



# COUNTRY PARKS II

2003 Seminar Proceedings  
of the  
Countryside Recreation Network

in association with



Edited by Melanie Bull  
Network Manager

Held at Oakwell Hall Country Park,  
Nr Batley  
17<sup>th</sup> September 2003

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## Countryside Recreation Network

The CRN is a network which:

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

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

### Research:

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

### Liaison:

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

### Good Practice:

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

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Geoff Hughes, Sport England

### Vice Chair:

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Published by CRN Countryside Recreation Network

© 2003 CRN Countryside Recreation Network

ISBN 1 84387 055 X

Copies cost £12 and are available from:

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## CONTENTS

### PLENARY PAPERS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Welcome and Introduction<br><i>Geoff Hughes, CRN Chairman</i>   | 1  |
| County Parks -- Towards a Renaissance Report<br><i>Andrew Maliphant, Recreation Adviser, Countryside Agency</i>   | 3  |
| History and Development of Country Parks in Wales<br><i>Gareth Roberts, Head of Recreation, Access &amp; European Affairs<br/>Countryside Council for Wales</i> | 15 |
| Standards for Scottish Country Parks<br><i>Mairi Caughey, National Strategy Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage</i>  | 28 |
| Country Parks in Northern Ireland - focus on visioning<br><i>Hugh McCann, Regional Manager, Environment Heritage Service (EHS)</i>                              | 31 |
| A Country Parks' Website<br><i>Finbar Mulholland, Communications Officer, Country Parks Network, GreenSpace</i>   | 40 |

### WORKSHOPS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Workshop 1</b><br>Developing a Shared Vision for Country Parks<br><i>Finbar Mulholland, Communications Officer, Country Parks Network, GreenSpace</i> | 43 |
| <b>Workshop 2</b><br>Minimum Standards<br><i>Andy Maginnis, Countryside Estates Manager, Worcestershire County Council</i>                               | 45 |
| <b>Workshop 3</b><br>Exploring Resources and Funding<br><i>Russell Cleaver, External Funding Manager, Hampshire County Council</i>                       | 48 |

### SUPPORTING PAPERS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Annex A - Programme                                | 50 |
| Annex B - Speaker/Workshop Facilitator Biographies | 52 |
| Annex C - Delegate List                            | 57 |

# Countryside Recreation Network Seminar

## COUNTRY PARKS

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

*Geoff Hughes*

*Senior Development Manager, Sport England  
and Chair of the Countryside Recreation Network*

I am delighted to welcome you to Oakwell to this second CRN seminar on Country Parks held in association with the Countryside Agency and GreenSpace.

CRN is a Network of 24 UK and Ireland Agencies and Government Departments which have an interest in countryside recreation. The Network aims to develop and share good practice and to undertake joint research. Although the event today is the second that we are holding on Country Parks it should prove to be significantly different from the first and add to the body of knowledge on the subject. The first event held earlier in the year at Lydiard Country Park in Swindon was oversubscribed and proved to be extremely valuable in bringing policy makers and practitioners together to share experience.

Whilst many Country Parks were created in the 1960s they have a vital role in contributing to current agendas. Particularly to :

- Health of the Nation - by supporting and encouraging participation in sport and recreation.
- Culture – by providing opportunities for sports and arts events and to explore heritage and the environment.
- Education and Lifelong Learning - particularly for environmental education but also for a variety of other activities.
- Sustainability – acting as exemplar facilities encouraging sustainable transport and operation.
- Biodiversity – through their contribution to local environments.

The list goes on but the key in my view is to demonstrate that Country Parks are relevant to the wider concerns of Government and to the priorities of local authorities.

In the morning session today we will focus on the experience of Country Parks in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. To commence the event and to provide an overview of *Towards a Country Parks Renaissance: A Report by the Garden History society and the Urban Parks Forum (2002)*, I would like to welcome Andrew Maliphant of the Countryside Agency.

In case I forget later I should like to thank Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council and the staff at Oakwell for hosting the event and the speakers and workshop leaders for taking their time to input. Thanks are also due to Melanie Bull and Magali Fleurot from the CRN secretariat at Sheffield Hallam University for volunteering to hold this additional event.

I hope that you have an enjoyable day.

Geoff Hughes  
Chairman

# **Countryside Recreation Network Seminar**

## **COUNTRY PARKS**

### **COUNTRY PARKS – TOWARDS A COUNTRY PARKS RENAISSANCE**

*Andrew Maliphant  
Recreation Adviser  
The Countryside Agency*

#### **Introduction**

Country Parks are a lasting and popular legacy of the provisions of the Countryside Act 1968. However, evidence presented by the Countryside Agency to a Select Committee's enquiry into Town and Country Parks in 1999 highlighted the fact that:

'Country Parks are now at risk of neglect and decline...Action is needed now to ensure they have a better future.'

The findings of the Public Parks Assessment<sup>1</sup> confirmed this view, revealing that whilst Country Parks were generally faring better than their urban counterparts, there was still a decline in condition. The Rural White Paper<sup>2</sup> tasked the Countryside Agency with 'issuing guidance on best practice to revitalise the Country Parks around our towns and cities'. In response, the Agency commissioned a study to:

- consider how Country Parks have developed in the years since their inception;
- gain an accurate understanding of the size and distribution of Country Parks;
- examine the major issues facing service providers;
- examine the contemporary relevance of Country Parks and how they might relate to current and planned initiatives.

## **Main findings**

The study "*Towards a Country Parks Renaissance*" found that:

- **most of the 267 Country Parks in England are owned by local authorities;**
- **they receive an estimated 73 million visits per annum;**
- **approximately 2,500 people are employed in managing and maintaining Country Parks;**
- **two-thirds of Country Parks are located on the rural-urban fringe;**
- **Country Parks offer a range of benefits, services and recreational opportunities to diverse and varied visitors at a comparatively low cost;**
- **good parks are continuing to improve whilst poor parks are continuing to decline, which reflects funding patterns;**
- **the continued relevance and appeal of Country Parks as popular, multi-functional greenspaces remains clear.**

## **Methodology**

A comprehensive questionnaire was sent to all the 267 Country Parks in England, with responses received from 137 of them. The report draws on detailed information, provided by those parks that responded, about:

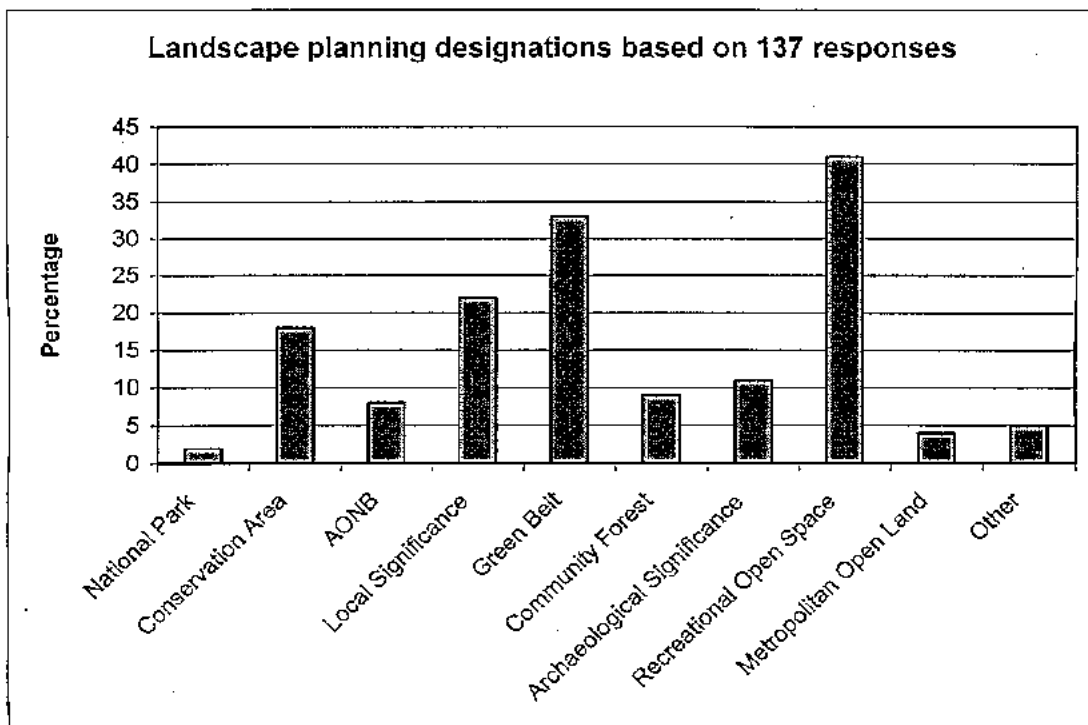
- the physical composition of the parks;
- condition and trend in condition;
- finance and funding;
- use and users; and
- management, including community/volunteer involvement.

## **Physical composition**

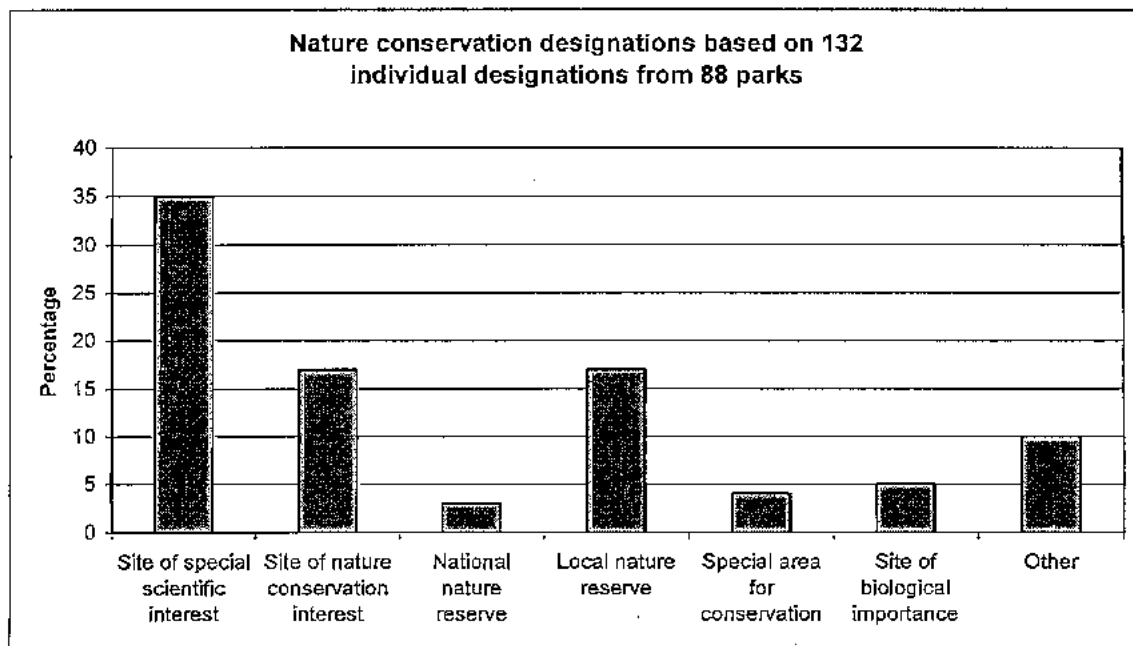
Country Parks represent a substantial landmass, estimated to be in the region of 39,000 hectares. Over 70% of their area is designated as green belt or recreational open space, and an estimated 35% contain Sites of Special Scientific Interest.



**Chart 1: Landscape planning designations within Country Parks**



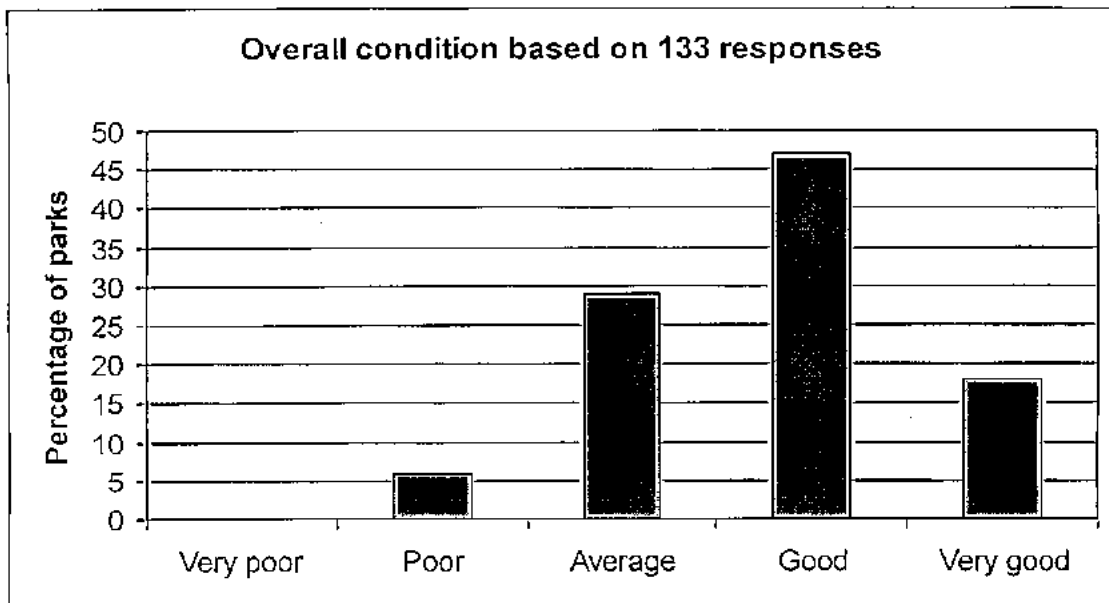
**Chart 2: Nature conservation designations within Country Parks**



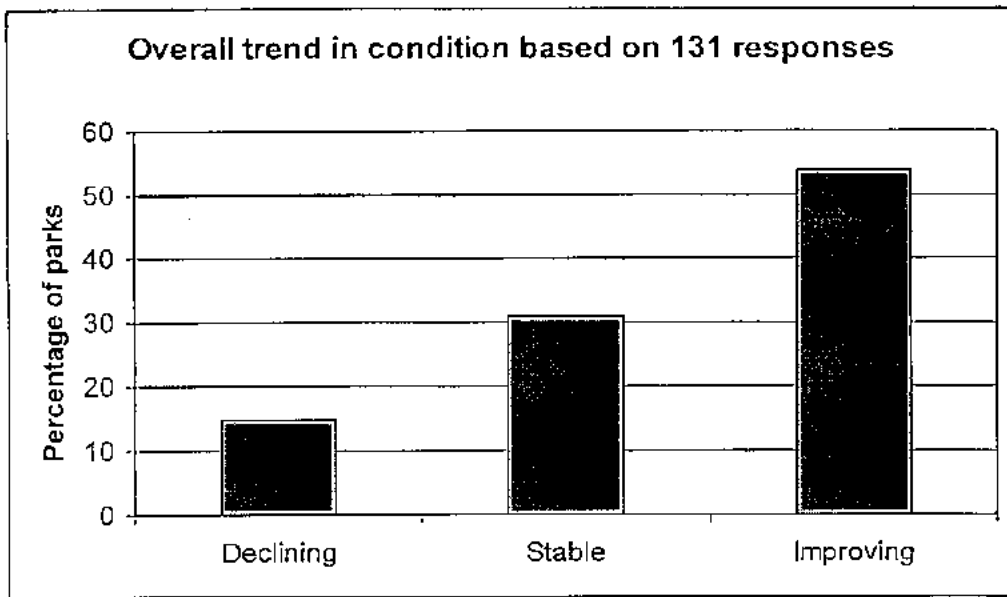
### Condition and trend in condition

More than 65% of responding officers reported that their parks were in either good or very good condition, and only 6% described their parks as in poor condition, with the rest described as average. The majority of parks (54%) were described as improving, nearly a third (31%) were stable and, encouragingly, less than a fifth (15%) were declining in condition.

**Chart 3: Overall condition assessment**



Worryingly, of those parks that rated their overall condition as poor, 88% also rated their condition as declining and none rated it as improving. Twenty-eight percent of parks rated as average said that their overall condition was declining, and 33% said it was improving. Of those parks that were rated good, 65% stated their condition to be improving, with only 5% declining. Seventy-five percent of very good parks said they were improving, with none declining. Thus the majority of parks that were in poor condition were in decline, while those rated in good or very good condition were more likely to be improving.

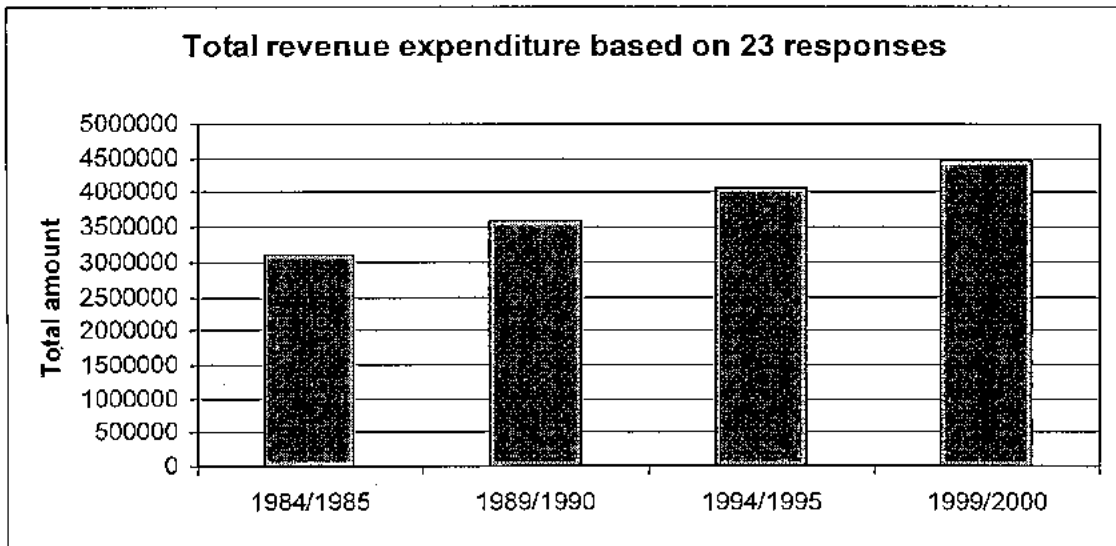
**Chart 4: Trend in overall condition**

### Finance and funding

Responding officers were asked to provide information about the amount they spent on running and maintaining their park for four specific date periods, from 1984/85 through to 1999/2000. Only 23 (17%) Country Parks were able to provide total gross revenue expenditure figures for each of the date periods requested.

Initially the figures provided, as illustrated in Chart 5, appeared encouraging, with an apparently small but steady increase over the years. However, when the effects of inflation were added to the equation, the financial situation facing Country Parks was reversed. In real terms, the amount of total gross revenue expenditure - applied to the 23 Country Parks responding to this section of the questionnaire - had declined significantly. The 1999/2000 budgets would need to be increased by 28% in order to have an equivalent value to the real term value of the 1984/85 budgets.

**Chart 5: Revenue Expenditure**



There was a significant increase in charge introductions during 1990/1991, most commonly for car parking, which relaxed until the mid-1990s when a marked increase was again observed.

Capital funding by local authorities has also been in decline, though the National Lottery and the European Regional Development Fund have proved useful sources of funding.

**Chart 6: New charges by subject**

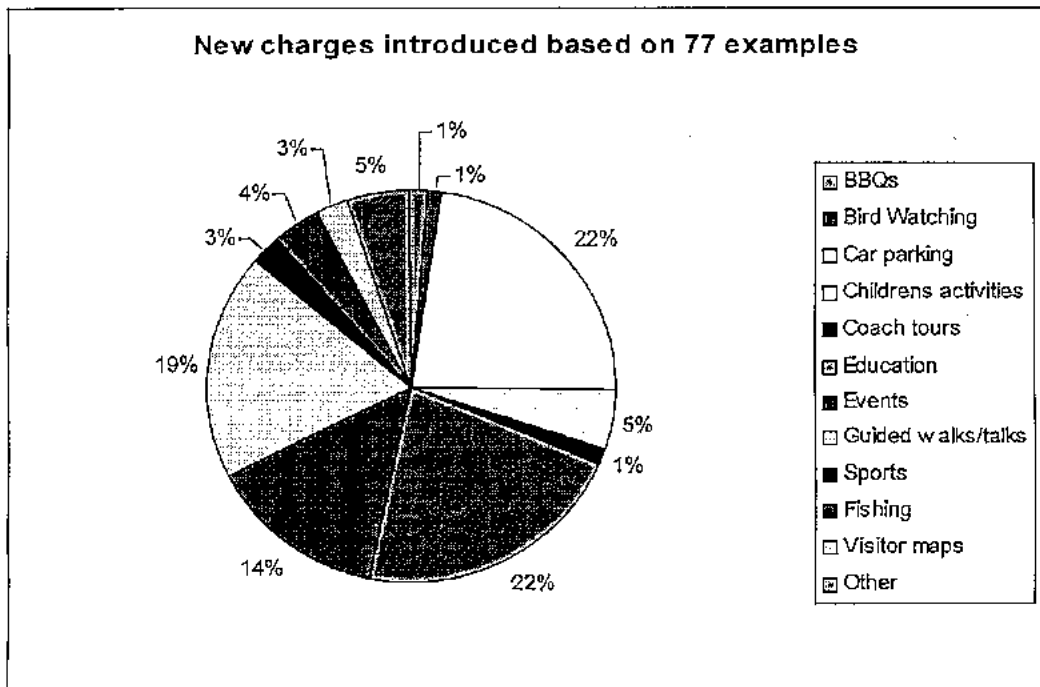
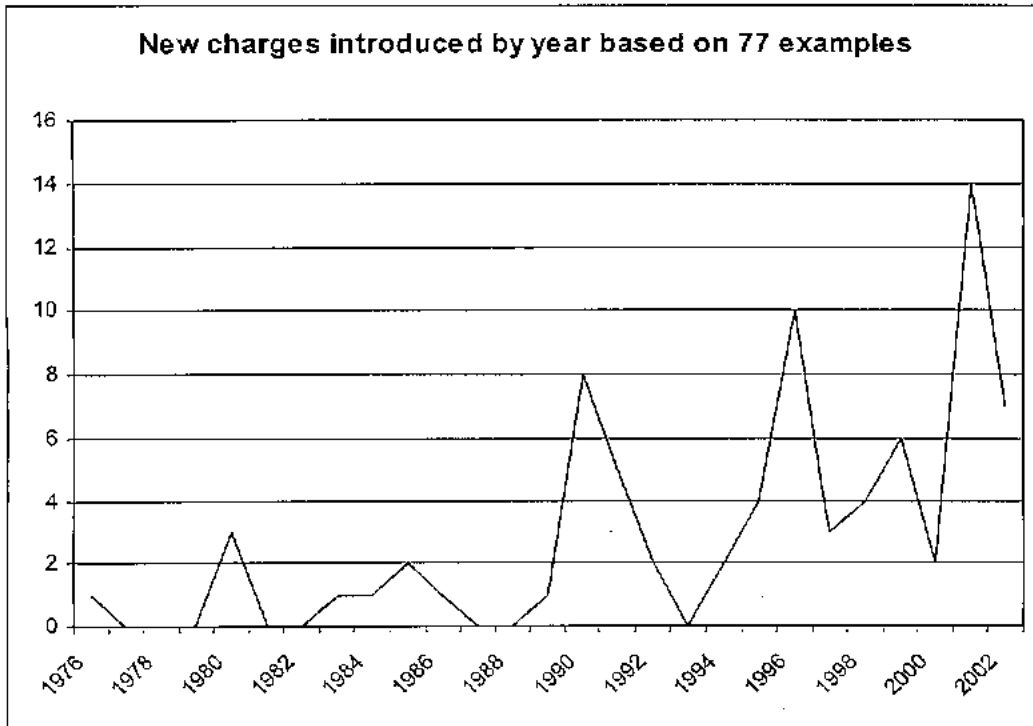


Chart 7: New charges by year



### Use and users

Increasingly, Country Parks need a good level of knowledge about their customers. Park managers are under pressure to increase visitor numbers and the income generated by visitors in order to supplement the declining value of revenue budgets. Modernisation of local government through Best Value legislation and the introduction of Local Strategic Partnerships place a substantial emphasis on the involvement of the community and customer feedback.

Through the questionnaire, the study sought to examine park managers' general awareness of their customer base and the needs and preferences of their customers. In order to achieve this, responding officers were asked:

- how often visitor surveys were being undertaken;
- whether visitor numbers were being estimated, at least on an annual basis;
- whether schools are specifically targeted;
- details about visitor activities catered for by the park.

Responding officers were asked to provide details of any visitor surveys carried out in the previous five years. Forty-three percent of responding officers (59 parks) said that they had completed visitor surveys in the previous five years, and provided the date of the last survey. Fifty-three percent of parks did not carry out visitor surveys.

Sixty-one parks (45%) provided total visitor numbers. A recorded 16,668,631 visits were made to these sites, an average of 273,256 visits per park. When projected forward, this gives a figure of nearly 73 million annual visits to Country Parks nationally. (This equates to approximately 6% of all visits to the countryside in England.)

Based on visitor survey comparisons or park staff impressions, 42% of parks felt their visitor numbers were stable, with 41% increasing and 17% declining.

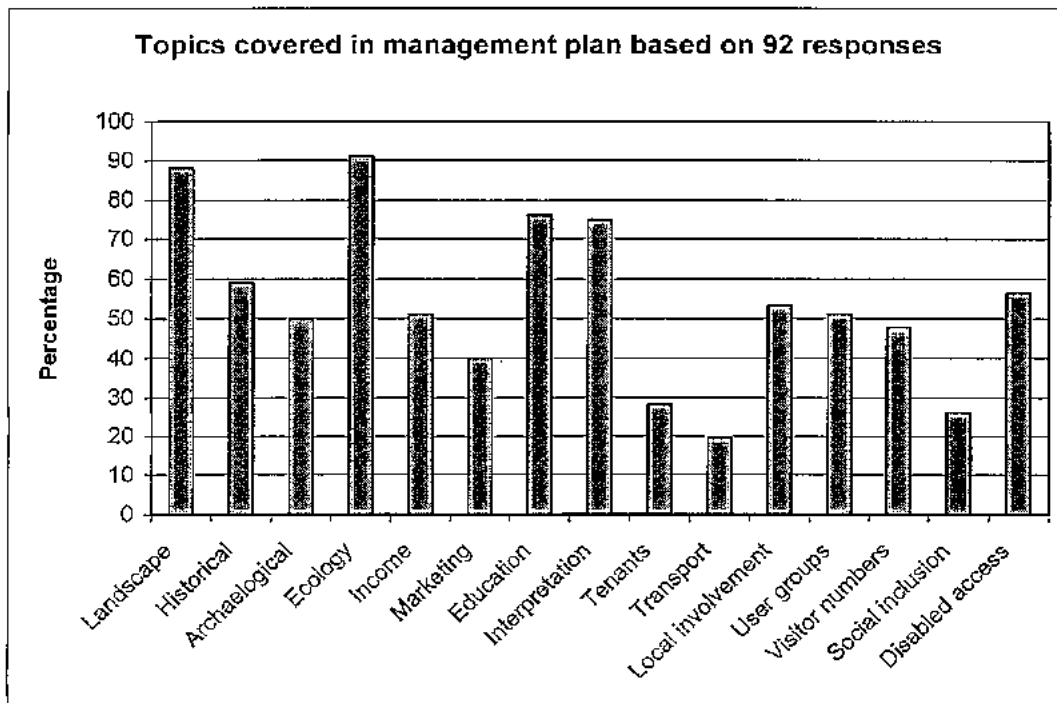
**Chart 8: The range of visitor activities indicated by the responding officers.**

| <b>Activity</b>            | <b>% of parks</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Interpretive walks/talks   | 85                |
| Special themed events      | 76                |
| Orienteering               | 62                |
| Cycling                    | 61                |
| Angling                    | 54                |
| Horse riding               | 46                |
| Fetes                      | 42                |
| BBQ                        | 35                |
| Musical events             | 31                |
| Sporting events            | 29                |
| Camping/caravanning        | 26                |
| Boating                    | 19                |
| Sailing                    | 18                |
| Weddings                   | 16                |
| Stock rearing              | 13                |
| Miniature railway          | 11                |
| Sports pitches             | 11                |
| Cycle hire                 | 9                 |
| Golf course                | 9                 |
| Markets                    | 8                 |
| Fairs                      | 7                 |
| Swimming                   | 7                 |
| Murder/mystery events      | 4                 |
| Water-skiing/power boating | 4                 |
| Crazy golf/putting         | 4                 |
| Ski facilities             | 2                 |

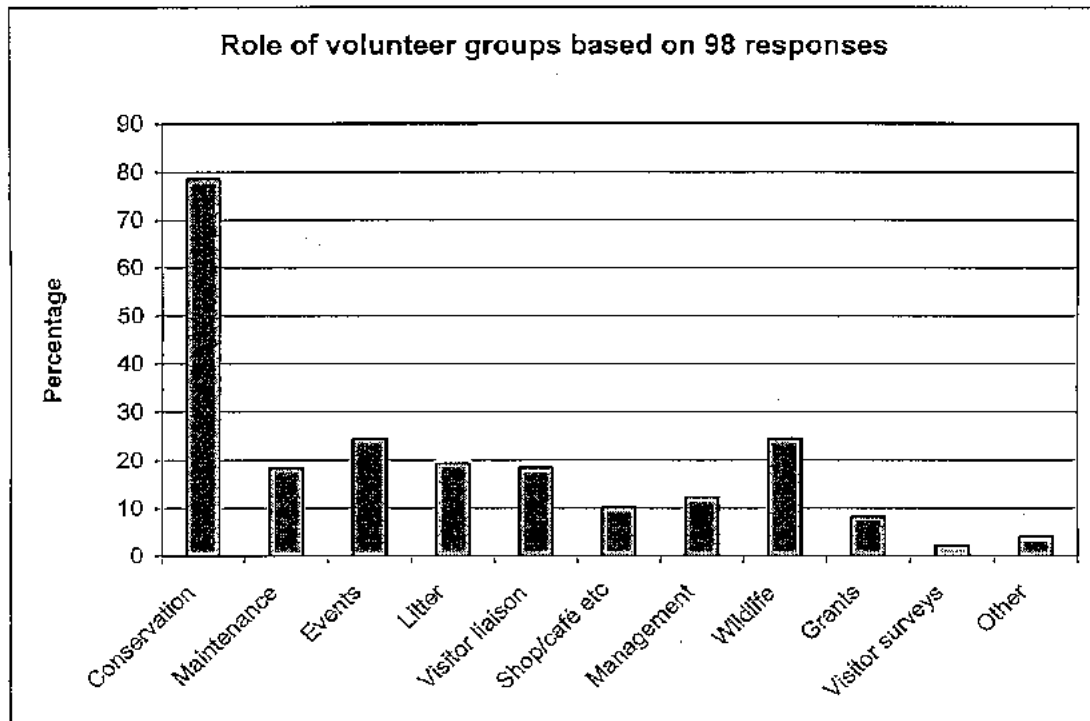
## Management

Whilst 64% of responding parks reported the existence of a management plan, only 46% of these were updated at intervals of less than two years. The plans covered a broad range of subjects but were by no means uniform in their approach. The Public Parks Assessment<sup>1</sup> in May 2001 found a clear link between the presence of management plans and an upward trend in park condition.

**Chart 9: Topics covered in management plans**



Country Parks have been very successful in attracting volunteer involvement, with the average park supporting the involvement of 3.5 volunteer groups.

**Chart 10: Role of volunteer groups in Country Parks**

### The Future

The report identifies a set of factors most likely to influence the future success and development of Country Parks:

- the need for a champion;
- a system of support;
- a shared identity and common goals;
- minimum standards;
- finance and funding;
- staff training and support;
- management plans.

The report looks in more detail at how this success can be achieved. Country Parks can become even more successful if they can be shown to address many of the national issues facing government today. For example, Country Parks can contribute to policy aims on:

- **Health** – via participation in sport and recreation, including healthy walking and green gyms, and the ability of greenspace to relieve stress-related symptoms;



- **Social inclusion** – by providing specifically for the needs of people with disabilities, families on low incomes and other excluded groups;
- **Social cohesion** – as places where a wide cross-section of society can enjoy a quality environment communally;
- **Culture, sport and the arts** - as venues in their own right, as quality environments, and for a diverse range of events;
- **Employment** – through education, training and lifelong learning programmes for staff and students as well as active members of community groups;
- **The needs of children and young people** – by providing safe and stimulating environments for play, learning, social interaction and sport and recreation;
- **Sustainability** – by acting as examples of good practice utilising sustainable resources and operational methods;
- **Biodiversity** – through their contribution to local and national 'Biodiversity Action Plans' and the active conservation and enhancement of nature and wildlife within the parks and surrounding areas;
- **Community engagement and active citizenship** – by engaging the local community and park users, by supporting community-based groups, and by offering opportunities for participation in a wide range of activities;
- **Linking town and country** – many Country Parks link town and country physically because of their urban fringe location. Country Parks have an important function in the urban fringe, both in conserving strategically important greenspace and in providing recreational opportunities for both rural and urban dwellers;
- **Tackling the urban/rural divide** – Country Parks link town and country socially and culturally. Their principal users comprise urban or suburban dwellers making visits to the countryside;
- **Heritage and tourism** – Country Parks have the potential to play an important role in local tourism, especially where they are based around a heritage property;
- **Education** – Country Parks can provide important educational opportunities, not always in terms of the national curriculum, but also in terms of allowing a general appreciation and understanding of the countryside and countryside matters.

## Conclusion

The report concludes with a set of recommendations:

- include Country Parks in local authority parks and greenspace strategies;
- ensure the continuity and enhancement of the country park image;
- develop incentives that encourage the participation of all Country Parks in the renaissance programme;
- develop a shared vision for Country Parks;
- realise the potential of Country Parks in linking the town to the countryside;
- develop a set of eight core activities in the work programme of all Country Parks, including recreation and sport, and education and interpretation;
- adopt a set of minimum quality/service standards for all Country Parks,
- address 'people' as well as 'place' in all country park work;
- promote, to all relevant bodies, the ability of Country Parks to assist in achieving social agenda objectives and targets;
- market and promote Country Parks, the services they provide, and the benefits they can offer;
- establish a national "delivery group" to link strategic development to delivery on the ground.

The Countryside Agency is working with partners to address these recommendations through:

- supporting the development of the existing Country Parks Network into a national forum for the discussion and exchange of information;
- developing a Country Parks website to promote and disseminate good practice within the Country Parks 'community';
- compiling practitioners' guidance and a self-audit database for inclusion on the Country Parks website to improve the competencies of country park staff;
- securing the commitment of local authorities to the wider social worth of Country Parks;
- identifying funding and income generation opportunities for Country Parks and promoting them through the network and website.

For further information please contact Liz Gaunt at Greenspace on 0118 946 9060, or email "Liz Gaunt" <lizg@green-space.org.uk>.

The full report is available at [www.countryside.gov.uk/tourism/countryparks.htm](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/tourism/countryparks.htm).

<sup>1</sup> *Urban Parks Forum (May 2001): Public Parks Assessment – A survey of local authority owned parks, focusing on parks of historic interest.*

<sup>2</sup> *DETR (November 2000): Our Countryside: The Future – A Fair Deal for Rural England*

# Countryside Recreation Network Seminar

## COUNTRY PARKS

### HISTORY OF COUNTRY PARKS

*Gareth Roberts*

*Head of Recreation, Access & European Affairs  
Countryside Council for Wales*

*Abstract – This paper reviews the historical development of Country Parks in Wales. It considers the role these landscapes have played historically, and are expected to continue to play, in meeting society's changing needs for leisure and pleasure.*

#### **Background**

Country Parks<sup>1</sup> are among our most popular recreational resources and include some of our most prized historic landscapes. There are 37 registered Country Parks in Wales. The Countryside Act 1968 states that a country park is 'a park or pleasure ground for the purposes of providing or improving opportunities for the enjoyment of the countryside by the public'. The 1968 Act gave the Countryside Commission powers to offer grant aid to support the establishment of Country Parks and in the following year it published criteria for judging applications<sup>2</sup>. A register of Country Parks was also established and a logo designed to 'badge' them. The use of the logo is now being used far more liberally, grant aid is less readily available and some Country Parks have developed and no longer fulfil the criteria set when they were first conceived. Whilst this in itself is not necessarily a problem, there remains a need to review Country Park policy in Wales to reconcile anomalies and uncertainties about the role of these areas. An understanding of the evolution and audit of Country Parks is an important first step in informing the way we need to approach their planning, and future management.

This paper is in three parts.

- The first briefly traces the historical development of parkland from medieval times up until the early 1970s when many of these historic parks and gardens were designated as Country Parks as a planned response to the perceived need to exercise more control over public access to the countryside.
- The second part describes the characteristics of Country Parks, their distribution and the contribution they currently are making to open air recreation and public enjoyment of the countryside in Wales.
- Finally, I consider the role that Country Parks might play in future to help the Countryside Council for Wales deliver its aim of further improving opportunities for open air recreation and public enjoyment of the countryside.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper 'Country Parks' refer to Parks designated under the provisions of the Countryside Act 1968.

## Parkland in Wales – a historical context

The landscaped park represents for many the quintessence of English landscape charm. I use the word English advisedly, for many of our parkland landscapes date from Norman times and are a product of a social order very different from that prevailing in Wales at that time. Though the early Anglo-Norman conquest of Wales resulted in sycophants following the English fashion and establishing deer parks most were quite small, concentrated in the S.E of Wales and the Marches and were short lived.<sup>i</sup> There are few literary references to park land in Welsh until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The bard Iolo Goch who described the deer park at the north Wales court of Owain Glyndwr was one of the first to use the term.<sup>2</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of the Tudors, following the Acts of Union (1536 and 1542) the Welsh gentry became increasingly anglicised and receptive to developing their estates in the English manner. Although more parks became established they were still to remain relatively thin on the ground for the next 150 years in Wales. Christopher Saxton, whose 'Atlas of England and Wales' published in 1579, provides us with the first county maps showing over 800 parks in England but not one is depicted on any of his Welsh maps. As late as 1786, Thomas Conder's map of north Wales, shows only four parks, all in the agriculturally richer valleys to the east of the Principality.<sup>3</sup>

The English word park is derived from the French 'parc' – a tract of ground, usually wooded and enclosed for the protection of the beasts of the chase. This has remained a recurring feature of parks down to the present day. Hunting the deer was the prerogative of the King and the establishment of a deer park a privilege bestowed by royal decree.

Parks continued to be developed and modified throughout the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in keeping with ideals of landscape beauty and taste currently prevailing. Throughout this period their prime purpose was to provide pleasurable and profitable settings for the large country houses which they surrounded. They afforded seclusion and prospect, produce and sport to a privileged few.

The prestige associated with parks made them increasingly popular with the gentry. Lodges were built as 'quiet seats, where the lord might indulge his sylvan tastes free from the cares of his household'.<sup>iii</sup> Tree lined walks or 'rides' which radiated out from country houses became an increasingly common feature of parks from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as epitomised in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century proverb:

'After dinner sit awhile  
After supper walk a mile'

---

<sup>2</sup> D. R. Johnston (1988) Gwaith Iolo Goch – p47.  
Gerllaw'r llys, gorlliwio'r llall,  
Y pawr ceirw mewn parc arall.

<sup>3</sup> A New and correct Map of North Wales (1786) ... T. Conder sculpt. Published by Alex. Hogg, at the Kings Arms, Paternoster Row, London.

Parkland has long been associated with love and paradise. Shakespeare's poem 'Venus and Adonis' provides us with one of the most evocative and sensual references in English literature to love and landscape. In the poem Venus likens her body to parkland in which she first seeks to seduce Adonis (her fawn) to graze and then take his pleasure.

I believe that it is this long historical tradition and the associations with romantic imagery, valour (hunting) and enclosure (protection/possession) that best helps explain our enduring popularity of parks. They have become part of our culture.

Surveys undertaken by the Countryside Commission in the 1980s still showed stately homes, Country Parks and gardens accounting for up to one-quarter of the recreational trips to the countryside. Little wonder then that the National Trust (Britain's most popular charitable organisation) continues to record parkland sites as being its most visited properties.<sup>iv</sup>

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the park came to symbolise for most people the best opportunity to access the countryside. The demise and consequent break-up of many of the country estates made rural parkland the obvious candidate for satisfying the growing demands of townspeople for rural recreational opportunity.

The public policy response to this demand came in the form of a White Paper that advocated the case for Country Parks.<sup>v</sup> Country Parks were seen as having a three fold function, namely:

*'They would make it easier for town dwellers to enjoy their leisure in the open, without travelling too far and adding to the congestion on the roads; they would ease the pressure on the more remote and solitary places; and they would reduce the risk of damage to the countryside – aesthetic as well as physical – which often comes about when people simply settle down for an hour a day where it suits them...'*

The Countryside Commission considered that these parks should not be less than 25 acres in extent, to be open to the public free of charge and have the 'capacity to absorb a considerable number of people or to provide a variety of recreational activities'.<sup>vi</sup> To be recognised by the Countryside Commission they also needed to be:

- (a) readily accessible for motor vehicles and pedestrians;
- (b) provided with an adequate range of facilities, including car parking, lavatories, and a supervisory service, and
- (c) operated and managed by statutory bodies or private agencies or a combination of both.

The first Country Parks were opened to the public in 1970. Allan Patmore commenting on the Countryside Commission's willingness to support (with 75% grant aid) the establishment of these new Country Parks described them as 'the ultimate creation of a carefully conceived pattern of recreational opportunity rather than a sporadic response to demand'.<sup>vii</sup>

To some leisure and planning may appear diametrically opposed and incompatible. 'The Guardian' seemed to suggest this when it described the Countryside Commission's logo for Country Parks as symbolic of *'two adults and a child who managed to get into a country park now clamouring for a lift to get out of it!'*<sup>viii</sup>

### **The characteristics of Welsh Country Parks**

The legislation (Countryside Act 1968 ) which provides for the establishment of Country Parks is common to England and Wales. Although Wales secured its own devolved National Assembly in 1998, the Welsh Assembly Government has no primary legislative powers. Consequently, policies relating to public access and enjoyment of the countryside are virtually synonymous in the two home countries.

In 1991 the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) was established as advisor to the UK and Welsh Assembly Governments on nature conservation, landscape and public access and enjoyment of the countryside and coast. Since then differences have begun to emerge on approaches and priorities in the implementation of countryside policy in England and Wales.

Countryside Commission policy on Country Parks was published in March 1969.<sup>ix</sup> This policy provided for grant aid to be paid at 75% for the establishment and management of Country Parks.

In the next decade 148 Country Parks were designated by the Countryside Commission in England and Wales. Sixty six of these Country Parks or 45% of the total were designated in part because of their historic or architectural interest.

Looking at the sub-set of Welsh Country Parks a similar pattern emerges with 20 (55%) of the Country Parks being established in the first ten years. There has been a subsequent tailing off in the creation of new Country Parks in subsequent decades which is explained in large part by:

- a reduction in the total amount and proportion of grant aid available to establish Country Parks;<sup>4</sup>
- spending on countryside management work becoming less prescribed;
- the growth in commercial provision of out door leisure parks;
- increasing demand and opportunity to access the wider countryside;
- the coincidental policy objectives (landscape conservation and land reclamation) driving Country Parks policy have been largely achieved.

---

<sup>4</sup> In 1992/93 CCW provided grant aid to 23 Country Parks in Wales amounting to £305,733. Two thirds of this funding went to supporting 56 posts.<sup>4</sup> CCW no longer supports any revenue expenditure on Country Parks in Wales.

Although the policy guidance governing Country Parks have been broadly the same there are some interesting differences in the implementation and outcomes of this policy in the two countries, notably:

- The proportion of historic parks and gardens designated as Country Parks in Wales is less than in England
- A higher proportion of Welsh Country Parks have been created from reclaimed former derelict colliery and other industrial land.
- An increasing proportion of Country Parks are being managed for their nature conservation interest.

The characteristics of Country Parks in Wales are given in the following two tables. This information has been gleaned from published leaflets (noted by asterisk \*) where available and / or contact with the managers of the Parks concerned. A typology of Country Parks is given below.

A typology of Country Parks in Wales (2003)

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Number of Country Parks in Wales        | 38 |
| Designated in the 1970s                 | 21 |
| Designated in the 1980s                 | 10 |
| Designated in the 1990s                 | 5  |
| Designated since 2000                   | 2  |
| Registered historic parks or gardens    | 7  |
| Registered listed buildings / monuments | 15 |
| NNR, SSSI, LNR                          | 11 |
| Created from derelict land              | 13 |
| In public ownership                     | 35 |
| Private ownership or in trust           | 2  |

**Table 1: Country Parks in Wales (date of establishment, size and management arrangements)**

| Name * Leaflet received   | Unitary Authority       | Date estab | Ownership                              | Size (ha.) | Access Charges | Contact (August 2003)                    |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------|--|------------|----------------|--|
| Craig-y-Nos *             | Brecon Beacons NP       | 1976       | BBNP                                   | 17         | N CP           | Richard Levy, Manager                    |
| Parc Cefn Onn *           | Cardiff City Council    | 1978       | Cardiff City Council                   | 81         | N              | Dave Hopkins, Operational Manager        |
| Forest Farm *             | Cardiff City Council    | 1992       | Cardiff City Council                   | 205        | N              | Chris Powell, Parks Conservation Officer |
| Llyn Llech Owain *        | Carmarthenshire CC      | 1973       | Carmarthenshire CC                     | 63         | N CP           | Simon Morris, Snr Ranger                 |
| Pembrey *                 | Carmarthenshire CC      | 1980       | Carmarthenshire CC                     | 1220       | Y              | Neil Perry, Manager                      |
| Gelli Aur *               | Carmarthenshire CC      | 1979       | Carmarthenshire CC (On Lease)          | 25         | N CP           | Mike Smith, Snr Ranger                   |
| Great Orme *              | Conwy CBC               | 1980       | Conwy CBC                              | 791        | Y&N            | Sally Pidcock, C P Warden                |
| Dare *                    | Rhondda C V CBC         | 1973       | RCV CBC                                | 196        | N              | Howard Martin, Asst Manager              |
| Loggerheads *             | Denbighshire CC         | 1974       | Denbighshire CC                        | 32         | N CP           | Huw Rees, Principal Countryside Officer  |
| Moel Famau *              | Denbighshire CC         | 1974       | Denbighshire                           | 800        | N CP           | " " " " "                                |
| Waun-y-llyn               | Flintshire CC           | 1974       | Flintshire CC                          | 30         | N              | Tom Woodall, Snr Ranger                  |
| Wepre Park *              | Flintshire CC           | 1981       | Flintshire CC                          | 67         | N              | " " " " "                                |
| Greenfield Valley         | Flintshire CC           | 1984       | Flintshire CC                          | 28         | N CP           | Helen Brockley Park Manager              |
| Pen-y-Fan Pond            | Caerphilly CBC          | 1976       | Caerphilly CBC                         | 5          | N              | John Hole, Snr Countryside Ranger        |
| Sirhowy                   | Caerphilly CBC          | 1987       | Caerphilly CBC                         | 405        | N              | " " " " "                                |
| Parc Bryn bach            | Blaenau Gwent CBC       | 1981       | Blaenau Gwent & Caerphilly             | 243        | N              | John Cavel, Park Manager                 |
| Padarn                    | Gwynedd Council         | 1970       | Gwynedd C                              | 323        | N CP           | Ken Latham, Park Manager                 |
| Glynllifon *              | Gwynedd Council         | 1987       | Gwynedd Council / Coleg Meirion Dwyfor | 70         | Y              | Gwynedd Roberts, Park Manager            |
| Caldicot *                | Monmouth CC             | 1974       | Monmouth CC                            | 23         | N Y(castle)    | Dennis Manning, Country Park Warden.     |
| Gnoll                     | Neath - Port Talbot CBC | 1986       | Neath PT CBC                           | 200        | N              | Elizabeth Ford, Manager                  |
| Afan Argoed Forest Park * | Neath Port Talbot CBC   | 1972       | Neath PT CBC                           | 6          | N CP           | Dick Wagstaff, Hd Ranger                 |
| Tredegar House *          | Newport City Council    | 1974       | Newport City Council                   | 37         | N CP           | Bob Sugden, CP Officer                   |
| Bryngarw                  | Bridgend CBC            | 1980       | Bridgend CBC                           | 46         | N CP           | Mike Lawton, Head Ranger                 |
| Scolton Manor             | Pembrokeshire CC        | 1973       | Pembrokeshire CC                       | 24         | N CP           | Brian Barney, Head Ranger                |
| Llys y Fran *             | Pembrokeshire CC        | 1972       | Welsh Water                            | 78         | N CP           | John Waddington, Head Ranger             |
| Parc Bryn bach            | Blaenau Gwent CBC       | 1984       | Blaenau Gwent / Caerphilly CBC's       | 243        | N CP           | John Kivel, Park Manager                 |
| Parc Cwm Daran *          | Caerphilly CBC          | 1978       | Caerphilly CBC                         | 117        | N              | Mike Honey, County Ranger                |
| Clyne Valley              | Swansea City & County   | 1980       | Swansea City and County                | 283        | N CP           |  |
| Margam *                  | Neath P T CBC           | 1973       | Neath Port Talbot CBC                  | 344        | N CP           | Ray Butt, Park Manager                   |
| Erddig                    | National Trust          | 1977       | National Trust                         | 404        | Y              | Gavin Hogg, Property Manager             |



| Name<br>* Leaflet<br>received | Unitary<br>Authority | Date<br>estab | Ownership        | Size<br>(ha.) | Access<br>Charges | Contact (August 2003)                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------|--|
| Ty Mawr *                     | Wrexham CBC          | 1986          | Wrexham CBC      | 14            | N CP              | Liz Carding, Head Ranger               |
| Alun<br>Waters *              | Wrexham CBC          | 1994          | Wrexham CBC      | 202           | N CP              | Martin Howarth,<br>Countryside Manager |
| Breakwater<br>Quarry          | Ynys Mon CC          | 1990          | Ynys Mon CC      | 42            | N CP              | Will Stewart, Park Warden              |
| Cosmeston<br>Lakes            | Vale of Glam<br>CBC  | 1978          | Vale of Glam CBC | 99            | N CP              | Steve Latham, CP<br>Manager            |
| Porth<br>Kerry                | Vale of Glam<br>CBC  | 1972          | Vale of Glam CBC | 85            | Y(Sun)CP          | Steve Latham, CP<br>Manager            |
| Minera                        | Wrexham CBC          | 1993          | Wrexham CBC      | 22            | N CP              | Tasmin Butler, Snr Ranger              |
| Bonc yr<br>Hafod              | Wrexham CBC          | 2001          | Wrexham CBC      | 24            | N CP              | Liz Carding Snr, Ranger                |
| Stryllas<br>Park              | Wrexham CBC          | 1990          | Wrexham CBC      | 4             | N CP              | Liz Carding, Snr ranger                |
| Moss<br>Valley                | Wrexham CBC          | 2003/<br>4    | Wrexham CBC      | 40            | N CP              | Tasmin Butler, Snr Ranger              |

**Table 2: Country Parks in Wales – (Landscape character, facilities and opportunities for public enjoyment)**

| Name               | Unitary Authority | Character  | Activities offered   | Facilities  | Countryside Commission or CCW Grant aided <sup>5</sup> | Comments   |
|--------------------|-------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| Craig-y-Nos *      | Brecon Beacons NP | Historic house & 19 <sup>th</sup> century gardens and ponds      | Walks and trails.<br>Wildlife study  | Toilets, exhibition, shop, classroom, guided walks.<br>Disabled access(?)<br>Dogs on leads                | CoCo   |  |
| Parc Cefn Onn *    | Cardiff           | Edwardian woodland park, pools.                                  | Paths  | Nature study,<br>Disabled Access(?)<br>Dogs on leads  | CoCo   |  |
| Forest Farm *      | Cardiff           | Wetland, woodland, grassland, sports ground,                     | Cycling, walks, nature study, Fishing, team sports                               | Information centre, Sports pitches' Bird hide<br>Information centre<br>Craft fayres<br>Disabled access(?) | CCW  |  |
| Llyn Llech Owain * | Camarthenshire    | Forest and lake  | Walks rides, guides, nature study  | Forest tracks, mountain bike trails, café, visitor centre.  | CCW  |  |
| Pembrey            | Camarthenshire    | Parkland and beach   | Walking, cycling, orienteering, nature study                                     | Ski slope, pitch & putt, visitor centre, miniature railway, refreshments, school groups<br>Guided walks   | CoCo<br>CCW  | Western Mail (3/9/03) reports proposed Safari park planned for 500k visitor p.a. |
| Gelli Aur *        | Camarthenshire    | 17 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> century deer park. Arboretum | Nature study<br>Play area<br>Guided walks  | Refreshments<br>Disabled Access(?)<br>Visitor centre  | CoCo<br>CCW  | Privatised Country House (WDA)   |
| Great Orme *       | Conwy BC          | Limestone pavement & calcareous grassland                        | Nature study (SSSI)<br>Walks   | Refreshments<br>Visitor centre<br>Ski centre<br>Tramway   | CoCo<br>CCW  |  |
| Dare Valley *      | Cynon Valley      | Woodland and grassland   | pony trekking, fishing, walks and trails.<br>Nature study                        | Camping, caravanning, café, visitor centre, accommodation<br>Class rooms.                                 | CoCo<br>CCW  | Restored derelict colliery land  |
| Loggerheads *      | Denbighshire      |  | Industrial trail, habitat, and geological trail.<br>Guided walks<br>Nature study | Trail leaflet   | CoCo<br>CCW  |  |
| Moel Famau *       | Denbighshire      | Open moorland  | Guided walks, mountain biking, nature study                                      | Toilets, 5 circular walks<br>Health walks programme   | CoCo<br>CCW  |  |
| Waun-y-llyn        | Flintshire        |  |  |   | CoCo<br>CCW  |  |
| Wepre *            | Flintshire        | Woodland   | Leaflet<br>Woodland walks<br>Nature study  | Visitor centre, Castle  | CoCo<br>CCW  |  |
| Pen-y-Fan Pond     | Gwent             |  |  |   | CoCo   |  |
| Sirhowy            | Gwent             |  |  |   | CoCo<br>CCW  |  |
| Cosmeston Lakes    | Vale of Glam CBC  |  |  |   | CCW  | Restored former colliery derelict land   |
| Padarn             | Gwynedd           |  |  |   | CoCo<br>CCW  |  |

<sup>5</sup> Denotes grant aid support offered by either / or both Countryside Commission (pre 1991) or CCW (post 1991).

|                   |                     |  |  |  |             |  |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|--|--|-------------|--|
| Glynliffon *      | Gwynedd             | Historic house and parkland 18 <sup>th</sup> & 19 <sup>th</sup> century  | Walks<br>Nature study (bats!)  | Craft workshops, sculpture park, festivals<br>Refreshments<br>Disabled access(?)<br>Dogs on leads      | CoCo<br>CCW |  |
| Caldicot *        | Monmouth            | Norman castle & parkland   | Medieval banquets<br>Orienteering,<br>Wildlife study   | Refreshments<br>Shop<br>Disabled access(?)<br>Events programme   | CoCo<br>CCW |  |
| Gnoll             | Neath - Port Talbot | 18 <sup>th</sup> century formal & informal gardens and cascades          |  | Refreshments<br>Disabled access (?)<br>Dogs on leads   | CoCo        |  |
| Afan Argoed *     | Neath Port Talbot   |  |  |  | CoCo<br>CCW |  |
| Tredeggar House * | Newport             | 17 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> century house and gardens            | Walks  | Refreshments<br>Disabled Access(?)<br>No dogs  | CoCo        |  |
| Bryngarw          | Ogwr                |  |  |  | CCW         |  |
| Scolton Manor     | Pembrokeshire       |  |  |  | CoCo<br>CCW |  |
| Liys y Fran *     | Pembrokeshire       | Reservoir  | Fishing<br>Cycling, walking<br>Sailing<br>Adventure playground   | Refreshments<br>Visitor centre<br>Gift shop<br>Toilets<br>Disabled access(?)                           | CoCo        |  |
| Parc Bryn bach *  | Blaenau Gwent CBC   | Grassland, woodland, lake  | Fishing<br>Water skiing<br>Hand gliding<br>Orienteering<br>Adventure playground<br>Walks<br>Nature study | Refreshments<br>Motor cycle eventing<br>Kite festival<br>Countryside centre<br>Bunkhouse accommodation | CoCo<br>CCW | Restored derelict colliery land              |
| Parc Cwm Daran *  | Caerphilly CBC      | Woodland, lake, grassland and moorland.                                  | Outdoor activities<br>Nature study<br>Walks & trails   | Refreshments<br>Disabled access(?)<br>Caravan & campsite<br>Educational visits                         | CoCo<br>CCW |  |
| Clyne Valley      | Swansea             | 19 <sup>th</sup> century landscaped garden, exotic trees & rhododendrons | May festival 'Clyne in Bloom'  | Limited Disabled access(?)<br>No dogs  | CoCo        |  |
| Margam            | Neath Port Talbot   | 18 <sup>th</sup> century park land & house                               | Guided walks, nature study, shows / festivals,   | Refreshments<br>Wardens<br>Steam train<br>Disabled access(?)<br>Dogs on leads                          | CoCo<br>CCW |  |
| Erddig            | Wrexham             | 18 <sup>th</sup> century formal garden & parkland                        |  | Refreshments<br>Disabled access(?)<br>Plant nursery<br>No dogs   | CoCo        | National Trust property.                     |
| Ty Mawr *         | Wrexham             | Woodland, grassland & river habitats                                     | Rare breeds farm<br>Guided Walks<br>Nature study<br>Sculpture projects<br><br>WW2H                       | Visitor centre, Coach Parking<br>Toilets, refreshments<br>Disabled access                              | CCW         | Excellent – focus on environmental education |
| Alun Waters *     | Wrexham             | Woodland, grassland, & wetland habitats                                  | Arts in the environment<br>Ranger led activities<br>Birthday parties (children)<br><br>WW2H              | Visitor centre, Classroom, coach parking, Toilets, Refreshments<br>Disabled access                     |             | Excellent – focus on environmental education |
| Breakwater Quarry | Ynys Mon            |  |  |  | CoCo        |  |

The landscape imperative of reclaiming derelict land has been the prime driver in determining the location of Country Parks. The Derelict Land Agency (later the Welsh Development Agency) provided 100% grant aid to local authorities to reclaim land and this followed up with 75% grant aid towards establishing a country park proved a powerful incentive.

A third of Welsh Country Parks feature in the guide to historic parks and gardens in Wales.<sup>x</sup> They contain a great deal to interest the public and enhance our understanding of natural and local history. Many of the large country house parkland landscapes, had long been 'familiar' to our forefathers, but have, until recently, had their gates firmly closed. Even those parks established by the beneficiaries of the industrial revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century typically had high walls built around them, as one wag poignantly put it, 'to keep the pheasants in and the peasants out!'

Word-of-mouth recommendation and the effective marketing of their literary, artistic and historic associations has helped strengthen the popular appeal of many of the Welsh Country Parks. Budget cut backs have seen some Parks close and others reviewing their future. Glynllifon was deregistered as a Country Park in 2000 and has since reopened a visitor attraction which charges for entry.

More recently a disparate variety of attractions and interests are being considered to boost visitor numbers, albeit they do little or nothing to add to their intrinsic character.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere theme parks are being developed as commercial ventures but offer by way of improving public awareness and understanding of the countryside and its natural history.

Latterly, we are seeing Country Parks being established and or developed to promote nature conservation purposes. Eleven (29%) of all Country Parks in Wales are also wholly or partly designated as sites of special scientific interest or local nature reserves.

### **The future for Country Parks in Wales**

The paradox of Country Parks is that their development in the 1970s was suffused by two frequently contradictory sets of ideas. The first was to provide a new type of recreation attraction to enhance visitor enjoyment of the countryside. The second was the perceived need to protect the countryside from the spread of 'gambolling humanity across the whole island' by corralling them into 'honey-pot' sites. The protection imperative prevailed and signalled a massive investment in Country Park development in the 1970s. By the 1980s funds for new Country Parks began to dry up. A growing dilemma for us today is sustaining those we have left.

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<sup>6</sup> Western Mail (3/9/03) reported that a Safari Park was being considered at Pembrey Country Park as part of an £80 million attraction creating 260 jobs.

The provision of Country Parks and picnic sites as places officially allocated for the masses to enjoy the countryside reflects views prevalent in the 1950s and 60s about the need to carefully prescribe, plan for, and keep under control (manage) public access to the countryside.<sup>xi</sup> These policies contrast starkly with the present Government's commitment to give the public freedom to explore open countryside and common land.

Despite the greater opportunity to enjoy the wider countryside, it is very evident the role of Country Parks continues to evolve, and many of them are very well placed to contribute to the leisure needs of people in Wales today. A worry is that some of these opportunities may be lost because resources may not be secured to realise this. A Wales wide strategic framework to support the case for resources is needed.

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) last reviewed its Country Park policy in the 1990s. An independent review of Country Park policy and management undertaken in the 1980s had already started to question the rationale behind the Countryside Commission's grant aid policy which seemed to be '*unrelated to any form of social accounting or cost benefit analysis*'.<sup>xii</sup> CCW concluded likewise. As a result we decided to curtail future grant aid for the development and management of Country Parks *per se*.

We also concluded that our predecessors had interpreted their recreation and access brief too narrowly and primarily in terms of walking, cycling and horse riding. We decided that we would interpret our statutory brief to provide facilities and opportunities for open-air recreation much more liberally. In 1996, in partnership with the Sports Council for Wales we published a policy acknowledging that many of our National Nature Reserves - some of the most sensitive nature conservation sites we manage - were providing venues for a wide range of out door sporting activities with little if no adverse impact on their environmental qualities.<sup>xiii</sup>

By the end of the 1990s we had witnessed the pendulum swing sharply away from the idea that access to the countryside has to be prescribed, sanitised and carefully controlled. Over a century after Tom Ellis first sought to secure a statutory right of access to open countryside in Wales, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 now offers the prospect by early 2005 of public rights of access to almost 400,000 hectares (20%) of the land area of Wales. Every part of Wales will benefit. We have calculated that some of this 'access land' (i.e. mountain, moor, heath, down or registered common land) together with the additional 150,000 hectares or so of state forest which will be dedicated for access, will be within a relatively short distance (say 2 kilometres) of every household in Wales. So what then is the future, if any, for Country Parks?

In 2001 CCW published its vision for the countryside in Wales for the period up to the end of the decade. Last year we sought to translate the vision into programmes of work suggest that our Country Parks are important assets in delivering the vision.

In particular, Country Parks offer excellent opportunities for people to gain access to sites that – in the main- are well managed and supervised. This is important in building confidence among people who might otherwise feel apprehensive about embarking on a visit to the countryside. The presence of wardens, organised activities (such as guided walks), toilets, cafes, supervised car parks, and promotional leaflets all helped to make Country Parks attractive venues for many people.

Country Parks have been the venues for some of CCW's prominent promotional campaigns in the past decade. Our Lonc a Chlonc / Walk and Talk programme was launched in 1995 in the Dare Country Park. This proved to be the harbinger of the British Heart Foundation *Walking Your Way to Health* programme now sponsored by the New Opportunities Fund. Several of the WW2H schemes in Wales will be staged at Country Parks in part because the facilities provided at these sites are ideal for new recruits to walking and active exercise.

Many of our Country Parks are situated within close proximity to the 100 most deprived communities in Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) wishes to see more resources targeted at these 'communities first' areas.

Some of our Country Parks have successfully managed to diversify their activities to attract a wider range of visitors. The Margam Country Park is an exemplar of a historic parkland landscape that accommodates the recreational needs of a wide variety of interests. Parc Bryn Bach – one of our most recently designated Country Parks – is an excellent example of a holiday park - providing accommodation and catering for pursuits such as hang gliding and motor cycle scrambling – which are becoming increasingly popular activities

Country Parks clearly offer opportunities to contribute to open air-recreation and public enjoyment of the Welsh countryside. Their role in future, however, is likely to be more to do with complementing rather than meeting main stream needs.

Key roles will be in:

- Providing venues for specialist events - including noisy sports;
- Supporting programmes such as WW2H
- Offering exemplar sites for promoting access initiatives;
- Encouraging and supporting 'new recruits';
- Providing opportunities for people living in some of our most deprived communities to enjoy countryside close to their homes;
- Providing opportunities for people to experience and learn about nature;
- Helping to conserve and promote some of our most important landscape, historic and nature conservation sites.

Country Parks clearly have a continuing role to play in providing opportunities for people to enjoy the countryside in Wales but unlike before it will be a complimentary role, perhaps offering special recreational facilities and opportunities, doubtless prized by their local communities, but unlikely, ever

again, to command the proportion of resources and political support they did twenty years ago.

- i The Countryside Commission (1969) *Countryside Commission –policy on Country Parks and picnic sites.*
- ii Linnard, William (2000). *Welsh Woods and Forests a History* Gomer Press Llandysul.
- iii Shirley, Evelyn P. (1867) ‘*Some Account of English Deer Parks*’ London.
- iv Shoard, M. (1979) ‘*Access: can present opportunities be widened?*’ in *Countryside for All* CCP 117 Countryside Commission, Cheltenham.
- v Cmnd. 2928 (1966) *Leisure in the Countryside*, England and Wales. HMSO.
- vi Countryside Commission (1969) *Policy on Country Parks and Picnic Sites*. HMSO.
- vii Patmore, J. Allan (1970) *Land and Leisure* David and Charles.
- viii The Guardian 23/2/89
- ix Countryside Commission (1969) *Policy on Country Parks and Picnic Sites*. HMSO.
- x The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (2002) *Guide to the Historic Parks and Gardens of Wales*, Talybont, Ceredigion.
- xi Dower, M. (1965) *The fourth wave: the challenge of leisure*, A Civic Trust Survey. Architect’s Journal.
- xii Slee, B. (1982) *Country Parks: A Review of Policy and Management Issues*; Gloucestershire Papers in Local and Rural Planning No. 17 GLOSCAT.
- xiii CCW / SCW (1996) *A sporting chance for the countryside* Bangor / Cardiff.

# **Countryside Recreation Network Seminar**

## **COUNTRY PARKS**

### **STANDARDS FOR SCOTTISH COUNTRY PARKS**

*Mairi Caughey  
National Strategy Officer  
Scottish Natural Heritage*

#### **Background**

In Scotland, local authorities have created some thirty-six Country Parks, using powers under the 1967 Countryside (Scotland) Act and guided by the former Countryside Commission for Scotland's (CCS) 1970 policy on Country Parks.

So that the concept of Country Parks could be understood and accepted as widely as possible by the public, and to help secure and maintain standards, the CCS adopted a procedure for registration of Country Parks. This entailed formal approval where it appeared that a proposed Park would be used and managed in the manner framed by the legislation and envisaged by the CCS policy, and where an adequate range of facilities was provided.

The requirements were couched in terms of five criteria concerning: adequate road and path access; convenient location; adequate range of facilities; a single co-ordinated management plan; and adequate funding to meet approved standards. Proposals that complied with these criteria were eligible for CCS grant. This grant was available for expenditure on the acquisition of land, and capital expenditure on development for informal outdoor recreation, including the provision of car and bus parks, internal roads and footpaths, lavatories and landscaping. Grant was also available for litter collection and support for ranger services.

However, no new Parks have been registered since 1985, although occasionally proposals are still discussed. For this reason and others concerning the changed context, the relevance of the original policy has come into question. And whilst the thirty-six Country Parks are now well established, the CCS's successor, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), believes that they face a range of challenges if they are to remain popular with the public and continue to fulfil their essential purposes.

In short, whereas the idea of standards was originally associated with a minimum range of facilities, designed and built to high specifications, SNH considers that the standards issue is now about whether the infrastructure and facilities found at Country Parks, and the general management of Country Parks, reflects changes in the world of leisure and recreation, meets public expectations and matches, if not exceeds, the very best of comparable sites in private ownership. Moreover, whilst provision of opportunities for recreation,



rather than conservation of the natural heritage, is the primary purpose of Country Parks, SNH believes it is important they are exemplars in management of the natural heritage because the natural heritage is important as the setting for people's enjoyment of recreation, be it formal or informal.

### **The Purposes of Standards**

In looking to the future, standards will need to serve a wider variety of purposes. Firstly, assuming that we want to allow flexibility to assess any new proposals for Country Parks, there needs to be a revised set of standards against which new proposals for Country Parks can be assessed. However, in addition to those concerning minimum levels of infrastructure provision, new criteria concerning proximity to settlements and accessibility may now be appropriate.

Secondly, there is a role for standards that say something about the quality of facilities and services to expect at Country Parks – in other words, service standards that are about managing places for people. The application of standards such as these are thought to be essential if Country Parks are to remain competitive with the best, comparable examples in private ownership.

And thirdly, there is a need for standards that concern the management of the place itself e.g. standards concerning emphasis of natural beauty, protection of flora and fauna, and 'green' or environmentally sensitive management.

Of course, many aspects of management are already being addressed by the implementation of Best Value principles and other initiatives. And in Scotland, some Country Parks are attaining wider recognition for the quality of their services and attractions in the form of the Visit Scotland Award. In fact, it has been suggested that official accreditation of this nature is essential if applying for external funding.

However, notwithstanding widespread consensus on the purposes and value of setting standards, the use of management plans as a tool for clearly establishing management principles and practices is thought to have fallen by the wayside in Scotland, with a number of managing authorities indicating that they don't use them or even see the need for them.

### **The Future**

A number of options suggest themselves as means of raising and maintaining standards in Scottish Country Parks. The production of guidance on best practice, including updated guidance on the production of management plans, is perhaps the simplest option, and it would allow research to be specifically targeted towards those subjects identified as being most relevant to the challenges facing Country Parks. Such an approach perhaps has the advantage of not requiring the establishment of a formal administration scheme; it merely implies a role for SNH in reviewing the extent of implementation and the effectiveness of any agreed standards. The disadvantage, however, is that there would be no obvious profile to this work to reinforce the Country Park brand in the public's mind.

Secondly, a bespoke accreditation scheme could be devised, and this would have the advantage of creating a unique identity for Scottish Country Parks. But launching and raising the profile of such a scheme implies considerable resources and might take some time before it was generally recognised by the public.

Lastly, because there are currently no accreditation schemes in Scotland which are wholly relevant to Country Parks, the English Green Flag scheme is being considered for introduction to Scotland. This is operated by the Civic Trust and specifically identifies Country Parks as a type of eligible open space. The advantage, of course, is that this scheme has been running successfully for several years and the criteria for accreditation are now well tested. Nevertheless, the administration of this scheme would need to be addressed in a different way, since this scheme does not fall within the remit of the equivalent Scottish body. A further disadvantage with this option is that, again, it may take some time before it is recognised by the public.

Each of these options has its merits and detractors, but the bottom line is that we must look for a way of setting standards which informs the public about the nature and level of facilities to expect and also give them reason to believe that the Park will be well managed and maintained and that the experience will be welcoming.

Whatever option we pursue must also be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the variations that have evolved between Parks in terms of facilities and attractions, since it is not necessary for all Parks to have the same range.

Lastly and importantly, Country Parks must be able to demonstrate not just best practice but also value for money if they are to justify continued investment by their local authorities.

# **Countryside Recreation Network Seminar**

## **COUNTRY PARKS**

### **COUNTRY PARKS IN NORTHERN IRELAND A FOCUS ON VISIONING**

*Hugh McCann  
Regional Manager  
Environment Heritage Service (EHS)*

My presentation will outline the need for a vision and a policy for Environment and Heritage Service's (EHS) seven Country Parks in Northern Ireland. I will address how this was taken forward under the following headings, Problem, Context, Solution, Outcome and Assessment.

#### **Problem**

A requirement to document detailed management plans for each EHS-managed country park drew attention to the lack of guiding principles for staff to use in developing their management proposals. This prompted Regional Operations to undertake a visioning exercise to develop Policy and common standards for management of Country Parks.

#### **Context**

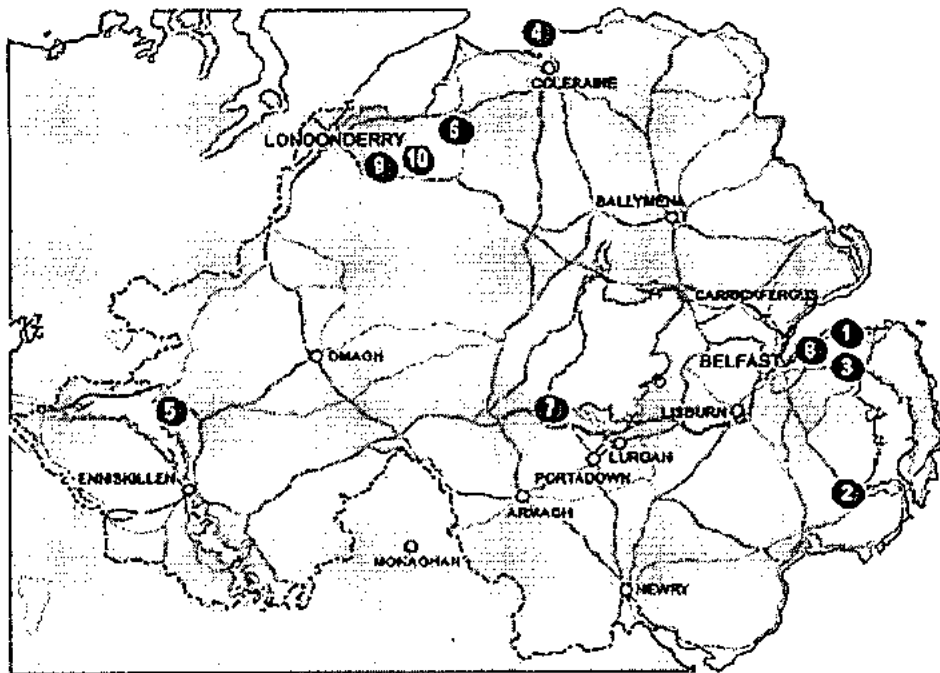
##### **Historical overview**

The first Country Parks in Northern Ireland were established in the early 1970s under the Amenity Lands Act (Northern Ireland) 1965, which set up an Ulster Countryside Committee (UCC) charged with advising Government *inter alia* on the purchase and management of Amenity Lands. The UCC recommended the acquisition of a suite of Country Parks which would provide for safe, countryside recreation, primarily for urban dwellers, in a variety of natural settings including the coast, woodland, river corridors, lakeside, hills and later peatland.

Responsibility for the seven EHS Country Parks lies with the Regional Operations Unit of the Natural Heritage Directorate of EHS. EHS is an Agency within the Dept of Environment for NI and so is part of Government. The Agency's mission statement is; *"Our aim is to protect and conserve the natural and man-made environment and to promote its appreciation for the benefit of present and future generations"*

Another EHS Functional Units, Countryside and Coast, encourages countryside amenity provision through grant aid to NGOs such as the National Trust and the 26 Local Authorities so there are other Country Parks in NI. Forest Service run several large Forest Parks that provide amenities normally associated with Country Parks.

### Map of NI showing Country Parks & Countryside Centres



1. Crawfordsburn Country Park coast and wooded glen
2. Quoile Countryside Centre
3. Scrabo Tower & Country Park hilltop, scrub and woodland
4. Portrush Countryside Centre
5. Castle Archdale Country Park lake shore, woodland and parkland
6. Roe Valley Country Park river corridor and woodland
7. Peatlands Park intact and cut-over peat bog
8. Redburn Country Park parkland, woodland and meadow
9. Ervey and Ness Wood wooded glens

## Background to EHS Country Parks

- High profile during acquisition and development phase
- In the 70s and 80s the management of Parks and Reserves was the main function of the Agency
- Lost status within Environment Service when UCC & NRC merged as CNCC under amended NCALO, priority given to designation of ASSIs, SPAs,
- Completion of management plans never given priority
- Policy decisions of *ad hoc* nature and never properly set out
- Latterly park management left very much to judgement of individual wardens
- Failure to maintain staffing levels led to minimalist approach to management & loss of incentive further to develop Parks

## Current Situation (Oct 2002)

- Parks understaffed or managed by staff "acting up"
- Management plans using CMS format well advanced but prepared without a clear vision, policy basis, and linkages to other EHS initiatives or incentive to plan beyond current activity
- Any recent developments have tended to be education-led (e.g. biodiversity field, pond, bog garden, classroom)
- Interpretative exhibitions are generally dated and shabby
- Relatively low level of interest from CNCC(statutory advisory committee)
- New legislation, European Directives and an expansion to include Built Heritage and Pollution Control into the one agency, mean that the management of Country Parks is a small part of a large organisation.
- Country Park Policy Paper draft taken to Natural Heritage Directorate – Ads want other initiatives built into Policy Paper
- Director has agreed to 3 month deferment of Management Plan completion till March 2003 to allow development of a vision and for it to be incorporated into the Management plans

## Revised Management Plans

- Work on country park management plans completed to date will still be included and relevant
- The Country Parks Policy, when agreed, will reinforce the rationale for actions and provide justification for expenditure
- Plans should include a development vision or requirement for that vision along the lines of "investigate and cost the potential for..." "prepare an economic appraisal for..."
- Plans should address the potential of the Park to promote and implement EHS policies
- Plans should address equality issues specifically, providing for disability being the most relevant issue
- Plans should include performance measures based on standards agreed for common features

## **Solution**

It was decided to undertake a visioning workshop to;

- acknowledge the skills and expertise within the wardening staff and tap this resource to develop sensible policies for the future
- encourage site managers to "think beyond paths and grass cutting" and inspire greater imagination into the plans
- develop some consistency in standards provided at the different parks
- develop an agreed policy on Parks
- involve all relevant staff so that there is ownership of the process and avoid a top-down approach

## **Role of the facilitator**

It was decided to involve the use of an outside facilitator, who then worked with EHS staff in drawing up the agenda for the workshops.

The facilitator began by asking, "who needs to be in the room" and "what is the desired outcomes?" This then helped identify the Task for each part of day.

When talking about hiring a facilitator it might be worth saying that the person is independent of the organisation, as it is the independence that allows that person to question and sometimes challenge what is being said, and also ask for clarification on points, that maybe someone from the organisation would not have the freedom to do.

## **Main participants**

Deciding who should be there is important. Be sure to invite any "wicked fairies" otherwise they will scupper the process later. Inviting all our Wardening staff and the Regional Managers, plus the Assistant Director, meant we had a group of 18. An ideal number for the Task and breaking up into three smaller workshop discussion groups. Apparently you don't want any more than eight. Using a facilitator was a new process for most of the staff.

## **Format of the workshop**

At the beginning of the workshop the facilitator will explain the ground rules. Something like, all ideas are valid, you are responsible for your time...

The facilitator will employ a number of different techniques to engage the participants and draw out ideas. These are usually brainstorming and SWOT analysis. Having got this far you then need to identify actions from your feedback groups. This involves a process of comparing the different SWOT reports and producing a cumulative one. Then undertake action planning in three steps.

1. Identify action to capitalise on strengths, address weaknesses, maximise opportunities and minimise threats.
2. Identify which group of staff will undertake the tasks and
3. Decide a priority or timescale.

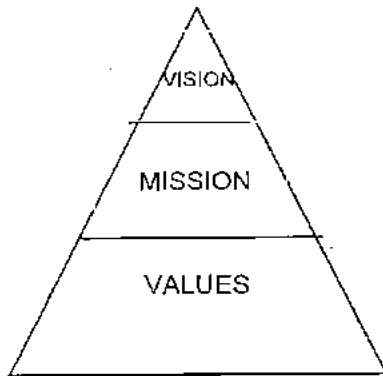
## **Capturing the dialogue and the key outcomes**

The key headings/questions are all written on flipcharts, which are then posted within the room. These can then be typed and circulated as a product of the workshop. After two days we had thirty pages! These were circulated by e-mail to all participants so as to maintain a feeling of ownership and momentum.

After setting the ground rules for the workshop the facilitator introduced the visioning process with the following slide.

### **Vision Statement**

The reason for sharing a vision is because people believe that their efforts can make a difference, and work with greater commitment, when they are guided by a vision.



**The VISION** is an image of the mission accomplished, the ideal future state made concrete through words and pictures.

**MISSION** statements are tasks that when implemented will realise the vision.

**VALUES** are the beliefs or judgements about what is worthy, important or desirable that are reflected in individual and organisational behaviour.

### **COMPONENTS OF AN INSPIRING VISION**

- *Reflects a high standard of performance*
- *Describes a unique attribute*
- *Represents future accomplishments*
- *Conjures up an image or picture*
- *Presents a unifying theme*
- *Appeals to shared values*

## SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis of Country Parks enables managers, staff, and others with an interest, to identify what areas to address in the development of actions or an action plan, availing of opportunities that are presented and being equipped to cope with risks or threats.

### STRENGTHS

(Present time)

**Strengths** include:

- Special attributes pertinent to an area
- Special/Key assets (natural or built)
- Key distinctive features

*Capitalise upon Strengths  
Develop some into opportunities  
In-efficient use of the potential of a  
strength can mean that it becomes a  
weakness or threat*

### WEAKNESSES

(Present time)

**Weaknesses** include:

- Any disadvantages that have a negative impact in the area
- Factors that hinder, inhibit or impair growth/development of the area

*Address weaknesses  
Try to turn weakness into strength  
Weakness can become a major  
drawback if not addressed*

### OPPORTUNITIES

(Future)

**Opportunities** include:

- New or previously unidentified initiatives that could be capitalised upon to develop Country Parks
- Strengths and Weaknesses that have the potential to be turned into drivers for growth/development

*Maximise potential of opportunities*

### THREATS

(Future)

**Threats** include:

- Events/changes which could negatively impact on the well being of the people in the area. There is a reasonable possibility that these Threats could occur

*Awareness of potential threats so that they can be acted upon immediately and appropriately, should they arise, minimising and countering their effect and impact*



## Details of our workshops

The first workshop was held at Castle Archdale Country Park in mid Oct 2002 over two days. The agenda was ambitious, it had to be to justify having all the Park Wardens involved for two days, plus hiring a facilitator. Really it was too ambitious and the second day had to be rescheduled to conclude a consensus building process from the first day.

Whilst we achieved most of our tasks, working through the details of how to deliver the vision took another two workshops.

## Development of a policy paper in tandem with the Visioning process

The Assistant Director, Bob Bleakley undertook to draft a policy paper for Country Parks, which was then presented and discussed in a workshop. The Policy now contains the Vision, Mission and Values which came out of the series of workshops.

## VISIONING outcome

The vision statement for the management by Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) of its Country Parks is:

### Natural Inspiration

## The Mission

*A Country Park is a place that provides easy access for countryside recreation in a managed environment.*

**EHS will manage its Country Parks using sustainable, best practice management:**

- 1. To provide a quality, safe environment for all to enjoy and appreciate countryside recreation*
- 2. To provide appropriate countryside facilities*
- 3. To promote the appreciation of the countryside and provide opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes and commitment needed to protect and improve the environment*
- 4. To provide inspirational interpretation of the natural and built environment*
- 5. To provide a positive "interface" between EHS and the public*

## The Management Ethos

EHS will employ the following values in the management of its Country Parks:

- 1. *Sound environmental principles with a presumption towards management for the conservation of nature and the historic heritage***
- 2. *Working in partnership with local communities and other stakeholders***
- 3. *A professional, friendly and efficient service consistent with the EHS Customer Care Policy***
- 4. *A safe environment for people***
- 5. *The working environment and support for its staff to enable them to deliver the vision***
- 6. *Equality – a commitment to all***
- 7. *Best value for money***

## Workshops at each Country Park

Following the workshops that produced the statements above, there were a series of facilitated visioning workshops held at each Country Park between November and December 2002.

The aims for the workshops were:

- To engage Country Park Staff in the delivery of the vision, mission and values detailed in the draft statement of policy
- To explore the potential of each Country Park
- To look at opportunities for, and barriers to, development
- To explore the implementation of the Statement of Policy for the Management of Country Parks

The results of these individual workshops are included in the Country Park Management Plans.

## **Assessment**

The visioning process has delivered;

- plans which describe common features using similar headings
  1. Access and Recreation
  2. Information and Education
  3. Legal and Other obligations
- Involved staff in a visioning exercise which empowered them to effect change and gave them ownership of the policies that guide their work
- Produced fantastic management plans?
- Provided a sound bite that encapsulates the purpose behind Park management- "**Natural Inspiration**".
- Four Best Practice teams currently researching different topics which will provide defining guidelines for Park managers, these are;
  1. Controlling litter and dog fouling
  2. Dealing with undesirable activities and a standard patrol proforma
  3. Guidelines on open space and opening hours/level of staffing
  4. Activity permits and categorisation of paths
- A proceedings document which describes ACTION necessary to deliver the Mission and Ethos.
- a more homogenous outlook within regional operations and explored the possibility of a closer involvement in corporate delivery
- Generic targets in the current operational plan, e.g. visitor counters will be installed at all Parks, each Park will explore improvements to play and adventure facilities for families and provision for cycle parking.
- Visioning methodology now being utilised to produce agreed management proposals for major monuments

For further information Hugh can be contacted at Castle Archdale Country Park, Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh. 028 6862 1588

# Countryside Recreation Network Seminar

## COUNTRY PARKS

### A COUNTRY PARKS WEBSITE

*Finbar Mulholland  
Communications Officer  
Country Parks Network, GreenSpace*

The Country Parks Network (CPN) has been assigned the task of developing a Country Park Website. The website development cost and management is being overseen by the Countryside Agency.

It is clear from the report 'Towards a Country Park Renaissance' that country park staff are extremely under resourced and financed. This situation has been the catalyst for the new website development which aims to raise the capacity of country park staff as a whole.

#### **The Aim**

The website hopes to be the first port of call for all country park practitioners and local authority staff who have responsibility for Country Parks. The initial design of the website has come from the source i.e. Country Parks staff.

A randomly selected number of country park staff were invited to the CPN headquarters to discuss and put forward their ideas and have the chance to talk to the individuals responsible for implementing their ideas and building the site.

The day was a great success and created the core elements which would be needed by country park staff. Overall, five main aims of the site were established:

- **Networking:** to deepen the network of Country Parks and to aid information sharing;
- **Data-gathering:** to facilitate a greater understanding of Country Parks;
- **Staff-capacity:** to develop the capacity of country park staff;
- **Good practice:** to gather and disseminate good practice case studies; and
- **Best Value:** to promote best value via information sharing and best practice.

#### **The Benefits**

The benefits of this new website are endless and will really make a difference to country park staff struggling with the lack of resources, time and finance.

The benefits/features of the site are:

- A self-audit database: this database enables country park staff to input their details and compare, which will generate a comparison with all other entries (Country Parks);
- Unique advice and guidance: this comparison will highlight where the park could improve and will direct the user to the most relevant resources within the site e.g. visitor surveys;
- The latest news: the site will contain the latest news relating to Country Parks;
- Funding news, advice and guidance: the website will also provide the very latest news on funding, highlighting news funds which are appropriate to Country Parks and advising on the application process.
- Ask an expert: users will have the opportunity to ask an expert their questions. E.g. the site may have an expert from the Heritage Lottery Fund answering questions on the development of a management plan or guidance on filling out a PPI application form.
- Resources: users will benefit from an array of resources such as the Practitioner Guidance, which advises country park staff on issues such as marketing, biodiversity and access. The site will also have an array of online case studies covering these topics.
- A dedicated e-newsletter: users how register will benefit from a dedicated email newsletter highlighting the latest news and developments.

## **Audience**

The website is primarily designed for country park managers and staff. However, there are a number of other groups which could benefit from the website, which includes:

- Country park staff working in the public, voluntary or private sector;
- Countryside management and associated practitioners and organisations;
- Local authorities;
- Urban park staff;
- Volunteers and interest groups.

## **Using the Site**

The site can be accessed by carrying out the following simply tasks:

1. If the user is a member of the CPN they will log on and select a user name and password.
2. If the user is not a member they will follow the same process but will be required fill in their details to have full access.
3. Both sets of users will be required to view their details and update them if required.
4. Once the details have been checked/update, a unique comparison will be generated.

5. This comparison will highlight the areas of the park which could be improved, but will also give advice and guidance on doing so.

### **What now?**

It is hoped to launch the website before the end of the year. Before that happens the site will undergo testing by the original user forum made up of country park practitioners. After their comments and suggestions have been made the site will undergo another short testing period, but to a wider audience.

Once the final changes and developments have been made, the site will then be launched. The Country Parks Network and GreenSpace will make all its members aware of the launch.

For further information regarding the new website development, please contact Finbar Mulholland on 0118 9469060 or email at [finm@green-space.org.uk](mailto:finm@green-space.org.uk)

# **Countryside Recreation Network Seminar**

## **COUNTRY PARKS**

### **WORKSHOP PAPER**

## **DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION FOR COUNTRY PARKS**

*Finbar Mulholland*  
*Communications Officer - Country Parks Network*  
*GreenSpace*

### **Aim of the workshop**

The aim of the workshop was to generate discussion and ideas relating to the development of a shared vision for all Country Parks within England. It was hoped that by the end of the day, the following would be completed:

- Issues on the development of a shared vision;
- The benefits of developing a shared vision;
- The dangers of adopting a shared vision;
- The process of developing a shared vision; and
- The basic/core elements of a shared vision.

### **Issues on the development of a shared vision**

At the beginning of the workshop it was brought to the chair's attention that there were two main concerns about developing a shared vision for Country Parks. The first and most significant was that many thought a vision should be created which encompasses the thoughts and expectations of the visitors of Country Parks, rather than Country Parks professionals themselves.

This issue was debated for sometime with no real outcome generated. However, it was felt by many other of the members of the workshop that this idea would not be a true representation of a country park vision and could lead to the creation of an inappropriate and inaccurate vision.

In general, a vision was seen as a positive step and one which needs to be taken. All members could see the benefits which could be derived from a vision.

### **The benefits of developing a shared vision**

A few benefits generated by developing a shared vision are:

- Raise the profile of Country Parks;
- Make funding easier to attain;
- Create a better link between Country Parks;
- Sharing of good practice; and
- Generate fresh ideas, motivation and inspiration for country park staff.

### **The dangers of developing a shared vision**

As well as benefits, the group also discussed the dangers which could be created when developing a vision. Dangers suggested included:

- Confining what is and what isn't a country park;
- Could be seen as a barrier for future development or positing of Country Parks;
- Could create another pressure for Country Parks managers and staff; and
- Might prove difficult to follow.

### **The process of developing a shared vision**

The second of the two workshops looked at a different aspect of creating a vision and asked members to actively participate in developing a draft vision for Country Parks. The first step invited members to come up with words which they thought encapsulated the very essence of a country park. Some of the words included:

- Accessible;
- Managed;
- Friendly;
- Enjoyment;
- Recreation;
- Natural; and
- Safe

The next step involved the grouping of the words into themes. Some of the themes generated were:

- Safety – non threatening;
- Open space;
- Managed;
- Valued; and
- Opportunities.

The final stage involved getting the workshop members to formulate a draft vision based on the words and themes they created. Some of the visions are listed below:

#### **A country park ...**

*'...is an area of attractive, safe and accessible countryside with an appropriate range of recreational opportunities and facilities'*

*'...is a welcoming landscape offering easy access and responsible recreational opportunities'*

*'...provides an appropriate natural setting for quiet recreational activity'.*



*'...is a valued and welcoming open green space, managed for recreational opportunities and freedom of access'.*

# **Countryside Recreation Network Seminar**

## **COUNTRY PARKS**

### **WORKSHOP PAPER**

#### **MINIMUM STANDARDS**

*Andy Maginnis*

*Countryside Estates Manager, Worcestershire County Council  
Chair, Countryside Management Association*

The workshop was concerned with three principle questions:

- 1) Should Country Parks be expected to have a minimum range of facilities and services to be considered a Country Park?**
- 2) Should these facilities be managed to recognised standards and if so do appropriate "off the shelf" standards already exist?**
- 3) Can meeting standards help to attract or maintain funding?**

The bulleted points which follow were either the consensus view or agreed by the great majority of participants.

- 1) Should Country Parks be expected to have a minimum range of facilities and services to be considered a Country Park?**
  - In an ideal world, yes. It was agreed that the public have a reasonably consistent view of what they expect from a Country Park and that, by and large, those expectations should be met if the brand is to remain strong. It was also agreed that there would be merit in providers and agencies sharing a common vision for what the term means.
  - A number of features, facilities and services were identified that one might expect to find at a Country Park. It was agreed that certain core features, facilities and services should be expected at every Country Park and that others could be selected from a wider menu. The menu included:
    - visitor centre
    - café
    - shop
    - toilets
    - waymarked trails
    - information and interpretation
    - car park
    - directional signage to locate the site
    - staff presence
    - events and activities such as walks and talks
    - play area

- picnic facilities
  - open greenspace
  - opportunities for community involvement
  - some conservation interest
  - overall size greater than ten hectares or enough attractions to support a two hour visit
- It was agreed that there could be merit in recognising one or two grades of Country Park in much the same way that hotels, restaurants and B&B's are awarded keys or stars. It was felt that such a system would need to be administered by an organisation such as the Country Parks Network.
  - It was recognised that some providers would continue to call their sites Country Parks despite not providing the minimum level of facilities and services. Clearly these providers could not be prevented from using the title, however, these sites would not be awarded "stars".
  - Most participants manage a range of sites other than Country Parks and it was agreed that there was no intention to imply that other sites were inferior or less important in any way.

**2) Should these facilities be managed to recognised standards and if so do appropriate "off the shelf" standards already exist?**

- It was strongly felt that facilities and services should be managed to recognised common standards. This would help meet visitor expectations, set clear objectives for managers and provide a rationale for resource allocation.
- It was agreed that "minimum" standards was an unhelpful and potentially misleading term and that standards should be realistic yet challenging.
- Opinion was divided on the issue of whether or not a Country Park should be declassified or downgraded as a result of failing to meet the standards. Some participants felt that an improvement plan should be developed by the provider in order to meet them, others that failing sites should be declassified.
- A number of "off the shelf" standards were mentioned including:
  - Green Flag
  - Visitor Welcome
  - Chartermark
  - BT Access For All
  - Investors In People
  - Accredited Membership of the Countryside Management Association

- It was agreed that there would be some merit in the Visitor Welcome initiative being updated and extended with signposting to other relevant standards such as those listed above.
- It was noted that standards and continuous improvement are key features of any Best Value Review and standards are also relevant to Best Value Performance Indicators.
- It was also recognised that a number of standards are imposed by legislation such as the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, Disability Discrimination Act and the Health and Safety at Work Act.

### **3) Can meeting standards help to attract or maintain funding?**

- Most participants could cite examples where meeting standards had helped to maintain or increase funding.
- It was agreed that this was because:
  - Standards, particularly those with an award, were readily understood by elected members and senior officers
  - Elected members and senior officers were extremely reluctant to lose awards once achieved
  - The achievement of standards and awards (or a commitment to meeting them) often gives confidence to potential external funders

### **Summary**

It was agreed that:

- Visitors have reasonably consistent views on what they want and expect from Country Parks
- The brand "Country Park" is worth protecting and promoting
- Ideally the title should only be used for sites providing certain core facilities and services
- The facilities and services should meet common largely existing standards
- A commitment to meeting common standards would help to protect and enhance funding

# Countryside Recreation Network Seminar

## COUNTRY PARKS

### WORKSHOP PAPER

#### EXPLORING RESOURCES AND FUNDING

*Russell Cleaver  
External Funding Manager  
Hampshire County Council*

The aim of this workshop was to explore different sources of funding, both internal and external, and probe more closely into the most appropriate forms of increasing funds.

The workshop began with delegates sharing their experiences of obtaining external funding with emphasis being made of especially relevant points, such as the role of partners, the valuable help provided by lottery fund officers etc. etc.

Reference was made to the analysis carried out in the Countryside Agency report compiled by Greenspace: '*Towards a Country Parks Renaissance*'. The most fruitful forms of grant aid currently available was agreed to be Lottery funded programmes.

Delegates then teamed up in pairs to consider what characteristics went into making a good project that was most likely to attract grant aid.

Following discussions of the detailed suggestions it was emphasised that overall it was important to meet the particular criteria of the preferred source of grant aid and to demonstrate that there was both a public need and demand for the proposed project.

The workshop went on to reveal the key assessment criteria that one of the Lottery programmes used when judging applications and also what type of grant application would be the most likely to succeed.

Next the workshop addressed site generated income and again delegates shared their experiences. The relevance of income made from shop sales was highlighted. Delegates were then invited to work in pairs once more to consider how best to improve site sales at a typical country park.

A lively discussion ensued regarding the excellent sales performance of inexpensive goods, but with the reservation that: what you sell reflects the values of your organisation. The principle being, what is inexpensive should not mean cheap!

Other key points were also discussed, such as the critical importance of meeting the needs of customers. It was agreed that Country Parks, with their good community links, often knew much about their customers; information that can be very useful in directing the type of goods and services provided by parks.

A very relevant point was explored, namely that individual parks which controlled their own dedicated budgets had much more incentive to generate income than parks who were not receiving the profits from their own performance.

The workshop ended with a brief introduction to the role of business sponsorship and the distribution of handouts.

# **ANNEX A**

# COUNTRY PARKS

## PROGRAMME

- 10.00 Registration and refreshments**  
**10.30** Welcome by chair (*Geoff Hughes, Sport England and Chairman of Countryside Recreation Network*)  
**10.35** Country Parks: Past, Present and Future (*Andrew Maliphant, Countryside Agency*)  
Summary of the "Towards a Renaissance of Country Parks" Report  
**11.10** History and Development of Country Parks in Wales - (*Gareth Roberts, Countryside Council for Wales*)
- 11.40 Refreshments**  
**11.55** Country Parks in Scotland - focus on minimum standards (*Mairi Caughey, Scottish Natural Heritage*)  
**12.20** Country Parks in Northern Ireland - focus on visioning (*Hugh McCann, Environment & Heritage Service*)
- 12.45 Lunch**  
**13.30** Workshop 1/2/3 (delegates choose one workshop session)  
**14:30 Workshop changeover**  
**14.35** Workshop 1/2/3 (delegates choose one workshop session)  
*Workshop 1 chaired by Finbar Mulholland, Country Parks Network, GreenSpace*  
*Workshop 2 chaired by Andy Maginnis, Worcestershire County Council*  
*Workshop 3 chaired by Russell Cleaver, Hampshire County Council*  
**15.35 Refreshments**  
**15.50** Reports and discussions from workshops  
**16:05** Country Parks Website, *Finbar Mulholland, Country Parks Network, GreenSpace*  
**16.20** Moving forward - next steps  
**16.30 CLOSE**

## WORKSHOPS

### **Workshop 1: Developing a shared vision for Country Parks**

The 'Renaissance' report contains a draft vision - wider consultation will help refine the proposed role of Country Parks. The workshop will consider questions such as 'Should Country Parks become more visitor focused?'; 'Should they operate as a single entity or be more diverse' and 'Where do we see them in ten years time?'

### **Workshop 2: Minimum standards**

What defines a country park? What services and facilities should a country park have? How do/would minimum standards affect funding? Should minimum standards exist?

### **Workshop 3: Exploring resources and funding**

The workshop will look at the most common pathways for obtaining external funding and internal income generation. Discussion to include the advantages and disadvantages of various funding sources.



## **ANNEX B**

# BIOGRAPHIES OF SPEAKERS

## CHAIR

**Geoff Hughes**  
**Chairman of the Countryside Recreation Network**  
**and**  
**Senior Development Manager**  
**Sport England**

Geoff Hughes is a Senior Development Manager for Sport England based in the North East office in Durham. Geoff combines a role of More Places Team Leader in the regional office along with co-ordinating Sport England's role in countryside and water recreation at national level.

After graduating with a B.Sc Joint Honours in Geography and Biology in 1972 from the University of Salford, Geoff gained a Post Graduate Diploma in Town and Country Planning from Leeds Metropolitan University. He also holds a Diploma in Management Studies from the University of Teesside, gaining a distinction and the British Institute of Management Award.

Geoff joined Sport England in 1984 as the Regional Planning Officer in the North East following 11 years in local government. In his local authority career he held a variety of posts including Recreation Officer in the former West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council and as a Landscape Assistant in Teesside County Borough Council.

As the co-ordinator of facilities work in the North East region he is responsible for Sport England's two statutory functions which embrace the distribution of Sport England Lottery Funding and as consultees on planning applications which have implications for playing fields. In any national capacity he has been involved in a variety of projects including the preparation and adoption of Sport England's policies on sport and recreation in the countryside, presentation of evidence to the House of Commons Environment Select Committee on the Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities, co-ordination of the case at the Windermere 10 mph Speed Limit Inquiry and the publication of advice to potential lottery applicants based on the Use of Natural Resources in Urban and Rural areas. Geoff is currently working with a variety of other Government Departments and Agencies on the development of the Framework for Sport in England.

Geoff was elected as Chair of the Countryside Recreation Network in March of this year and has been instrumental in establishing the close working relationship that has been forged with Sheffield Hallam University who employ the CRN Manager and provide the secretariat.

## **SPEAKERS/WORKSHOP LEADERS**

**Andrew Maliphant  
Recreation Adviser  
Countryside Agency**

Andrew Maliphant is a Recreation Adviser based at the Countryside Agency's headquarters in Cheltenham. He is currently the lead officer for the "*Country Parks Renaissance*" project, working closely with officers from GreenSpace. He is also involved in the development of Rights of Way Improvement Plans, and research into vehicles in the countryside, access to water for canoeing and funding for countryside access generally. Andrew has previous experience of working with AONBs, and before joining the Agency worked in market towns regeneration.

**Gareth Roberts  
Head of Recreation, Access and European Affairs  
Countryside Council for Wales**

Gareth Roberts is head of Recreation, Access and European Affairs with the Countryside Council for Wales. He studied art history before and civic design before embarking on a career in town and country planning with local authorities in the south east and the midlands of England. He moved to Wales in 1980 as the principal planner with the Snowdonia National Park Authority before joining CCW in 1991.

Gareth retains a particular interest in the development provision and design of open space for open air recreation and out door leisure. He was a member of the Regional Advisory Committee of the Forestry Commission in Wales, and is a Director of Artworks Wales and the Landscape Research Group.

**Mairi Caughey  
National Strategy Officer  
Scottish Natural Heritage**

Mairi Caughey works for Scottish Natural Heritage as a policy officer with responsibilities for matters such as Country Parks, planning, design issues in protected areas, and designations. This role has also included involvement in the development of advice to the Scottish Executive on legislation for new access arrangements and National Parks. Her other roles in SNH have been as an advisor on planning casework and an Area Officer with responsibilities Countryside Around Towns projects, Paths For All, LBAPs and environmental education.

Prior to joining SNH in 1995 Mairi worked as a Town Planner for local authorities in England in both Development Control and Local Plans. Work in the latter included urban regeneration work and co-ordination of a major project to restore derelict land to informal public open space.

**Hugh McCann  
Regional Manager West  
Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland**

Hugh is currently one of four Regional Managers working for EHS in NI. He has been in this post for three years and the main role is to manage properties for natural and built heritage, which includes Country Parks, Nature Reserves and Monuments. Prior to that he was the Nature Reserve Warden for twelve sites in County Fermanagh from 1988 to 2000.

In the mid 80s Hugh worked in various Countryside Ranger posts including the Mourne mountains in Co Down and a year in the Pentland Hills outside Edinburgh. Having been brought up on a small farm near Slieve Croob in Co Down, and graduated in 1984 with BSc in Biology/Ecology, Hugh has a good understanding of countryside conservation issues. He now lives with his wife and two children on an organic smallholding in Co Fermanagh.

**Finbar Mulholland  
Communications Officer  
Urban Parks Forum**

Finbar Mulholland joined the Country Parks Network in February 2003. His main responsibilities lie in the development and management of online communications for the network. In the past five months Finbar has researched funding opportunities available for Country Parks as well as the ongoing development of web material. Finbar is fully committed to raising the awareness and importance of Country Parks at a local, regional and national level.

**Andy Maginnis  
Countryside Estates Manager  
Worcestershire County Council**

Andy Maginnis is Countryside Estates Manager for Worcestershire County Council with responsibility for Country Parks, picnic places, local nature reserves, commons and the forest estate. He is the lead local authority officer for the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and manages the County Council's Gypsy Service. Andy is the Local Government Association (England) representative on the Countryside Recreation Network (CRN) and is vice chairman of the Countryside Management Association (CMA) of England and Wales. He has previously worked as a volunteer, contractor, consultant and ranger.

**Russell Cleaver  
External Funding Manager  
Hampshire County Council**

Russell Cleaver is External Funding Manager for Hampshire Council Council, within the Recreation and Heritage Department. Its Countryside Service manages some 80 sites, over 4,400 hectares as well as Rights of Way; on of the largest such landholdings of a local authority in the UK.

Russell's background covers some 25 years in countryside management - from park keeper to historic estate manager, successful at attracting external funding and developing on-site income generation. Russell's current responsibilities lie as an in-house advisor on External Funding opportunities, helping officers access a wide range of funds from the lottery money to sponsorship, as well as encouraging park generated income. He also advises Hampshire County Council clients/partners where appropriate.

## **ANNEX C**

## Delegate List

| Title | Name    | Surname    | Job/Position                                      | Organisation                                       |
|-------|---------|------------|---|--|
| Mr    | Edward  | Andrews    | Bridgnorth District Council                       | Countryside Officer                                |
| Mr    | David   | Askey      | Stockton on Tees Borough Council                  | Senior Countryside Ranger                          |
| Mr    | Richard | Aspinall   | Oakwell Hall Country Park                         | Acting Head Ranger                                 |
| Mr    | Bob     | Ayres      | The National Trust                                | Warden - Clent Hills                               |
| Mr    | Andy    | Bailey     | Moses Gate Country Park                           | Country Park Ranger                                |
| Mr    | Graham  | Barrow     | Graham Barrow Research & Consulting Ltd           | Director   |
| Mrs   | Jane    | Beech      | Countryside Agency (East Midlands)                | Countryside Officer                                |
| Mr    | Peter   | Bell       | Gateshead Council                                 | Countryside Officer-<br>Development and Enterprise |
| Miss  | Lyndsey | Bignell    | Ivel and Ouse Countryside Project                 | Countryside Officer                                |
| Miss  | Carolyn | Buckley    | Bridgnorth District Council                       | Senior Countryside Officer                         |
| Miss  | Melanie | Bull       | CRN   | Network Manager                                    |
| Ms    | Tamsyn  | Butler     | Caradon District Council                          | Countryside Officer                                |
| Mr    | Raymond | Butt       | Neath Port-Talbot County Borough Council          | Park Manager                                       |
| Mr    | Peter   | Casterton  | Bridgnorth District Council                       | Countryside Officer                                |
| Ms    | Mairi   | Caughey    | Scottish Natural Heritage                         | National Strategy Officer                          |
| Mr    | Russell | Cleaver    | Hampshire County Council                          | External Funding Manager                           |
| Miss  | Hannah  | Dryland    | The Broads Authority                              | Development Manager                                |
| Mr    | Richard | Dunton     | Bradford District Council                         | Trees & Woodlands Manager                          |
| Mr    | Stephen | Egan       | Glasgow City Council, Land Services               | Senior Countryside Ranger                          |
| Miss  | Magali  | Fleurot    | CRN   | Network Assistant                                  |
| Mr    | Rob     | Garner     | Scottish Natural Heritage                         | Advisory Officer                                   |
| Mr    | John    | Garner     | BTCV  | Greenspace Officer                                 |
| Mr    | Paul    | Greenslade | Metropolitan Borough of Wirral                    | Senior Area Ranger, Mid-Wirral                     |
| Mr    | Keith   | Hamilton   | City of Sunderland - Development and Regeneration | Landscape Architect                                |
| Mr    | Geoff   | Hughes     | Sport England                                     | Senior Development Officer                         |
| Mrs   | Johanna | Lang       | Warwickshire County Council                       | Senior Countryside Ranger                          |
| Mr    | Andy    | Maginnis   | Worcestershire County Council                     | Countryside Sites Manager                          |

| Title | Name    | Surname    | Job/Position                                    | Organisation                                  |
|-------|---------|------------|---|---|
| Mr    | Andrew  | Maliphant  | Countryside Agency                              |   |
| Mr    | Richard | Mash       | Colchester Borough Council                      | Ranger Team Manager                           |
| Mr    | Hugh    | McCann     | Environment & Heritage Service                  | Regional Manager West                         |
| Mr    | Richard | Mervill    | Bassetlaw District Council                      | Principal Leisure & Amenities Manager         |
| Ms    | Lucy    | Monhemius  | Ashford Borough Council                         | Cultural Services                             |
| Mr    | Fínbarr | Mulholland | Urban Parks Forum                               | Country Parks Network Project Officer         |
| Ms    | Sue     | Mullinger  | Great North Forest                              | Planning & Projects Officer                   |
| Mr    | John    | Preston    | BTCV  | County Manager                                |
| Mr    | Martin  | Riley      | Hollingworth Lake Country Park                  | Countryside Service Manager                   |
| Mr    | Gareth  | Roberts    | Countryside Council for Wales                   | Head of Recreation, Access & European Affairs |
| Mr    | Peter   | Scott      | Peter Scott Planning Services                   | Director                                      |
| Ms    | Eleanor | Sherwin    | Hollingworth Lake Country Park                  | Chief Ranger                                  |
| Mr    | Carl    | Smethurst  | Mersey Forest                                   | Resource Development Officer                  |
| Mr    | John    | Stokes     | Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council           | Senior Interpretation Officer                 |
| Miss  | Annie   | Surtees    | Salford City Council-<br>Environmental Services | Senior Ranger                                 |
| Mr    | Chris   | Sutcliffe  | Calderdale Council                              | Wildspace Community Liaison Officer           |
| Ms    | Hazel   | Thomas     | The Countryside Agency                          | Senior Countryside Officer                    |
| Mr    | Barrie  | Tinker     | Bradford District Council                       | Principal Parks Manager                       |
| Mr    | Keith   | Tomey      | West Berkshire                                  | Countryside Ranger                            |
| Mrs   | Zoe     | Warrick    | Larne Borough Council                           | Carnfunnock Country Park Manager              |
| Mr    | Dave    | Wilson     | Calderdale Council                              | Ogden Water Manager                           |