project is now well underway.

The fourth phase is again a product of collaboration between the SCW and the CCW and involves transferring the database onto a GIS. This phase is also now nearing completion. All sites had been given grid references, but more work has been needed to digitise linear and polygonal features such as cycle routes, footpaths and areas for orienteering. The coverage files are suitable for viewing through on Windows-based ARC/View System which can be run on a PC. Transferring this database on to a GIS system gives enormous added value to the scope for strategic planning and policy formulation. The GIS system allows any number of selected parameters to be viewed simultaneously thus allowing complex relationships to be analysed instantly. For example, a map showing canoeing sites on SSSIs within the District of Ceredigion could be produced within minutes.

Like all databases, it will be necessary to constantly update and improve the quality of the data. The consultants undertaking this project on behalf of the SCW and the CCW are the Rural Surveys Research Unit at Aberystwyth. They are currently piloting a method whereby a two-way exchange of information can be established on a long term basis with local authorities, governing bodies and various sporting associations. This will generate updated information for the RSRU in exchange for providing hard copies of information contained in the database for various organisations.

This system could be the start of a truly dynamic national register of sport and recreation in the natural environment and be of considerable value to all those concerned with improving the management of the rural recreational resource.

Rob Owen
Senior Recreation Policy Officer
Countryside Council for Wales

Agencies Unite in Advisory Guidelines for Strategic Planning

We must no longer think that economic development is an overriding necessity and environmental protection a luxury, but must accept that the two are inextricably linked.

That is the advice given in new guidelines—*Conservation Issues in Strategic Plans*—recently published by three environmental agencies: the Countryside Commission, English Heritage and English Nature.

Designed to show how the globally vital concept of sustainable development might be applied in a practical way within strategic planning for the benefit of our natural heritage, it marks the first occasion that the three organisations have joined forces to produce a document of this kind. And more advice on conservation and sustainability is likely to follow.

The guidelines give practical suggestions on a wide variety of planning matters, ranging from waste disposal to water; from transport to tourism, and from urban economy to energy. Positive sustainable and environmentally-led development policies can be applied to regional planning and county-wide structure plans, says the 6-page document. But they must recognise the importance of the rural economy including agriculture, together with conservation of landscapes, wildlife, archaeological and historical features.

A foreboding list of indicators of environmental change, nationally and internationally, emphasise the urgent need for a reassessment of our relationship with the natural and man-made environment.

But planning for sustainable development means a major change in emphasis, away from a traditional development-

led approach, say the three agencies.

While recognising that there cannot be an instant move to sustainable development policies and plans, they seek to build on existing good practice, led by environmental issues rather than straightforward development needs.

The guidelines suggest a seven-step approach: a state of the environment report; examining environmental capacity/thresholds; identifying social and economic needs; establishing goals and objectives; assessing policies and policy options; setting targets and programmes and finally monitoring.

The accepted principles of sustainable development require that there is effective public involvement in the process too—“not a statutory ‘hoop’ to go through, but as a positive opportunity to give communities a sense of ownership in tackling environmental problems”.

The need for more integration in strategic planning is also stressed. “Even though planners are used to dealing with a multitude of different environmental matters, the very complexity of conservation has tended to lead them to a sectoral approach to policies and proposals”, says the document. “Most strategic plans have traditionally tended to deal with environmental matters separately from development issues, with environmental policies in separate parts of the plan. This approach has become less and less tenable”.

The agencies are also pressing for a comprehensive integration of environmental and conservation interests.

Conservation Issues in Strategic Plans (CCP 420) is available, price £6.00 from Countryside Commission Postal Sales, PO Box 124, Walgrave, Northamptonshire NN6 9TL

Local Education Authority Outdoor Centres

The Sports Council has recently completed the fieldwork for a project concerned with LEA provision of outdoor centres for sport and active recreation.

The overall aim of the study is to identify changes which have taken place in residential and non-residential outdoor centres used by English LEAs, in the light of recent education reforms and continued financial pressures on local authorities. The project will provide a comprehensive assessment of changes in centre provision and management of these changes.

Whilst LEA outdoor centres meet primarily the needs of schools, community users are now evident, and the wider training role of centres is significant, particularly in relation to the implementation of the new National Curriculum developments and continuing in-service training and provision for national governing body awards. The study will assist in developing Sports Council policies in support of outdoor active recreation and explore the possible role of the Sports Council and other bodies in relation to provision for outdoor activities and the future operation of centres.

All LEAs in England and Wales were invited to take part in a postal survey and asked to provide information about the number of centres, levels and programmes of use, funding, staffing and future policies. A response rate of 65% was achieved. Further in-depth interviews will also take place with a number of key organisations such as the Central Council for Physical Recreation, the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education and the National Association of Outdoor Education. It is anticipated that a report of the research findings will be available before the end of the year. Further information can be obtained from the Sports Council Research Unit on 071 837 2658.

Marion Wheeler

Research Officer, Sports Council Research Unit

Access to National Nature Reserves in Wales

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) has adopted a very positive approach to the question of public access to some of the most environmentally sensitive sites in Wales.

CCW is charged with the responsibility to acquire and manage National Nature Reserves (NNR) as part of a portfolio throughout Britain. At the present time there are 49 NNR in Wales, all of them renotified as SSSIs, a process undertaken under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The management of all NNR is directed, planned and organised through a management planning process which includes a formal review every five years.

All management plans for NNR address the issues of access and public rights of way. Indeed, the annual work programme for each NNR will include priority prescriptions for the care and maintenance of public rights of way and permissive paths which cross the NNR. So far 29 management plans have been completed, two of which incorporate 'interpretation plans' which specifically address the important aspects of recreation, interpretation and education on the NNR.

On NNR within its direct control, the CCW will:

- keep open all public rights of way shown on the definitive map;
- undertake regular inspections to determine the state of repair and condition of public rights of way;
- subject to the wishes of the owner and so far as is possible (consistent with the primary conservation purpose of these reserves) promote public access and enjoyment of public rights of way in NNR. As far as is practical, to set and adopt the highest standards of practice for the proper care, maintenance and improvement (including signing, waymarking, surfacing, bridging, fencing, etc) of a network of public rights of way on NNR linking to it (where possible) a network of permissive paths and to make it available for demonstration purposes.

On NNR beyond its direct control, CCW will

- encourage the owners and managers to adopt similar standards in the management of access in those NNR;
- continue to deploy resources (advice, grants or labour as appropriate) to assist its partners to achieve similar objectives.

All known public rights of way within NNR in Wales are open and accessible at the present time. This extends to about 100 km of public rights of way. There are a further 60 km or so of 'permissive paths' (trails, boardwalks, etc) which facilitate greater public access and enjoyment of NNR and their surroundings.

Many NNR are supported by services to fulfil access and enjoyment opportunities. These include reception facilities, car parking, interpretative displays, leaflets and waymarking. It is proposed that these services will be extended to other NNR in due course.

In setting these high standards for safeguarding and enhancing public access opportunity the Council hope to encourage all other landowners and land managers to follow suit. Over the past year, major public and private landowning interests in Wales have pledged support for the Council's public rights of way campaign and confirmed that rights of way on their land are to be to the best of their knowledge fully open and available for the public to use.

Gareth Roberts

*Head of Recreation & Community Action
Countryside Council for Wales*

'Ways and Means'

A Conference on Access to the Northern Ireland Countryside

11-12th November 1993

Slieve Donard Hotel
Newcastle, Co. Down, N.
Ireland

Availability of access is fundamental to the enjoyment of our countryside. Whilst the Province has no great tradition of rights-of-way and bridleways as exist in England, we do have a healthy provision of countryside recreation in our Forest Parks, Country Parks, National Trust properties and through access to our coast.

However, informal access to a wider countryside is more problematical given issues such as privacy, liability and maintenance. Demands for the provision of more access routes is coming from both local communities and tourists alike. This conference will seek to address some of the issues raised when considering access for countryside recreation and will consider how such access can be developed, maintained and ultimately developed.

The conference will consist of formal sessions ("access overview", "issues and opportunities", "ways and means" and "developing access markets and products") and more informal workshops (on good practice, marketing access, strategic planning and legal issues).

Further details and a booking form are available from:

Ross Millar
Countryside and Wildlife
Environment Service
Dept. of the Environment for
Northern Ireland
Calvert House

Standardised Questions for Tourism Surveys

The Research Section of the Scottish Tourist Board (STB) has recently published *Standardised Questions for Tourism Surveys*, a document aimed at tourism research practitioners. It is designed to help them in their choice of methodologies, aiding them in the detailed design of tourism market research questionnaires.

With the proliferation of tourism research work being undertaken by a variety of organisations in Scotland in recent years, it has become of increasing concern to the STB that a common format be adopted in the phraseology of the most frequently asked questions in these surveys. Consequently, this manual contains a series of the most commonly asked questions used in different situations within a tourism and leisure context. These questions have been tried and tested successfully over a number of

years in previous survey work.

It is hoped that the questions contained in this manual will be used by a wide range of organisations when they are undertaking tourism research. Such a practice will result in a number of benefits, including:

- the possibility of making comparisons between surveys undertaken in different areas, thereby helping to add to the overall database of information on the tourism and recreation industries;
- a reduction in the problem of practitioners "re-inventing the wheel" each time they wish to explore a particular issue—question phrasings can be taken from the manual in the knowledge that they have been used successfully before;
- savings to the researchers in terms of both costs and time.

Although produced primarily for tourism research practitioners based in Scotland, the contents of the manual are such that they are relevant to a much wider audience, irrespective of geographical boundaries.

Beginning with a short description of the principles and practice of market research and the issues which should be explored when deciding on the methodology, the real meat of the manual focuses on five different aspects of tourism research (see Table 1). Each of the five sections includes a self-contained series of the most commonly-asked questions used in these situations. Where appropriate, account is taken of the variations in wording required for different methodologies eg. self-completion questions vis-a-vis home interviews etc.

Table 1: Standardised Questions for Tourism Surveys - Contents

Section A: Visitor Surveys of a Geographical Area

Section B: Visitor Surveys at Tourist Information Centres and Visitor Attractions

Section C: Visitor Surveys at one-off Events and Festivals

Section D: Marketing Activities—Evaluation of Public Holiday Exhibitions

Section E: Marketing Activities—Evaluation of Brochures and Publications

This 60-page manual is available at a cost of £15.00 (inclusive of Postage and Packing) from the Scottish Tourist Board. Please send cheques made payable to the "Scottish Tourist Board" to the Finance Department at STB, 23 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH4 3EU.

Further information is available from Jim Eccleston. Tel: 031-332 2433 Fax: 031-343 2023

Jim Eccleston

Assistant Research Manager

Scottish Tourist Board

Paintball Games in Woodlands

English Nature has recently published guide to accommodating the popular, but potentially damaging, activity of paintball games. However, with careful site selection and the responsible management of gaming, the activity can readily and innocuously be another exciting and popular element in the growing sphere of active recreation in the countryside.

The Guide sets out guidelines for the two prerequisites for the successful integration of paintball game activities with the natural environment—the selection and management of suitable sites. Thus the following elements

could usefully be examined:

- areas of importance for wildlife within and adjoining the site;
- man-made features within the site;
- ways of managing activity to minimise impacts on wildlife;
- incorporating the above elements in planning site layout.

The guide is available free from

English Nature
Northminster House
Peterborough
PE1 1UA

Sport and Recreation in the Community Forests and the National Forest

The Sports Council Perspective

The Sports Council believes that everyone should have access to a range of countryside activities within a reasonable distance of home, and be able to participate at the level they wish, whether beginner, those wishing to improve existing skills and confidence in the countryside or "experts" at the pinnacle of their sport. With the increasing popularity of countryside recreation as a result of increased leisure time, increased mobility and interest in healthy lifestyles, the need to cater for the demand for new activities, or to provide additional facilities for popular activities, particularly for those who cannot gain access to the wider countryside on a regular basis, is becoming ever more important. By their very nature and location, Community Forests and the National Forest can play a valuable role in offering such opportunities to a large number of people, many of whom may previously have had little contact with countryside activities, but also to those who already participate in countryside sport but wish to increase their level of activity or seek new areas for training and competition.

The location of the forests around the fringes of towns and cities means that they often encompass large areas of derelict or degraded land, farmland for which some owners are seeking new uses and land owned by large companies or by private landowners, all of which offer opportunities for the siting of sports facilities on both a permanent and a temporary basis.

New options for the use of derelict sites includes not only environmental improvements such as landscaping but also locations for sports facilities through matching the physical characteristics of such sites to the requirements of particular sports. For example, the floor of a crater of a disused mineral site may be suitable for a motorsports circuit or a shooting range and the steep sides will help to buffer the noise from the activity, particularly if there is also extensive tree planting around the sides. An example of this is at South Poplars in the Forest of Mercia, Staffordshire, where part of the landfill site has been restored and is now used for motorsports, shooting and water sports.



Farm diversification is another new option for provision. Farmers looking for new enterprises on their land can provide temporary sites for a range of sports, including traditional ones such as shooting and riding and new activities such as quad bike and motocross tracks, mountain bike courses and angling pools. Greater investment into permanent facilities requires strong commitment from the landowner and good business planning. Thus, some farmers provide facilities for golf, air sports and tourist accommodation or conversion of redundant farm buildings into facilities such as bowling rinks or gymnasia. Examples of farm diversification in the forests include

a windsurfing lake and another with a permissive bridle path, a mountain bike course and an archery field. Farmers need not go to the extent providing high investment facilities but can also help through allowing public access via permissive foot and bridle paths under the various grant schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, Community Woodland Supplement of the Woodland Grant Scheme and the MAFF Farm Woodland Scheme.

The inclusion of policies in support of the Community Forests in structure and local plans in the forest area and national planning guidance such as PPG17 on Sport and Recreation and PPG2 on Green Belts (to which some of the forests are subject) all provide positive scope for the development of new sporting opportunities in the forests. By giving due regard to the needs of local communities and the statutory requirement to identify areas for the location of sports, including countryside sports, the forest teams and local authority partners can ensure that opportunities are recognised and seized upon as they arise and that a strategic approach can be taken to meet identified needs—in line with the policies of the forest teams, the local authorities and the Sports Council.

In order to investigate the extent of opportunities in each forest area, the Sports Council has funded or part-funded sport and recreation research studies. The studies have investigated existing provision and demand for countryside sports, projection of future demand based on demographic factors and trends in lifestyle, and identified potential opportunities for new provision through after-use of

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derelict sites, farm diversification, private sector provision and forging new partnerships between organisations. They have also considered any constraints on new development, including statutory and non-statutory planning policies, statutory land designations (such as nature conservation sites), accessibility, attitudes to sport and recreation, and landscape considerations.

The results differ in detail between individual forests, but there are common findings:

- walking, running, riding, angling and golf are the most popular activities;
- walking, cycling and riding require a better network of routes in all the forest areas;
- there is a need for more orienteering courses;
- there is a great demand for golf but there is a shortage of 'pay-as-you-play' courses;
- motorsports are poorly provided for due to noise constraints, lack of suitable sites and resistance from residents;
- there is a general lack of provision for motorised watersports;
- pitch sports are adequately provided for but the quality of provision varies;
- angling is well catered for;
- demand for air sports is generally low and constrained by CAA air-space restrictions.

Proposals for the implementation of sport and recreation strategies for the forests encompass physical provision through projects such as linking sites of sporting activity—termed Core Recreation Areas or Gateways—via the Rights of Way system, permissive paths, and re-use of derelict railway lines; matching site characteristics to the requirements of individual sports for which there is an identified local need; encouraging landowners to diversify into provision on a temporary and permanent basis, and encouraging greater participation by providing introductory and development courses for activities with coaching and training opportunities; providing information and publicity on existing opportunities, and initiatives and events aimed at groups which are currently under-represented in the countryside—young people, women, the disabled, low income and ethnic minority groups.

An interesting example of such an opportunity is the link which the forests offer with education and the National Curriculum. Following the recommendations of the Hunt Report in 1990, outdoor adventurous activities are compulsory for children up to the age of 11 and optional thereafter. Thus, provision of new opportunities for adventurous activities which can be accessed easily during the course of a PE lesson or by youth groups in the evenings is an important

role which the Community Forests can fulfil. Disused quarries offer sites for climbing and abseiling, former pit mounds ski slopes and water-filled gravel pits for canoeing and sailing, provided they are well-restored following working. Young people—one of the Sports Council target groups—are thus introduced to countryside activities close to home and may then develop the confidence and desire to continue these activities in their own time and in the wider countryside.

The forest teams are now incorporating the findings of the studies into the forest plans as policies which cater for the specific needs of the local communities and to seek opportunities to put these into practice. The aim is to make people aware of what they can do in *their community's forest* and to encourage them to get out and do it!

An important element in this is the Sports Council's funding of specialist sport and recreation officers—at a national level and within the forest teams. To date, there is one national post and two forest-based posts—one covering the Cleveland and Great North Forests and one covering the Red Rose and Mersey Forests. The role of these specialist officers is to develop sport and recreation strategies for their forests and to encourage and develop practical projects with the local authorities and other partners. It is hoped that, eventually, all the forests will have a specialist sport and recreation officer who will put into practice the policies which will encourage the local communities to take advantage of the opportunities on their doorsteps and ensure that "Sport for All" in the countryside becomes a reality.

Audrey Brown is the Sports Council's National Development Officer for Sport and Recreation in Community Forests. Audrey is based in the Department of Physical Education, Sports Science and Recreation Management at Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3TU Tel. 0509 223292



Sport and Active Recreation in the Great North Forest

Context

The Great North Forest is a joint project between the Countryside Commission, Forestry Commission and five local authorities to enhance the structure, appearance and use of 60 square miles of countryside around south Tyne and Wear and north-east Durham.

The vision for this new landscape is set out in the Great North Forest Plan, published for public consultation in 1992 and given formal government approval in August 1993. The Forest Plan provides an agreed strategy to co-ordinate and guide countryside change in a complex and pressured area over the next 30-40 years.

The Forest area forms a green jigsaw piece linking the urban settlements of Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland, Washington, Houghton/Hetton and Chester le Street. Some 500,000 people have immediate access and up to 1.5 million live within 10 miles. With a varied and attractive landscape, the area already houses twelve riding stables, eleven golf courses and a variety of other sports provision. Public use, however, is more limited. A recent countryside visitor survey in Gateshead found that only 7.4% of users came from east Gateshead, adjacent to the Great North Forest, while 67.7% came from the west of the borough where the amenities of the Derwent Valley and other attractions are close to hand.

Many factors will contribute to the realisation of the Forest vision but fundamental to success will be the active involvement of local people in the care and use of their own countryside. The Forest Plan highlights sport and active recreation as both an important function for the countryside close to where people live and an effective means of involving the community in its future planning and growth.

The Sports Council

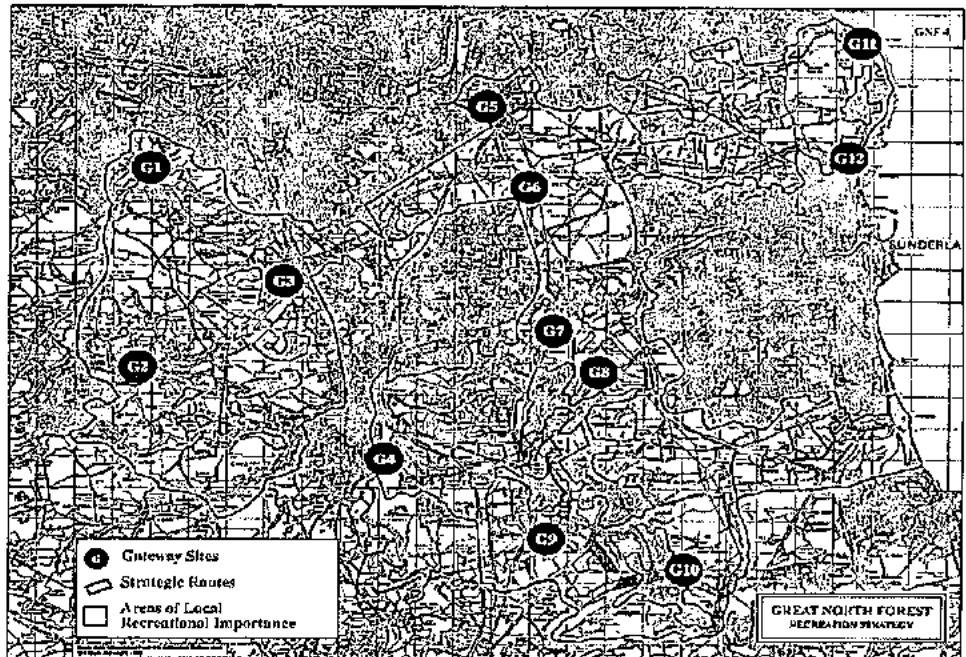
The Sports Council's Northern Region has a long-standing interest in countryside and water recreation. From an early stage they perceived the opportunities from the Great North Forest offered to achieve their objectives for the promotion of greater public participation and the provision of enhanced facilities close to where people live.

As a first step in establishing sport and active recreation as a key theme, the Sports Council joined with the Countryside Commission to fund a research study by PA Cambridge

Community Forests. Gary already has experience of sports development work with both the north-east and north-west regions of the Sports Council and now provides a focus for Forest sports activity.

A Strategic Framework

The Forest Plan identifies a network of 'gateway' sites, mainly based on an old colliery or newer mineral extraction areas, which will focus access to the countryside and act as centres for the provision of more intensive recreation facilities, particularly close to the urban edge.



Economic Consultants towards the preparation of the Forest Plan. This identified existing provision, looked at regional demand and developed outline ideas for a strategic recreation framework across the Forest area.

A key recommendation from the study was the need for development work to promote activity within the existing countryside as a base for future growth. With Sports Council funding Gary Charlton was appointed as Sport and Active Recreation Development Officer in March 1993 to work in both the Great North and Cleveland

These gateway sites will be linked by a network of 'strategic multi-user routes', based on disused and reclaimed railway lines and other long distance corridors, enabling people to move easily and clearly through the Forest area without conflict. This network will offer access to a range of smaller sites on both public and private land and to the wider countryside through an extensive rights of way network.

A number of gateway sites and longer distance routes are already well-established, including the provision of

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on and off-road cycling facilities and water activities on reclaimed land at Hetton Lyons with further proposals for equestrian development. The Consett to Sunderland Cyclepath, developed by Sustrans along a disused railway line and now being promoted as part of a more extensive coast to coast link, already offers a 20 mile journey across the Forest area and out into the wider countryside. Reclamation, mineral extraction and other capital programmes over the next five to ten years should see considerable progress in the development of this network.

Remedial work on public rights of way is also well-advanced with Gateshead MBC set to be the first metropolitan authority in England to complete the signposting and waymarking of their system and the City of Sunderland gaining substantial EC funding to develop their network of 'Heritage Trails'. Upgrading of the whole of the Forest rights of way network is a priority and should be completed before the Countryside Commission's target date of the year 2000. This will be complemented by improved small-scale car parking and information at key access points.

Sports Development

Sports development work is concentrating on extensive activities which can utilise the basic structure of the countryside to stimulate interest and participation. Running, orienteering, cycling, horse-riding, watersports and outdoor activities all offer considerable scope for entry level activity using footpaths, bridleways, woods, seaside land and reclaimed sites.

Initial work has focused on adding value to existing local authority programmes while building contacts with providers, funding agencies and regional governing bodies. Considerable scope clearly exists for more basic 'taster' courses to introduce people to countryside sports, particularly using voluntary sector providers like Wayout in Gateshead, Sunderland Outdoor Activities Association and the help of local clubs.

As well as developing people's awareness of the recreational opportunities offered by their local countryside, this participation work will also help to identify specific local demands, feeding into the planning and development of facilities on future gateway sites through links with local clubs and youth organisations.

Information

Information provision is an important area of interest. An early priority for the Development Officer is the production of an overview leaflet highlighting the basic sports opportunities across the Forest area. This will then become an umbrella for more sports-specific material containing details of local clubs, courses and facilities and basic information sheets about riding and running routes, orienteering trails, mountain bike tracks and opportunities for outdoor activities.



A Great North Forest Trail

Running is long established as a popular sport in the north-east, with a large number of local clubs, an active events programme, national cross country meetings and Gateshead International Stadium. The Great North Run crosses the edge of the Forest area. The project was approached at an early stage by one local runner interested in organising a junior relay event around the boundary of the Forest area. With the success of this event he continued to develop the route as part of an Environmental Management degree, canvassing local support and surveying hundreds of kilometres of path to come up with an off-road circular trail linking all the existing gateway sites. This 80km route will be waymarked and promoted over the next year for walkers and runners as the basis for a number of events, including timed continuous circuits, relays, interclub competitions or individual challenges. Future information leaflets will enable it to be treated as either a sporting challenge or a relaxed way to collect impressions of the Forest landscape.

Future Debate

Active sport is the fastest growing area of countryside recreation activity and Community Forests are already spotlighted as key areas for the provision of everything from motor circuits to football stadia. Care will be needed in developing an appropriate agenda for sports provision which meets local and wider demand while sustaining a fragile countryside resource.

John Vaughan

Project Director, Great North Forest, The Grove, Birtley Lane, Chester le Street, Co. Durham DH3 1AZ

Tel. 091 410 9066

Community Forest Partnerships

Community involvement is integral to the Community Forest concept. Use of the countryside for all forms of formal and informal recreation should therefore be a key objective in their planning and implementation.

The Mersey and Red Rose Forests are in an ideal position to build on partnerships with local authorities, the Countryside Commission, Forestry Commission, non-statutory land management agencies and the commercial sector to bring new representatives and a strengthened recreational dimension to this process. Governing bodies of sport and local specialists have already contributed to Draft Consultation Plans. The Sports Council regional office is working closely with both Forests to encourage such dialogue. As the Forests grow this dialogue should be encouraged through structured partnership.

If Community Forests are going to create new opportunities, raise awareness and improve access for sport and recreation it is crucial that each one has a coherent programme for implementation, based on a clear strategy. My appointment by the Mersey and Red Rose Forests will allow this process to be taken forward in the North West.

First and foremost my role is to identify clear objectives for the promotion of sport and recreation in the Red Rose and Mersey Forests. These objectives will form the basis for each Forest's strategy and action plans for implementation. The key to achieving this will be working in partnership with community and user representatives.

I have begun with a review of current provision and existing statutory and non-statutory plans. If however we are going to take advantage of the Forest's potential to bring a range of regional expertise and experience round the table we need to be clear about aims and crucially, establish an understanding amongst contributors as to a mechanism for joint working. This goes beyond assessment of sites or acknowledgement of user group needs and extends into ongoing and credible dialogue, in which all parties will have confidence. From this point key issues, such as sport equity, sustainable development, mitigation of conflict and safety can be addressed.

At a regional level, governing bodies provide an effective access point in determining recreational need. Where it is appropriate the Forests can act as brokers between local need and short, medium and long term opportunity. This process begins with Forests encouraging governing bodies individually, or collectively through the umbrella organisation of the North West Federation for Sport, Recreation and Conservation, to provide up to date development plans or at least "shopping lists" of need. I am particularly concerned that working with the voluntary sector is not just a matter of courtesy but forms part of a

formal consultative process to which the Forest and all its partners are committed. Similarly, other interest groups, for example representing people with disabilities, should be encouraged to offer specific and ongoing advice to ensure the practical implementation of policy statements, in the case of people with disabilities concerning access, opportunity and design. Identifying the most appropriate and effective local contacts and developing substantive relationships is a key task of the Sport and Recreation Officer. The mechanism for working in partnership with this sector will figure centrally as the strategy develops.

While land use plans provide a basic reference in the identification of opportunity, Community Forest partnerships with local Government rely on close co-operation and mutual support at elected member and officer level. In the same way that governing bodies need to co-ordinate their approach, I am keen that local authority departments share information and responsibilities in the planning and action process. We are looking not only to support appropriate development practices for "new" sites but also to encourage local authorities to take advantage of the Forests regional perspective on countryside sport and recreation. This includes working with officers on strategy development and to making responses to planning applications.

The private sector, as landowners, developers and managers of services, will be central partners in the integration and development of sport and recreation in the Forests. We will be drawing together a range of views from all appropriate sectors to maximise this opportunity. Many companies recognise the role they have to play within local communities, either directly into the economy or indirectly as contributors to the environmental and social landscape. They are also aware that local partnership organisations, like community forests, are ideal vehicles through which to build active community links. As forums for expertise the



Community Forests

Red Rose and Mersey Forests can, for example, offer developers new opportunities to tailor planning proposals to broader community needs. When considering landscape improvement or creating new access, landowners and managers have been able to approach the forest offices for advice on putting together grant application packages, where appropriate this has considered opportunities for recreational development such as farm diversification into recreation.

Having established partnerships, community forests will instigate and be a vehicle for training and awareness raising. This might include running awareness training for local authority planners specifically addressing access and design in country parks. Both the Mersey and Red Rose Forest are considering running training courses on perception of risk in recreational woodland to coincide with International Women's Week in March 1994. Whatever the subject matter, it is crucial that we recognise a specific role and pull in and promote good practice.



The drawing together of interest groups, who in themselves bring opportunities and expertise, will be central in establishing an effective sport and recreation strategy. The final document will be one part of a process in the development of sport and recreation in the Forests. It will be successful if partners representing all members of the community are demonstrably effective in implementing community forest policy.

In establishing parameters for the strategy and in drawing up guidelines for a commitment to ongoing work, I am keen not to exclude any sport or recreational activity. I believe my work, particularly in its early stages, is being helped by an holistic approach. There are many instances of formal indoor provision adjacent to existing or potential sites for countryside recreation. Existing leisure amenities provide an initial site based focus for the Forests, i.e. higher profile, higher use platforms from which to raise awareness and broaden opportunities.

This approach provides a starting point and serves to set the role of the Forests as catalysts for new work and new relationships in a context that includes both existing provision and potential new development.

From this position I am building links with a range of agencies and can adopt an increasingly focused approach to countryside recreation. Inevitably, while considering all activities, the Forests in the North West are primarily concerned with those sporting and recreational activities which rely on the natural environment, or adaptations to it.

The perceived benefits of working with community forests will vary from partner to partner. Common benefits can be identified that include increased opportunity to access new resources, improved range and quality of facilities and support for projects from a range of partner agencies, so increasing chances of success. Early discussion around these outcomes has indicated that the Forests can be effective in highlighting joint agendas and beginning to effect action. A twin-track approach, working on the development of a strategy while being actively committed to ongoing work, will allow the Forests to take forward initiatives from its partners and apply them to concrete situations. We will, for example, be involving local orienteers, cycling groups and horseriders in the development of a landfill site in north Cheshire for the early establishment of fixed orienteering course, all terrain cycle courses and bridleway development to support existing local routes. This project will be local authority led and illustrates the coming together of identifiable need and site opportunity.

Keith Gerrard

Sport and Recreation Officer

Red Rose and Mersey Community Forests

Community Forest Centre, Warwick Road, Old Trafford, Gtr Manchester M16 0QQ



Devising Networks for Walks and Rides in Wales

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) is to publish early next year a manual to guide local authorities, community councils and other groups on how to devise local networks of walks and rides in their area.

The manual will draw on existing good practice and recent research undertaken by CCW. It is aimed at developing functional networks of linear access that will be clearly marked and well maintained. Such networks will help to identify appropriate and sustainable levels of use, thereby avoiding potential conflicts with other countryside interests.

Throughout Wales, surveys of the condition of the rights of way system are already underway, thanks to the interest and enthusiasm of community councils and volunteers. CCW has also set the challenging target of an interim network of paths by 1995 to add to that of the entire network open and available by 2000. With this aim in mind, it has carefully considered how precious resources of time and money (public and voluntary) can be deployed to provide the kind of access most people want.

Building on the opportunities and priorities identified through the community paths surveys and the work of local authorities, the manual sets out the mechanisms by which network of walks and rides are established.

Key features of this approach are:

- *defining and agreeing local networks* for countryside users whether on foot, cycle or horseback to which CCW resources will be targeted. These networks will be based largely on the rights of way network.
- the *participation and collaboration* of the public and local authorities. CCW's duty is to provide opportunities for public recreation, linked to the responsibility for countryside and nature conservation. Networks devised will reflect local and external demands, recognise the interests of land users and providers and contribute to the local economy while remaining sensitive to the physical environment and its economy.

- establishing *Local Access Groups* which can help the evolution of networks by submitting proposals for routes, endorsing networks, assessing access demand and performing a consultative liaison role.
- encouraging the appointment of *Network Officers* in local authorities, who could be responsible for all matters relating to the future management of the network. Network Officers will liaise between highway authorities and CCW on one hand, and community councils, user groups and landowners on the other, playing a vital co-ordinating role in the development of the network in addition to the provisions of advice and support.

CCW considers that the manual 'Which Paths—Creating Networks' offers a novel, participative method of providing for the present and future access needs of Wales' residents and visitors.

Martyn Evans
Senior Access Policy Officer
Countryside Council for Wales

Motor Sports and the Countryside

The use of off-road motorised vehicles in the countryside is an issue guaranteed to stir emotions, both of users and those who find their presence an unacceptable intrusion on the peace and quiet of the countryside they wish to enjoy. The users of off-road vehicles are nevertheless well-organised and are represented by the Motoring Organisations' Land Access & Recreation Association (commonly known as LARA), a body which promotes the responsible use of off-road vehicles and works to extend the opportunities for their use in the countryside. A variety of Clubs are represented by LARA—such as the British Motorcyclists' Federation, and the Trail Riders' Fellowship—and the organisation's work is supported by the Sports Council.

Three documents illustrate the nature and direction of LARA's activities. First is the report of a Symposium held in April this year entitled "Planning for Motor Sport & Recreation in an Increasingly Sensitive Environment". The proceedings set out in exhaustive detail the issues

surrounding motor sport and recreation and the countryside: current issues, legislation relating to rights of way, the nature and extent of the illegal and irresponsible use of motorised vehicles and means of its control and examples of good practice from abroad. Volume II of the proceedings collects together speakers papers presented at the Symposium.

Second is the LARA Access Guide—a simple guide to the law for recreational and sporting vehicle enthusiasts and organisers. The Guide covers such topics as access to the countryside, touring and recreation and the highway, and the planning law as it relates to motorsports, primarily with regard to development control and the establishment of areas specifically designed for motorsports. Thus perhaps the most difficult barrier to surmount—that of disseminating information concerning responsible use—is approached with a Guide that clearly sets out the bounds of within which users must be expected to enjoy their sport.

continued on page 16

Third is a booklet entitled "Road Research: an Introduction to Rights of Way Evidence". The booklet is intended to primarily to benefit motorcycle trail riders who recognise the need to carry out research into where they can legally ride, but who need guidance on what can be a complex and time-consuming process. However, the Guide will be of use to other user-groups who have an interest in defining and perhaps re-establishing rights of way, such as horse riders and mountain-bikers. The topic is as potentially tangled as it is fascinating and it is the process of unravelling that needs a careful, methodical approach and an awareness of the potential sources of information and their usefulness—physical, oral and user evidence and public records, for example.

These documents and further information about the work of LARA are available from:

The Motor Recreation Development Officer
Land Access and Recreation Association
 PO Box 19
 Newcastle upon Tyne
 NE3 5HW

English Nature's Conservation Goals: "Strategy for the 1990s"

English Nature has recently published its conservation goals for the Year 2000. The Strategy is centred on the promotion of policies and encouragement of action which maintain and enrich wildlife and natural features across their traditional ranges. Sustainability, achieved by environmentally-led planning, and the encouragement of biodiversity are key planks in the strategy.

English Nature's major nature conservation goals for the year 2000 include:

- maintaining and enhancing characteristic plant and animal communities, and natural features within Natural Areas*;
- achieving the commitment of owners and managers to the maintenance of England's biological diversity within SSSIs;
- maintaining a range of sites representing the diversity of rock type, landforms and geological history of England;
- increasing populations and distributions of statutorily protected species within each Natural Area;
- stabilising population distributions and increase the numbers of defined indicator species;
- achieving wider acceptance of the role of personal stewardship in characteristic wildlife and natural features, rather than through the imposition of specific prescriptions;
- increasing opportunities for people to experience wildlife and natural features;



- ensuring that sustainability is accepted as the fundamental principle in developing the use of land, sea, air, water and wildlife resources;
- ensuring comprehensive environmental audits become an integral part of the decision making process;
- seeking widespread acceptance of environmental quality standards for clean air and water;
- ensuring that nature conservation is integrated with other objectives within all relevant Government plans, and that a record of gains and losses to nature conservation is maintained.

* Natural Areas are a series of areas (though not a statutory designation) characterised by different combinations of features. These can provide a national context and overview for England's wildlife and natural features and the framework for developing local objectives and strategies. Examples are Exmoor and the Quantocks, the Chilterns, the Broads, the White Peak, and the Breckland.

Copies of "Strategy for the 1990s" are available free from Dept. ENAG, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA

Country Parks in Wales

There are 34 country parks in Wales, employing some 107 staff grant aided by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). It is estimated that some 4 million visits are made every year to Welsh country parks, which gives some indication of their value as a recreational resource.

The limited information available on country parks in Wales is to be rectified by CCW through the compilation of a directory. This will provide a map and detailed data on each country park, which can then be up updated as necessary.

Country parks now have a multiplicity of functions, but have a primary emphasis on the provision of a recreational facility and are important places for environmental education and community involvement.

In the last 24 years, since the first country parks were established, the drive to provide more country parks has declined. Country parks nevertheless represent a substantial investment of public money through the grant-aiding of a large number of staff. Increasing attention is being focused on the efficient use of resources to improve the existing management of country parks. It is therefore of great consequence that this resource should be managed and maintained to ensure that country parks contribute to meeting the leisure needs of the public into the next century.

In order to encourage good management practices, CCW is in the process of producing a set of guidelines. These guidelines can be summarised into four key areas:

1. **Operational**, including the promotion of certain sports activities and other special events. Also the networking of a "family" of country parks, in addition to ensuring that links to countryside services are cultivated, and the possibility of an annual award scheme.



2. **Community involvement and educational use**, recognising the importance of local visitor needs, and the opportunity for environmental education.

3. **Safety issues and access**—for the disabled; by public transport; and utilising the country park as a "gateway" for access to the wider countryside.

4. **Data collection**, enabling country parks to provide appropriate interpretative facilities, and to assess feedback on visitor characteristics and aspirations, to allow country park managers to make informed decisions and to continue to provide a useful service to all recreation users.

Two changes are likely to affect country parks in the future:

1. **Local government reorganisation**—country parks will come under new ownership in the form of unitary authorities, with a number of significant implications. There may be a shift in the role of country parks, with perhaps a decline their in

importance within new recreation and conservation strategies in addition to obvious concerns about financial considerations.

2. **Compulsory Competitive Tendering**—As this practice becomes increasingly widespread with possible moves towards privatising wardening services, there are dangers that each country park will operate as an insular, isolated unit working against the idea of "a family" of country parks. In such cases the emphasis is likely to change to focus primarily on revenue generation.

Through the adoption of good practice guidelines, including community involvement, environmental education, and a better integration of existing countryside management services, country parks will continue to provide an important recreation and conservation resource that will be of value in the future.

*Carole Thornley
Recreation and Tourism Officer
Countryside Council for Wales*

From Coal Tips to Country Parks

The industrial and environmental heritage of the South Wales Valleys is a rich and varied one. Until the late 1960s, the industrial took precedence over the environmental—significant areas utilised for iron and steel making, coal mining (and the dumping of its inert waste) and the dereliction of abandoned workings. Alongside economic regeneration came calls for environmental improvements, particularly in the badly scarred Rhymney Valley; today many former derelict industrial sites have become focal points for countryside recreation.

Rhymney Valley is some 24 miles long, extending from Cardiff in the south to the Brecon Beacons in the north, characterised by a number of small towns and villages, tributary valleys, and hills and open moorland. It is an ideal environment in which countryside recreation can be developed alongside schemes for urban and economic regeneration.

Schemes by Mid Glamorgan County Council and Rhymney Valley District Council, with funding from the Welsh Development Agency and British Coal, aimed at the reclamation of former coal mining sites turning them into Country Parks.

Reclamation work, which commenced in the late 1970s, saw the removal of mine workings, visual improvements to the land with the creation of artificial lakes, footpaths and tree planting.

Today Parc Cwm Darran and Bryn Bach Country Parks have established individual identities. At Bryn Bach, waterskiing, windsurfing and fishing have become popular recreational activities, while day visitors have access to lakeside picnic sites, car park facilities a circular lakeside walk and a visitor centre. At Parc Cwm Darran there has been evidence of community involvement in the provision of countryside recreation amenities; local schools have become actively involved in interpretation projects and developing recreational facilities. At the annual 'open day' each July, Parc Cwm Darran encourages local people as well as visitors to "discover the wide range of recreational and study opportunities" which the Country Park has to offer. A site for touring caravans, with toilet and washing facilities, encourages visitors to stay, and a new interpretation and visitor centre is due to open soon.

In the southern part of the Rhymney Valley, the Caerphilly Mountain Countryside Service (a project established in 1979 by a consortium of local authorities with financial support from the Countryside Commission) provides a wide range of conservation and recreational activities. Voluntary Wardens guide groups on various countryside walks within the lower Rhymney Valley, and work in close association with local community organisations on

countryside conservation schemes. Of particular interest has been the recent opening of the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway Walk—a 30 mile circular route across the surrounding mountains of the Lower Rhymney Valley, which provides a link at Caerphilly Mountain to the Glamorgan Ridgeway Walk.

Rhymney Valley District Council is in the process of consulting the community on recreation and tourism proposals contained in a new draft local plan. Proposals include the development of the Bargood Lakes Country Park on the site of the now disused Bargood Colliery, creation of a network of cycle routes throughout the Valley, and a scenic car drive across Gelligaer Common linking the attractions of Llancaich Fawr Living History Museum with the Drenewydd Museum at Butetown and Parc Cwm Darran.

The future for countryside recreation within the Rhymney Valley looks a promising one. Interest among local people and visitors continues to grow, and we are constantly hearing news of new ventures being proposed to encourage countryside walking, cycling, golf, countryside conservation and interpretation, linking these with tourism initiatives.

Ian Thomas

Secretary

Rhymney Valley Tourist Association



Forest Enterprise - North and East England Region

Recreation Strategy 1993 - 1996

"Members of the public are welcome to roam through all our forests wherever there are no legal or other constraints".

This is the guiding principle for recreation within the 137,000ha of forest and 26,000ha of non-forested land owned or managed by Forest Enterprise in the North and East of England. In the context of a similar nationwide policy, Forest Enterprise have produced a recreation strategy which provides guidance for the promotion and management of recreation. The Strategy aims to:

- describe the means by which Forest Enterprise policy is to be implemented;

National Rights of Way Training Programme

The Countryside Commission, working in conjunction with the County Surveyors' Society, has awarded a contract to secure the development, implementation and monitoring of a training programme for rights of way staff in England. Graham Walters has been appointed to work on the programme for three years and began work in November 1992.

As a former Rights of Way Officer and then Access and Recreation Manager for Berkshire County Council, Graham gained considerable knowledge of the rights of way field. He is now establishing his own Countryside Planning Consultancy.

The Context for the Programme

Countryside Commission policies for "Enjoying the Countryside", published in 1987, identify the rights of way network as the single most important means of access to and enjoyment of the countryside. The policies set out key targets:

- a new approach be adopted, by the early 1990s, by every highway authority with significant rights of way; and
- the entire rights of way network be legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised by the end of the century.

The policies and targets have been widely endorsed, by the Department of the Environment and its Ministers, local authorities, user groups and the main farming and land-owning organisations.

Yet whilst there has been a considerable increase in the number of rights of way staff in recent years, most staff have learnt to carry out their work 'on the job'. There is no academic or vocational qualification for staff to aspire to which deals with the range of specialist work carried out. Some purpose-designed training has become available, normally short workshops.

Following concern from the County Surveyors' Society, Tim Slade of the Isle of Wight County Council carried out research into the training needs of rights of way staff in

1988. The results of his survey were published by the Commission as "Training of Public Rights of Way Officers" (CCP 298, 1990). The principal recommendation of the study was that a national training programme for rights of way staff be developed.

Another relevant report is "Training for Tomorrow's Countryside" (CCP 269), prepared for the Commission by the Countryside Staff Training Advisory Group (CSTAG) in 1989. This formed the basis of the Commission's policy on training, detailed in "Training for a Better Countryside" (CCP 312, 1990). It emphasised the need for all countryside staff to see their work within the broad framework of the changing countryside.

Aim of the Programme

The development, implementation and monitoring of a flexible and accessible National Training Programme to assist rights of way staff in England to have the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to competently carry out their work. This involves improving and extending opportunities for use and enjoyment of the countryside, whilst conserving and enhancing its natural beauty.

Methodology

The strategy for carrying out the contract guides Programme implementation, and is reviewed in the light of progress.

The main results of the research are:

- there is extensive demand for learning, covering the whole range of work identified;
- however, local authorities have limited finance to fund learning through the National Training Programme—about £100 per full-time equivalent post;

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- provide guidance for Forest Enterprise managers in future provision for recreation;
- identify priorities, opportunities and constraints;
- inform discussion between Forest Enterprise, other providers and users.

Developing the opportunities for recreation in the forests embraces not only free access but positive provision through such facilities as car parking spaces, picnic sites and trails and more comprehensive facilities such as visitor centres.

Complementing the direct provision is promotion of the opportunities through leaflets and advertising and the training of staff to discover and satisfy the needs of visitors. To ensure that investment in the provision of facilities and training of staff is worthwhile and cost-effective, a number of elements are considered: the nature and degree of demand and its location, the attractiveness of the forest and the potential conflict between users. Similarly, the relationships with other providers and interests along with available funding have to be born in mind.

The Strategy is available from: *Forest Enterprise, North and East England Region, 1a Grosvenor Terrace, York YO3 7BD*

- there are distinct variations in demand for learning at each level, foundation, intermediate and advanced;
- workshops and case study discussions are popular and effective ways of learning: keeping up to date, sharing experience, improving skills and increasing confidence;
- secondment is attracting interest as an inexpensive and effective way of sharing knowledge and discussing common interests;
- 'clusters' of learning have been identified, based on demand.

Co-ordination of provision to meet the needs is a central part of the strategy, and a key part of the consultant's work. There are many interested parties involved, including traditional training providers such as Losehill Hall and BTCV, specialist providers such as the Byways and Bridleways Trust, bodies such as the Institute of Public Rights of Way Officers, the County Surveyors' Society, and the Association of Metropolitan District Engineers, and other rights of way and training experts.

A liaison group has been convened to bring these organisations and individuals together, and a collaborative approach to meeting the needs has been agreed. Varying methods of provision are being considered, enabling 're-cycling' of format and material wherever possible. This will mean that a workshop can be held at different locations in the country with little extra effort, and that documentation may be brought together as part of open-learning material.

Planning provision should be improved by trainers, discussing their ideas with potential clients. This should help to make provision be more effective, and aid take-up of the Programme.

Sponsorship of aspects of Programme delivery will be given by the Countryside Commission, and will help to reduce the price to authorities of learning provision. This is very important so that best use be made of limited finance.

Promotion of the Programme will involve regular circulation of learning details to authorities.

Monitoring and evaluating the Programme will concentrate on the effectiveness of delivery, particularly on the transfer of learning to the workplace. Further research into learning needs is planned for the next two years.

Development of an NVQ (or at least units of an NVQ) for rights of way staff to work towards is hoped for, capitalising on the vocational analysis already undertaken.

Conclusions

With recent research indicating that local authority staff working on rights of way amount to over 1000 full-time-equivalent posts in England, this initiative may be quite unique. Carrying out the training needs analysis and organising learning opportunities for such a diverse client base is certainly ambitious. The success of the Programme will depend upon many people and organisations contributing to the overall effort, not least in using the learning process to improve not only individual competence but the organisation's performance and service. Financial constraints and perhaps local government re-organisation, may to some extent inhibit the Programme. Nevertheless, the National Training Programme should benefit rights of way work across the country.

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Mills, Moors and Luddites: Exploring Kirklees by rail and foot

by Lydia and Colin Speakman
Published by Leading Edge at £4.99

This guide to the Kirklees district of West Yorkshire uses the rail system as the focus for a series of town and country trails. The area offers a diverse range of landscapes to explore—the open moorland of the Dark Peak and South Pennines, deep, wooded valleys, and the industrial millscapes and rich architectural heritage of traditional textile towns such as Dewsbury and Huddersfield. By an informative and highly entertaining text the reader is led through the fascinating environmental, social and industrial heritage of the area, and invited to ponder on the shaping of the physical and cultural landscape. Railways and walking make ideal companions—this guide helps to strengthen that bond and demonstrate how much is missed in the insular environment of a car journey.

The book, one of a series that encourages the use of the rail network as a means of exploring the countryside without resorting to using a car, is supported by Kirklees Metropolitan Council and the Countryside Commission. A catalogue detailing this and other titles in the series is available from Leading Edge on 0969 667566.