COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION Network News

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This issue:

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

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Cover photo: Ramblers' Association

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COUNTRYSIDE
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NETWORK

A UK-wide Network, CRN gives easy access to information and people concerned with countryside and related recreation matters. The Network reaches a variety of organisations and individuals in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors. The Network is usually reached through the CRN manager, but there are several thousand other people in the Network.

The Network helps the work of agencies and individuals by:

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

CRN is committed to exchanging and spreading information to develop best policy and practice in countryside recreation.

CRN News is produced three times a year and welcomes submissions of articles and letters from all its readers. The deadline for items for the October 1995 issue is 1 September.
Subscription to CRN News is free.
For more information please contact:

Catherine Etchell
CRN Manager
Dept. of City & Regional Planning
University of Wales, College of Cardiff
PO Box 906
Cardiff
CF1 3YN
Tel./Fax: 01222 874970
e-mail: stoce@cardiff.ac.uk

Editorial

'On the back burner' or in the frying pan and about to catch fire? Access to the countryside is often viewed as a red hot political issue. Discussion can arouse much passion and on many occasions much more heat than light. Fortunately there is a great deal of useful discussion taking place at the moment. Recent discussion by the Access Forum in Scotland has been considering access to the open hill. The Access Forum in Wales meets periodically to resolve any tensions before they become problems. In Northern Ireland the Environment Service has recently published a very interesting and useful leaflet on access to the countryside. In the South of Ireland new legislation recognises a third category of person in the countryside, 'recreational user'. In England the House of Commons' Environment Committee has completed its task of looking at the effects of access, or the impacts of leisure activities on the environment. Access will surely also be considered in the forthcoming Rural White Papers.

Access is about rights and responsibilities, and this is illustrated in an article from the Ramblers' Association; and in articles from the British Canoe Union and the British Mountaineering Council, two governing bodies of sport which have consistently demonstrated their interest and responsibility for the environment and the natural resources upon which their sport and enjoyment depends.

Regrettably, not everybody has easy access to the countryside. Barriers exist — whether physical or psychological. The BT Countryside for All project seeks to cut through many barriers which exist for people with disabilities. Potentially the greatest barrier to access is lack of communication. Many of the articles in this edition of CRN News show that the most practical way forward is to promote better information and increased understanding. Cooperation within many sports, such as canoeing, climbing and trail biking, can lead to the resolution of competing interests; such as land/water ownership, nesting seasons, the need for a 'peaceful countryside'.

The first half of 1995 has been a very busy one for CRN, with an unusually hectic programme of meetings and workshops covering such topics as Sport, the Arts, Geographic Information Systems, Visitor Safety and European Funding. We have broken new ground, and successfully acted as a catalyst in bringing expertise across the Atlantic. The second half of 1995 will prove no less exciting. This year's Countryside Recreation Conference, 'Today's Thinking for Tomorrow's Countryside' in September will bring you up to date with many recent developments. The accelerating interest in the communications power of the Internet has encouraged us to arrange workshops in the autumn and to explore, with the help of the ESRC, how we might use the Internet to exchange and spread information more widely. So, before too long, you could be 'surfing' the CRN; we will keep you posted! For those who prefer hard copy — we will be publishing a suite of workshop reports over the summer. In the meantime, remember to send in your contributions for the next newsletter — the theme is Visitor Safety!

Creating positive experiences — adventure and environmental awareness

Geoff Cooper examines the benefits of adventure in education

It is clear from my experience of introducing young people to the countryside that some fundamental needs are not being met by formal education. There appears to be a need for adventure, a need to feel part of the natural world and to belong both to place and to people. The following story helps to illustrate this:

We had come on a day visit to South Walney nature reserve off the Cumbria coast to see thousands of nesting herring gulls, lesser black back gulls and eider ducks. Our small group of eleven year olds had to tread carefully to avoid trampling the nests. Even on the well-marked trails we had difficulty in avoiding the nests with their exquisitely camouflaged eggs. At first the group were interested in the behaviour of the birds but after a while they became tired of looking at the eggs and the birds squawking overhead. One or two of the group were restless and quarrelsome and wanted to explore away from the directed route.

After lunch we reached the shore. It was low tide. A huge expanse of sand with shallow pools stretched before us. In a flash shoes and socks were off and we were all running rapidly towards the sea. The children were surprised at the changes in the texture of the sand; the hard ripples under their feet, the deep, soft sand where they sunk up to their ankles and the lovely pools of warm water. We ran faster and faster towards the water's edge, then slumped in the sand under a perfect blue sky. This was a wild, exciting place. There were imaginary deltas and sand-dune deserts. It was another world, miles away from anywhere.

On the way back across the nature trail, something had happened to change the group. They were more alert, more interested in what was around them, they were closer to each other. They collected 'treasures', special stones rounded by the waves with minerals glistening, periwinkles, razor shells and driftwood. They wanted to show them, wanted us to share them and answer questions.

What had produced the change? It was the need to play, for spontaneity, for adventure. A chance to feel the natural environment through their bodies, to release the tensions of the disciplined nature study they had experienced in the morning. To run, skip, jump and feel the freedom of a wild area, a new and uncertain environment. The niggles and quarrels of the morning evaporated. The children had enjoyed a common experience, they had come together, there was a sense of achievement. Now was the time for the teacher to build on the enthusiasm and motivation and help them to understand the significance of this special environment.

This story illustrates some valuable lessons from outdoor experiences. It demonstrates that good education is holistic; it is concerned with mind, body and spirit. Motivation and enthusiasm are essential ingredients of effective learning. Adventure is a great motivator. Young people who under-achieve in the classroom may suddenly come alive and show a range of skills that have remained hidden in formal teaching. Learning in the outdoors can be active, co-operative and relevant.

The story also reminds us that there is a strong link between personal, social and environmental education. We cannot expect an interest in and respect for the environment if there is little self-esteem and respect for other people. Positive experiences in the countryside, in this example through adventure, can encourage this process.

The value of outdoor learning experiences

It is clear from working with young people in the outdoors that there are many personal, social and environmental benefits. Observation over the past 15 years is reinforced by personal research in the form of questionnaires, letters from group leaders and anecdotal evidence. The following are statements frequently made as a result of young people experiencing adventurous or other interesting activities in the countryside:

- young people develop self-esteem and confidence.
- there is a noticeable increase in levels of motivation.
- co-operation and teamwork are encouraged.
- talent, such as problem-solving skills, can be unlocked.
- relationships between teachers and young people are strengthened.
- young people learn to appreciate simple, uncommercialised activities.
- a sense of wonder and awareness for the environment can occur.
- an understanding and concern for environmental issues can develop.
- young people gain interests and skills in activities in the countryside.
- positive experiences encourage confidence, enjoyment and understanding.

The role of countryside managers

Countryside staff can play a key role in educating for the environment. By providing positive and exciting experiences in

the countryside they can contribute to personal and social development and environmental awareness. Adventure is one powerful way of motivating young people to enjoy and appreciate the countryside.

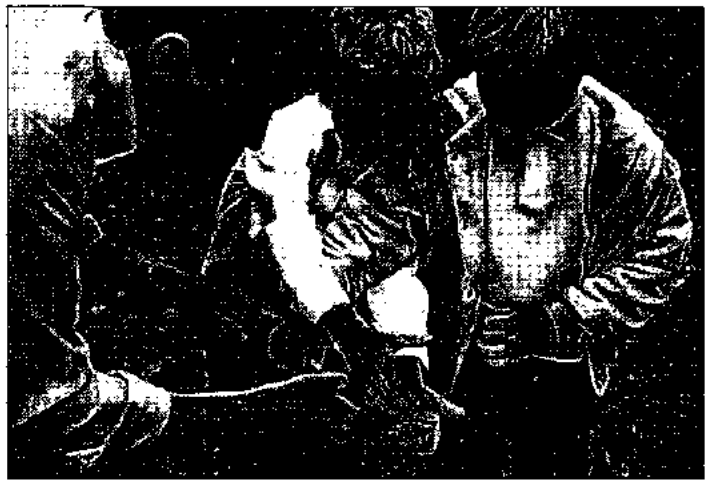
Adventure and Environmental Awareness Group

The links between adventure and environment have been explored by the Adventure and Environmental Awareness Group based in the Lake District since 1984. Initially there was a concern about the problems caused by adventurous activities: How do adventurers regard the natural environment? For example, how many climbers know or care about the mountain plants clinging to the steep rock faces? How many fell-walkers and gill scramblers know about the delicate ecological balance of the environment through which they journey? Do canoeists relate to the world of water birds and otters as they travel down rivers? Are lakes merely areas of open water for recreation? Is there an important extra dimension to the world of adventure?

The Group is comprised of a wide range of representatives from outdoor education, countryside recreation and conservation interests. It aims to encourage awareness, understanding and concern for the natural environment amongst those involved with education and recreation. It has tried to achieve this through workshops, talks, publicity and conferences and by forging links between outdoor enthusiasts and environmentalists.

Early workshops were aimed at communicating the need for a more sensitive approach to the environment to as wide an audience as possible. It became clear that an awareness of the impact of one's own activities often leads to greater care and respect. One example is the increasing awareness of the effects of gill scrambling, a popular activity in upland Britain. The gills occupy only a tiny portion of the uplands but represent extremely rich habitats. There is often a succession of species from woodland in the lower parts to arctic-alpine in the vegetation cover that have survived largely because of their inaccessibility to grazing animals. Their very nature makes them exciting environments to travel through. An understanding of their uniqueness encourages us to linger and enjoy their diversity. We can appreciate we are in a special place which is sensitive to disturbance. By concentrating activities on the rock-strewn river bed and by careful choice of entrance and egress points a group can experience the beauty of this environment and leave little impact on it. The adventure is enriched by the group's environmental awareness.

The Adventure and Environmental Awareness Group has organised a series of conferences to consider the impact of particular user groups, such as climbers, canoeists and mountain bikers on the environment. This has led to guidelines and codes of practice. The Group's report on 'Mountain Biking and the Environment' gives a clear statement of the issues from the viewpoints of practitioners and conservationists and sets out recommendations for improved route networks in less sensitive environments. Over the years the Group has attempted to influence attitudes through awareness and negotiation. A joint conference with the Friends of the Lake District on 'Large Scale Events in the Countryside' is planned for 1995. The aim of these conferences is not to hammer the user groups with a catalogue of complaints but to encourage awareness of the balance of nature and the benefits of a more sensitive approach.



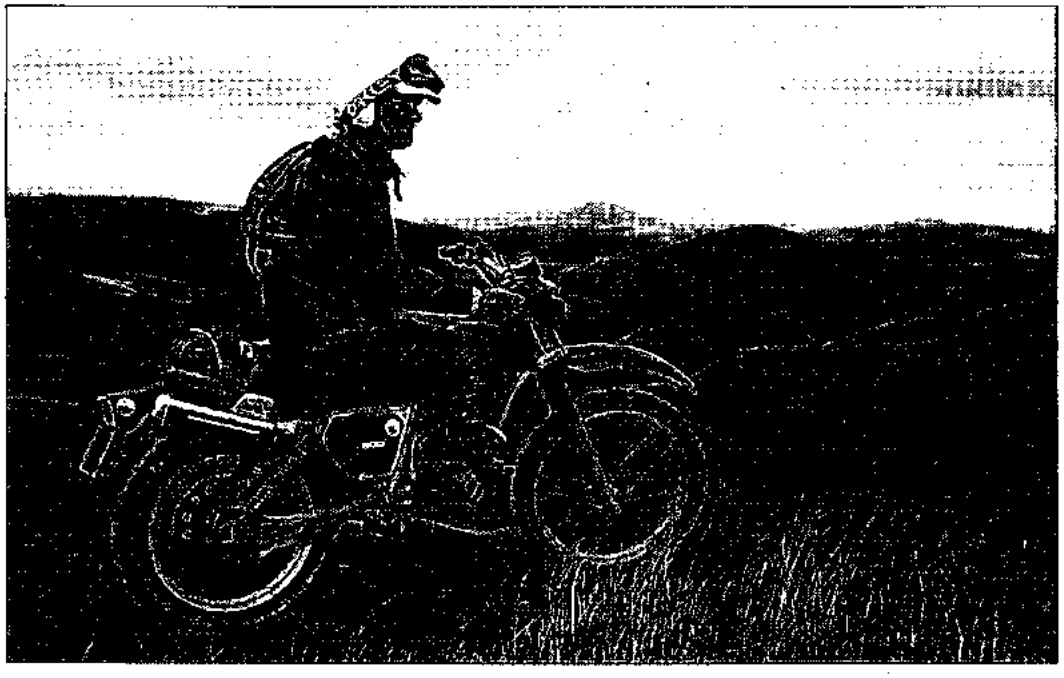
Working outdoors can induce a sense of wonder and awareness for the environment

Geoff Cooper is head of Metropolitan Wigan's outdoor education centres in the Lake District. Each year he organises Countryside Commission sponsored training courses on 'Schools, Curriculum and the Countryside' and 'Learning through the Outdoors'. He is secretary of the 'Adventure and Environmental Awareness Group'.

Further information from:
Low Bank Ground, Coniston, Cumbria LA21 8AA
Tel: 015394 41314.

Freedom of the Hills

Caroline Garfield considers the work and views of the Motoring Organisations' Land Access and Recreation Association



LARA promotes sustainable use of the countryside by motorised sports

We welcome this opportunity to illustrate access as it is seen from the eyes of an organisation representing vehicular access. LARA, the Motoring Organisation's Land Access and Recreation Association, is the umbrella organisation which represents the views of ten motoring bodies (including the three governing bodies), and is supported by the Sports Council. LARA is the forum for promoting the responsible use of our environment for motor sports and recreation. As such, we welcome all opportunities to discuss fair and continued access to the countryside.

LARA is not set up to encourage motoring, but to protect vehicular access and facilities by promoting good practice and sustainable use. LARA members use rights of way legitimately, and are therefore involved with access and rights of way eg on Access User Liaison Groups, reclassification of RUPPs and any subsequent Public Inquiries, voluntary maintenance and repair of rights of way etc.

Perhaps the most important access issue for recreational vehicular users is a general lack of understanding of all the rights which exist on rights of way and unsurfaced, unclassified roads. If a four wheel drive vehicle or motorcycle is unexpectedly encountered by a walker on a byway, the reaction can be one of misunderstanding, but nevertheless confrontational. This could be avoided if more emphasis was put on educating all users of the rights and responsibilities of themselves and others. For example, non-vehicular users could be informed in some way of the fact that they might encounter vehicles on routes with vehicular rights. Perhaps signs could be erected (similar to those used for mountain bike routes), which say that users should expect to see vehicles being used legitimately on the route.

We would also suggest that more emphasis should be placed on the promotion and awareness of responsible access. LARA is explicit in its desire to minimise any illegal, or indeed irresponsible, motorised access that takes place anywhere in the countryside. Indeed, LARA has produced and promoted user codes of conduct for off-tarmac vehicles in the countryside in co-operation with relevant user groups (for example, the LARA Access Guide, now in its 4th Edition, of which many thousands have been distributed). LARA promotes membership of user groups and clubs which advocate sensible and sustainable use of vehicles for countryside sport and recreation.

We highlight Government (DoE) Circular 2/93 on a regular basis to local authorities etc. This recommends that conflicts over the use of rights of way should be solved "...where possible by management methods based on co-operation and agreement...". These methods, some of which have been successfully implemented on, for example, the Ridgeway National Trail, as well as many lesser known resources elsewhere, include voluntary restraint agreements and codes of good conduct. The use of Traffic Regulation Orders is commended only as a last resort where consensual measures have been unsuccessful, and some form of prohibition of driving is the only option. The solution, as is so often the case, requires a holistic approach to management, where maintenance of the actual route (in some cases with the voluntary help of members of vehicular user groups) are just as important as inter-user attitudes, accurate

recording of the definitive map and relations with local people.

LARA members have recently agreed that they will support the use of light motor vehicles only on vehicular rights of way. LARA is also currently involved with a research project, in conjunction with the Lake District National Park, regarding the feasibility of creating a 'hierarchy' of vehicular routes i.e. some routes only for certain types of vehicle, some acceptable for heavier vehicles, and some routes with special historical qualities which could be designated 'Heritage byways'.

Some motor events use rights of way, often as a link between competitive stages, which leads us to another aspect of access which affects vehicle users : organised motorsport events that take place in the countryside.

To date, affiliated motor competition clubs have continued to use traditional venues whilst complying with ever stricter legal requirements and codes of conduct. They have achieved this through negotiating with the local authorities, English Nature etc, and helped to produce practical management agreements which allow both the events to continue and the conservation/ environment interests to be maintained. It is very encouraging when, through co-operation and liaison, clubs are able to negotiate with other bodies to retain use of a site which already exists when, for example, a SSSI is notified on an area of land. Unfortunately, we are aware of cases where conservation bodies have refused to discuss the continued use of a sensitive site for motorsport, which is particularly frustrating for clubs who have organised events for many years with no evidence of any long-term damage to the environment. Sport and recreation can co-exist with conservation, but only where all sides are prepared to make fair and reasonable management agreements.

Thus we continue to persuade Local Planning Authorities that an evenhanded approach should be taken with regard to sites where it is proven that permitted development rights have resulted in sustainable use for many years, but where new legislation regarding SSSIs states that planning permission is now required.

We are aware that there are certain groups of people who would argue that any access in the countryside should be 'quiet', and as far as their interpretation of this word is concerned, it seems that this necessarily excludes vehicular access. However, there is little evidence that vehicular activity, be it competitive or recreational, harms the 'quiet enjoyment' of others and therefore should not automatically be excluded from being a form of 'quiet enjoyment'. Indeed, research by the Sports Council for Wales reveals that many countryside users enjoy an opportunity to encounter other recreational activities taking place (see 'Views from the Park', SCW, 1993 and 'More Views from the Parks', SCW, 1994).

With reference to statutory designated areas, such as National Parks and AONBs, it should be highlighted that if pressure on these areas is to be relieved, adjacent and other areas must take steps to make extra provision for displaced activities e.g. motorsports. This would require improved inter-authority collaborative planning on a regional, if not wider, basis. In addition, concern is mounting that there are increasing pressures of this nature particularly from the emergence of locally important, albeit non-statutory designated areas, and we feel that wherever possible, attempts should be considered to accommodate legitimate motorised activities rather than relocate or worse, ignore them.

Comprehensive research has been carried out regarding the issues involved with providing for, and maintaining a sustainable level of, motor sport and recreational access in the countryside and urban fringe (for example Elson et al, 1986; South Western Council for Sport and Recreation, 1993; Wiltshire County Council, 1992; and LARA publications). The salient conclusion stresses the need to provide for motorised sports where there is a clear local demand, rather than seeking to ban them or divert them elsewhere; and to identify the facilities currently being used and the future needs for motorised sports, in order to engender an organised and responsible approach to these legitimate activities.

In summary, countryside managers face many frustrations in dealing with motoring activities, ranging from queues of ordinary cars on tarmac trying to enter a National Park to youngsters riding motorcycles illegally on common land. There is a danger of all these activities being lumped together as 'motoring problems'. LARA cannot help with all these problems but it certainly can with some of them. Bans and non co-operative measures do not solve the problems, but possibly make them worse in that illegal, uncontrollable use continues.

Members and clubs join LARA because they want to help. We encourage others to join so that we can encourage them to be responsible, too. Through liaison with authorities and other groups (both governmental and non-governmental), LARA can help not only to improve some of the problems, both real and imagined, concerning motorsport and recreation, but also to improve the chances of instilling a sense of responsibility in future vehicular users of the British countryside.

What we all want is better access. Only by co-operation can we really achieve access that is better for all.

Further details about LARA's work and publications can be obtained from:
Caroline Garfield
LARA
PO Box 9
Cannock
Staffs WS11 2FE
tel/fax 01543 467218

Urban Fringe — accessible, or not?

Lynn Crowe and Mel Jones of Sheffield Hallam University's School of Leisure and Food Management look at barriers facing urban residents in using their local countryside

There has been considerable investment by local authorities in the last 25 years in the development of countryside recreation provision in the urban fringe, particularly of country parks. A considerable proportion of that provision has taken place opportunistically without recourse to research findings and empirical evidence. However, in order to ensure that opportunities are accessible to all sections of society, we need to consider the needs and demands of all potential clients.

Countryside Commission policies (1989 & 1990), as well as various academic research studies, have emphasised that participation in countryside recreation is influenced by a combination of demographic, socio-economic, perceptual and personal factors. It is now acknowledged that there is a large section of the population who cannot convert their interest in visiting the countryside into reality because the countryside lies beyond their familiar territory, beyond their experience, beyond the places where they feel relaxed and at ease, and beyond their travel horizons. Further physical and practical constraints may add to their problems of gaining access to the countryside resource. The Commission has highlighted the need to raise levels of confidence and awareness among such groups and individuals, and ease specific constraints. Within the last few years the Countryside Commission has stressed the importance of data gathering and analysis at the local level in order to inform decisions (Co.Co. 1991).

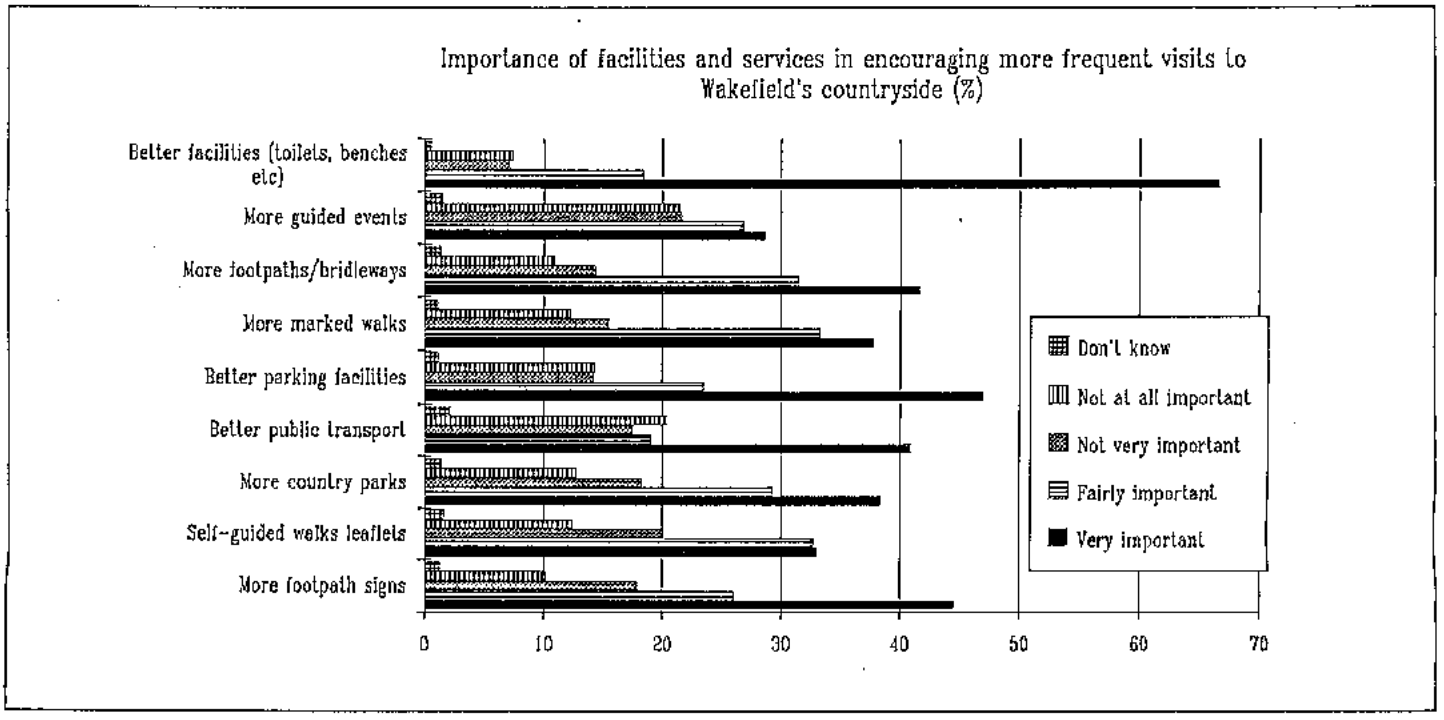
Increasingly, recreation providers are undertaking local studies to determine the backgrounds and interests of their existing users. These usually take the form of visitor or site surveys. These surveys all reinforce the views that the majority of visitors to these sites are professional people living in or near the countryside, and have almost always travelled by car to reach the sites. Visitors are generally quite satisfied with the facilities provided and are visiting these urban fringe sites in order to experience 'the quiet and the scenery' or 'to get away from it all'.

What these surveys cannot do is tell the recreation providers anything about those people who are staying away, either through lack of interest or constraints on accessibility.

In 1991, the authors undertook a research study on behalf of the City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council in order to provide a rational basis on which to evaluate existing provision which had developed on an incremental basis over several decades.

Wakefield Metropolitan District contains areas of both high landscape quality and severe environmental deprivation. The settlement pattern is equally diverse. There are two main urban agglomerations and other small towns, industrial settlements and villages scattered throughout. The vast majority of the managed countryside sites in the Metropolitan District occur primarily in the south-western quadrant of the District. This pattern is not uncommon in other metropolitan areas, with managed countryside sites often located in the more attractive urban fringe areas. Traditionally these locations have seen the greatest expressed demand for informal countryside recreation, and local authority action has merely followed and reinforced the pattern.

The specific objectives of the study were to collect



information about the levels and types of countryside recreation visiting undertaken by Wakefield residents within the District, the characteristics of each visit, barriers (both real and perceived) discouraging visits, and the level of awareness among the population served by the Wakefield Countryside Service. Using the information gathered, the aim was to produce recommendations about the future development of the Countryside Service and the deployment of its resources.

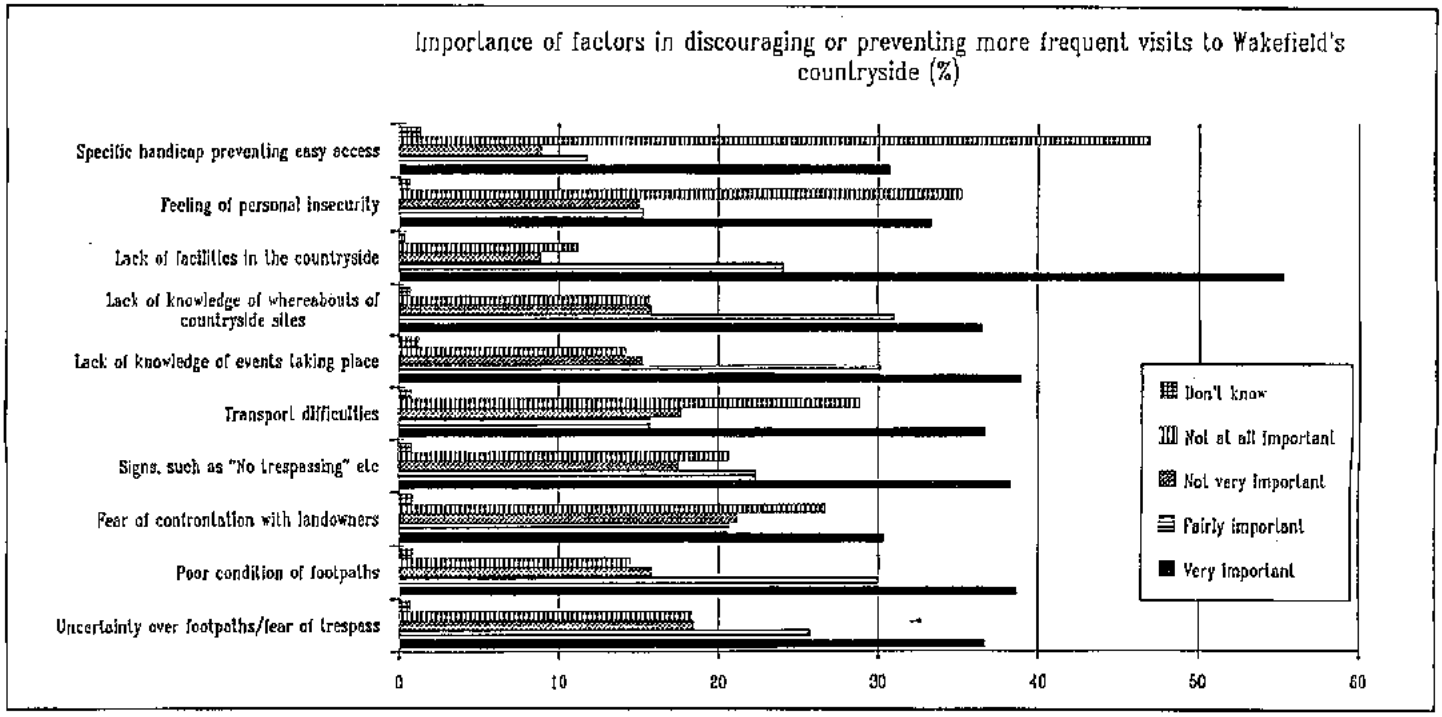
Data were gathered by means of a 1000 household questionnaire survey and three smaller site surveys at sites managed by the Countryside Service. The household survey was spread over a number of specified settlements, to achieve a geographical spread and a variety of different types of settlement.

The results of the survey re-emphasised that informal, non-specialist recreation in the local countryside is a very popular activity. Two out of every five of the 1000 respondents in the household survey said they went out into Wakefield's countryside at least once a week, and seven out of ten visited it at least once a month. However, it was also plain that some residents found their local countryside more accessible than others. There was a strong relationship between countryside recreation participation and socio-economic status, with access to a car a very significant factor.

The problem of lack of car ownership was highlighted due to the concentration of attractive countryside and managed countryside sites in the south-west of the District. Residents living elsewhere were at a considerable disadvantage when it came to visiting most of these 'flagship' sites. The low level of car ownership in some areas of Wakefield appears to have been mitigated by their proximity to two of the District's major countryside sites, Newmillerdam and Pugneys country parks. Areas with high car ownership levels in the north and east had visiting rates 25 per cent below the equivalent areas in the south-west of the district.

The results also indicated a strong desire among respondents to visit the countryside more often than they were doing, irrespective of their neighbourhood type or location. When asked what improvement in facilities and services would encourage more countryside visiting, more than two-thirds of household respondents cited better facilities such as benches and toilets, nearly half put better car parking facilities in this category and over two fifths said more footpath signs were very important. Interestingly, guided walks and events attracted the lowest percentage of 'very important' responses. Fear of confrontation with landowners, transport difficulties, lack of knowledge of sites and events, and feelings of insecurity were all mentioned as being very important in discouraging visits by between 30-40 per cent of the household respondents. The table summarises these factors.

With these issues in mind, recommendations were made to the Wakefield Countryside Service to assist in the development of initiatives designed to increase access and lower barriers to participation for all residents in Wakefield. The recommendations focused on three areas: redressing the imbalance between the eastern and western parts of the District by (in the likely absence of adequate resources for a major new site) the creation of networks of small, less formal sites linked by well managed and promoted rights of way; increasing confidence in using the local countryside through proper signposting, and simple information leaflets (including public transport details); and increasing awareness through the targeting of material at those areas currently remote from well-known and well-used sites through media such as 'countryside roadshows',



local radio, and neighbourhood packs.

As a result a number of specific initiatives have been launched. These include the creation of a dedicated public rights of way maintenance team with an increased budget; the running of Countryside Roadshows with particular emphasis on the eastern part of the District; greater use of local media to publicise events and facilities; the establishment of a Walking Women's Network; and the organisation of new events such as traditional tree dressings held in Pontefract town centre and in schools in the Pontefract and Normanton area. The Countryside Service also believes the results were useful in ensuring that landscape reclamation schemes included improved public access.

The research study findings clearly assisted the Wakefield Countryside Service in prioritising their increasingly scarce resources and in developing policies aimed at ensuring access to the local countryside for Wakefield residents is more equitably distributed. The findings also supported their bids for additional resources, particularly where access constraints or inequities were identified.

As providers of recreation services, often at the public expense, we have a responsibility to ensure that we are aware of our clients' needs and demands. As resources become increasingly scarce and value for money increasingly important, we must be able to demonstrate that our services and facilities are accessible to all who wish to exercise a real choice about whether and where to go in their local countryside.

Acknowledgements
The authors wish to thank Wakefield Countryside Service for permission to use the findings from the Countryside Recreation Study .

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Lynn Crowe and Mel Jones may be contacted at:
The School of Leisure and Food Management,
Sheffield Hallam University,
Totley Campus, Totley Hall Lane,
Sheffield S17 4AB

Tel: 0114 2532927 (Lynn Crowe)
0114 2532902 (Mel Jones)

A family outing in a country park
They are likely to live within easy reach of attractive countryside in the urban fringe. They are also likely to own at least one car and to have driven to the park. The parents are likely to be in professional jobs; they have a wide field of information and use their local countryside with confidence

The Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities

The Select Committee on the Environment published on 20 July its "Report on the Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities". This Report was prepared in response to a host of problems, perceived or otherwise, which were seen to be afflicting our countryside. These included such problems as the conflict between quiet enjoyment of the countryside and an increase in noisy sports; traffic congestion and over-reliance on the car; and destruction or compromise of wildlife habitats and landscape quality.

The Report suggests that the ecological impact of leisure and tourism in the countryside is not as significant nor widespread as is often supposed. Overall numbers of visitors to the countryside have not increased significantly in recent years although there hasr been a change in the pattern of pressure on the environment. The Report considers that the countryside should be able to absorb all the pressures which "appropriate" leisure inflicts. In order to ensure this, it recommends several important ways forward:

- Sustainable principles should be an inherent part of any new leisure provision
- Responsible use of the countryside should be promoted
- Issues of transport, rural culture and leisure management need to be addressed

The report notes that the planning process has an important role to play in conserving the environment, and it needs to provide a more positive guide in providing for difficult activities. However, it needs to be supplemented by good management practice. Particularly highlighted is the need to develop a new approach to traffic management. (This issue forms one of the main themes of the CRN conference in September, which looks at green tourism and sustainable transport through workshops on Pembrokeshire's 'Greenways' initiative and the Countryside Commission's 'Travelling Light' scheme, amongst others.)

The Report suggests that encouraging responsible use of the countryside should be achieved by a wider dissemination of information on good practice, and this via several means:

- Published codes of practice: guidebooks, leaflets and manuals
- Information provided by those who manufacture and sell sports equipment
- Instructors and leaders ie by teaching and by example

Relevant in particular to this issue of CRN News is the Report's conclusion that codes of practice and voluntary cooperation present a useful way forward for management of motor sports in rural areas (see the article by LARA on p. 6). The Report also commends all those who have established such initiatives. However, it stresses a need for quieter machines and the need to strike a balance between allowing vehicles on legal routes, providing suitable land for informal motorsports and preventing the illegal use of land elsewhere.

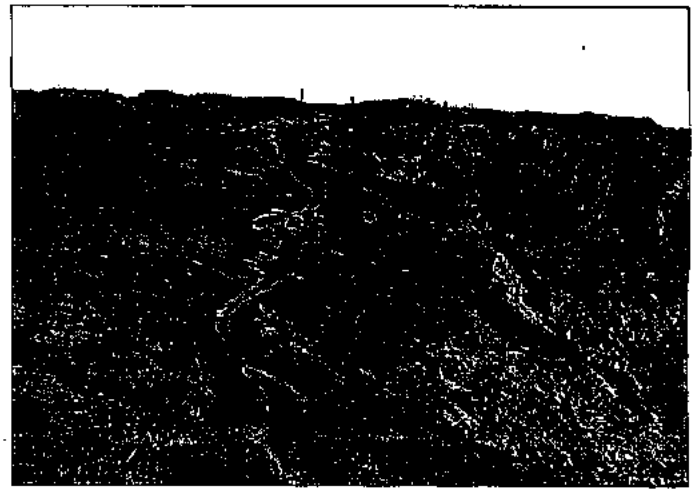
The report notes that cultural conflicts may be just as real, and sometimes more important, than the physical problems associated with leisure.

The report also commends the work of CRN in promoting collaboration on research. It suggests that we reassess the priority given to work on environmental impacts and that we develop a programme of work within the agencies to evaluate management initiatives. This is something which CRN will be considering in further detail in the autumn.

The report concludes that leisure provides a valuable sense of freedom which relieves weekday stresses. However the consequences of leisure may not only affect other people but may have lasting effects on the future of the natural environment.

The conclusions and recommendations made by the Committee are now available for consideration. Copies of the Report can be obtained from HMSO outlets. Enquiries can be telephoned on 0171 873 0011

What are acceptable environmental impacts of leisure?



Climbing and Conservation

Jeremy Barlow, Access & Conservation Officer, outlines the British Mountaineering Council's approach to wildlife conservation in climbing areas

A voluntary agreement at Gogarth on Anglesey is typical of those which restrict climbing access during the nesting season

Climbers are a lucky bunch. Not only do we get the chance to challenge ourselves in some of our most beautiful and wild landscapes, whether they be sea cliffs or mountain crags, but these same areas are often of the highest ecological interest. Over half the popular climbing crags in Wales are Sites of Special Scientific Interest — some of them holding important populations of breeding birds. On all but one of these sites climbing takes place in a positive, managed way with little or no impact on the wildlife value of the area. In some cases this approach goes back a long way.

The South Stack cliffs on Anglesey contain some of the largest populations of guillemot, razorbill and puffin in North Wales as well as chough and peregrine. After a number of years' exploration by climbers in the late sixties, the Nature Conservancy Council and the BMC entered into one of the first voluntary access agreements for nesting birds in 1970. Now, 25 years on, the voluntary agreement for Gogarth is still in place, and the Countryside Council for Wales describes it as 'a model example of a good practice site ... where ... the voluntary agreement has worked almost entirely successfully since its inception'.

It would be very easy for climbers to take a negative approach to any restrictions on access but two factors prevent this. Firstly, good quality information through leaflets, newsletters and the climbing magazines provides a clear rationale for restrictions and helps climbers understand the importance of supporting restrictions. Second, the BMC stays in close contact with all the relevant conservation bodies, national park authorities and other land managers so that any difficulties can be resolved before they become major problems.

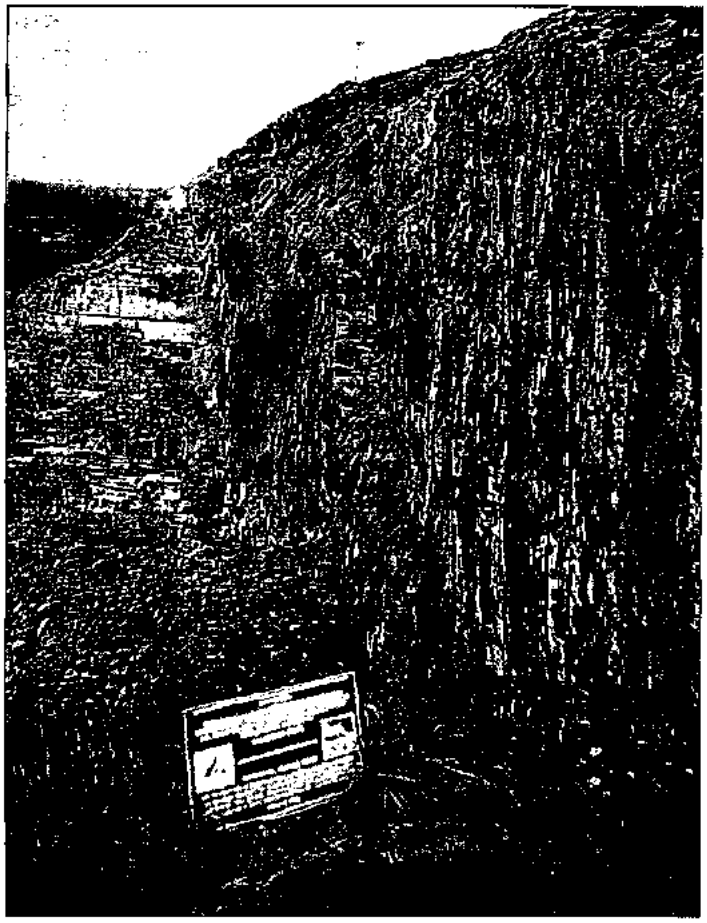
A 1995 BMC survey of climbers' opinions found overwhelming support for the current restrictions which balance the freedom to climb and the need to protect important wildlife populations.

Solutions can also be found where the level or pattern of use is causing erosion around the cliff or damage to vegetation. This may require simple signs asking climbers to avoid certain areas, perhaps suggesting alternative descent routes, or it may require practical works, such as at Chair Ladder in Cornwall where climbers were involved in helping to repair a steep descent path.

Little of this work would be possible without two important initiatives. Firstly the BMC has a long established Access Fund which provides funds for small scale management works to rectify impacts caused by allowing access. This funds items such as signs, fence repairs and erosion control. In recent years the fund has expanded significantly and in 1994 nearly £10,000 was spent on 47 different projects. Fundamental to the concept of the Access Fund is the fact that the money comes from the climbing community itself. Climbing clubs, guidebook publishers, outdoor centres and outdoor equipment manufacturers all make valuable contributions and this is crucial to maintaining the support of climbers for

a sensitive approach to cliffs and crags. In addition the BMC has established an extensive network of volunteers around the country. As active climbers with a good knowledge of their local areas they are ideally positioned to liaise between land owners, conservation bodies and other climbers and are central to the BMC's grassroots approach to resolving potential conflicts. Many years experience has shown that in the majority of cases there need be no conflict between conservation and climbing provided that there is sensitivity, understanding and good communications all round.

Jeremy Barlow can be contacted at
The British Mountaineering Council
177–179 Burton Road
West Didsbury
Manchester
M20 2BB.
Tel: 0161 445 4747



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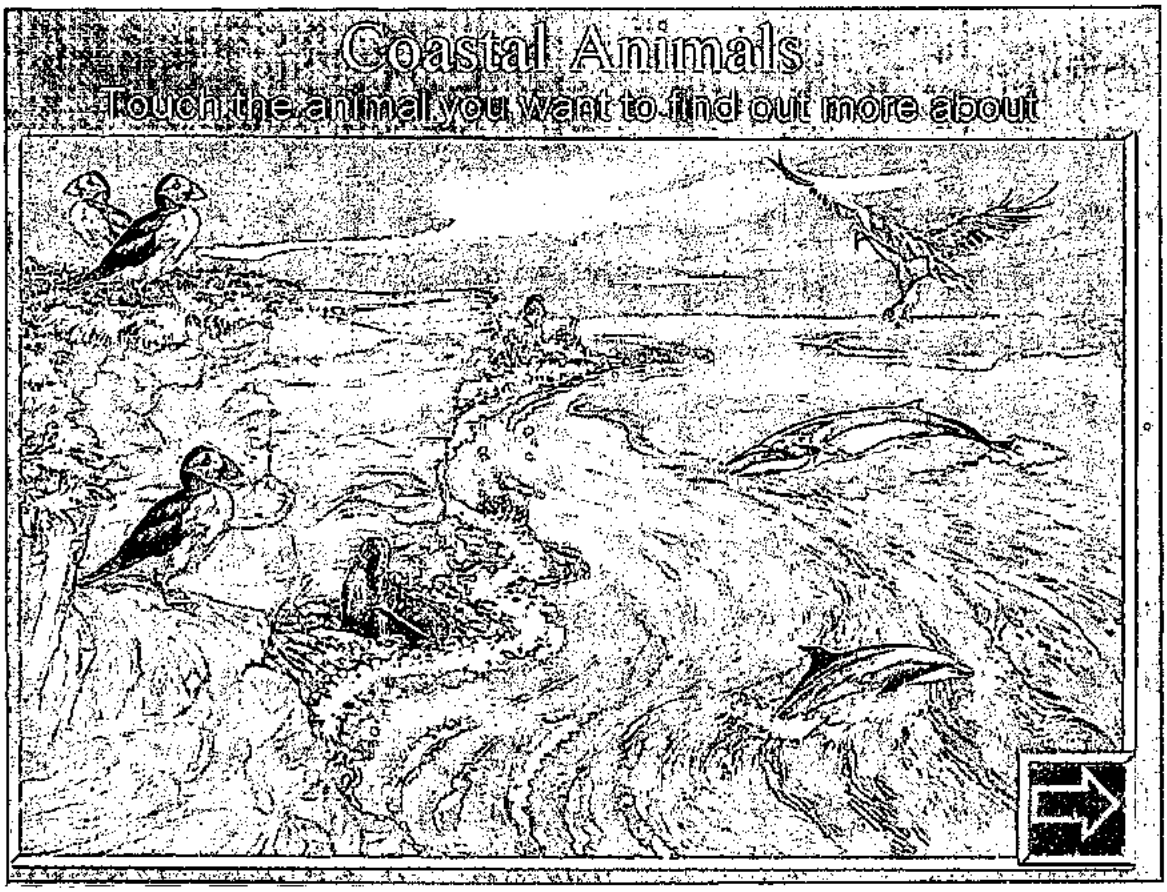
A Multi-media Countryside —

Computers, Public Entertainment and Information

Many of you may be wondering what multi-media is! Michelle Matthews of RSK Environment Limited describes not only what it is, but how it can provide information both *to* visitors and *about* visitors



Information on the coast can be selected from a variety of Highland habitats
Further selection leads to details of theanimals

For some people it conjures up images of complex computer systems and daunting software. Multi-media is in reality nothing more sinister than the combination of different media, including text, photos, graphics, sound, video and animation, to pass on information. This journal is multi-media because it uses pictures and text, T.V. is multi-media as it uses film, graphics, text and sound. Computer-based multi-media systems are different because the information is stored on and accessed from a computer.

Computer-based systems open up a new dimension in the communication of information. The practical advantages are that they can store and use a lot of information from any source in a small space, can be easily updated and don't fade, stretch, crumple or tear. The most innovative and exciting feature is however, that they can be made interactive. Computer-based systems can entertain like television, inform like a book, can be touched like an exhibit and questioned like a guide.

In an interactive system the user, as the name suggests, must take an active role. Unlike television or films which are unconcerned whether anyone is paying attention or not, an interactive system only provides information if it is asked. In a computer system the user decides what information they want to see, how long they spend looking at it and where to go next. They can even decide which language they want to see it in! This makes these systems ideal for entertaining and informing the public.

Many of you may be thinking that computers are unfriendly and unapproachable: particularly if you think

RAM is a male sheep and byte is what a shark does! They need not be like this. A well designed multi-media system even removes the need for a keyboard. All the user needs to be able to do is read and touch the screen. The pages of the system are designed to help navigate the user through the system. Using touch screen technology, all the user needs to do is point to and touch buttons or pictures on the screen to direct their journey or access information.

A system recently developed by RSK Environment Ltd. for Highland Regional Council (HRC) is a good example of the use of computer-based multi-media as a tool in tourism management. Tourism is a major industry in the Highlands and HRC have been helping to promote sustainable tourism there. One of the ways of doing this has been to provide a computer-based multi-media system for tourists at gateway centres to the Highlands.

The system introduces tourists to the wide range of attractions and activities that are available. Chapters cover landscape, wildlife, native woodland, archaeology and travelling tips. The initial system was a pilot study and it is intended to add more chapters. Recently a chapter on forest activities was added and others covering crofting and also the Cairngorms are planned. Each chapter tells its story using photographs, drawings, animation and text. The chapters are interconnected allowing the user either to delve deeper into the information available or change chapters. As the user enters the system they can select one of four languages, French, German, Italian or English, and Gaelic may be added soon.

The system can also provide information in two directions at once. As the visitor is moving through the system the computer can record their decisions; for example how many people were interested in the woodland walks available in Caithness and Sutherland. It can also record the number of people using the system and which languages they chose. This provides HRC with information on which they can base staffing levels and many other operational decisions in addition to assisting with forecasting.

The pilot system was installed in one centre in August 1994 and during the following two months 8,000 people used the centre. The pilot appears to have been a success in that people have been comfortable using the computers and many tourists have commented favourably on the system, especially those from overseas.

The HRC system was designed to inspire rather than to inform. Another system recently created by RSK for Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has the main objective of informing the public. It is part of the Firths Initiative and aims to demonstrate the points of view of different users of the firths. At present the system looks at two points of view; a bird's and the harbourmaster's.

The bird explains that it uses the firth to rest on long journeys, to feed and to breed. The harbourmaster explains how development is controlled, how ships are navigated and also the consequences of emergencies. There are buttons to access information on how the user can help in each of the situations, for example by avoiding disturbing breeding birds. There is a simple quiz at the end of each section. Both of these functions are also used to get information back from the user as the computer records how many people ask for help and their answers to the questions. In this way SNH can begin to gauge whether the system is encouraging people to find out more and how much they are taking in.

The system is to be used as a mobile resource which SNH Area Officers can take to schools and exhibitions to improve understanding of the firths.

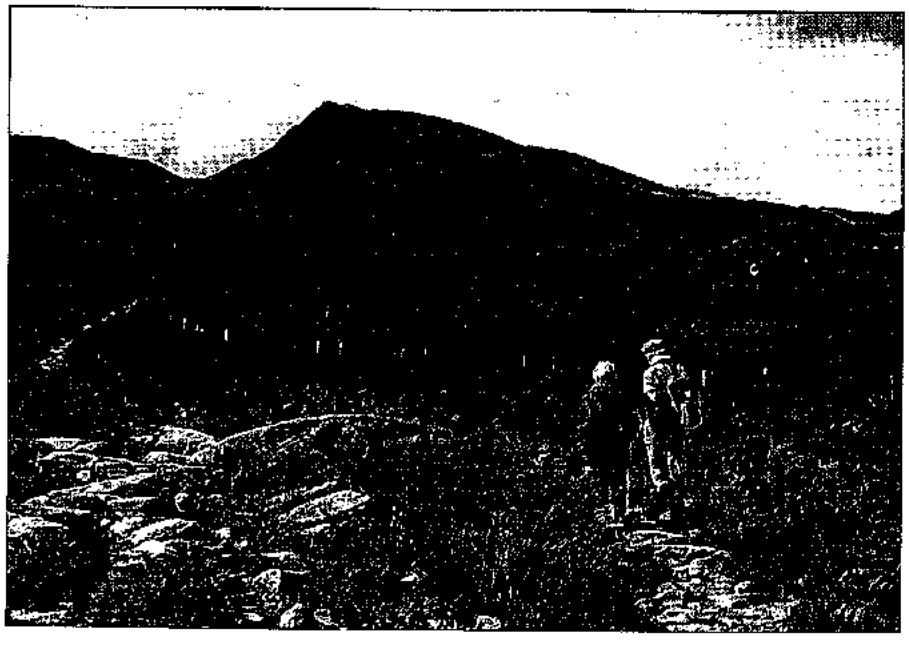
The advantages of multi-media computer systems open up new opportunities for the use of computers in the education and entertainment of the public. They also provide feedback to the operators which they can use in future planning. As a result, these systems are set to become key players in public information and education.

If you would like to find out more about RSK Multi-media please contact Ian Strudwick or Michelle Matthews at :

RSK Environment Limited,
Campus 3,
Aberdeen Science Park,
Bridge of Don,
Aberdeen. AB22 8GW
Tel: 01224 706511.

The Right To Roam — Aspiration Or Reality?

Deborah and Jerry Pearlman of the Ramblers' Association consider the history of our right to roam



Access in Snowdonia National Park; Moel Siabod in the background

The pledge by Chris Smith MP, during the Ramblers' Association Access Rally in the Forest of Bowland at Garstang, Lancashire on the 25th September 1994, that the Labour Party will enact the John Smith Memorial Act, is an important statement for the campaign for the right to roam.

Such an Act would almost certainly allow people to wander at will across 'open country' (ie. 'uncultivated land' which if defined as in the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act and the 1968 Countryside Act would include mountain, moor, heath, down, cliff or foreshore; river or canal, river or canal bank).

The campaign for the right to roam (variously described as wandering at will, the freedom to roam, rambling at will, freedom of access) has a long and tortuous history spanning well over a century. Twenty five Bills have been introduced into Parliament in an attempt to enact a right to roam — only two have succeeded — the 1939 Access to Mountain Act and the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. Both Acts were severely emasculated, neither containing a general right to roam. Section V of the latter Act gave the details whereby the public could be allowed a right to roam just over specified areas. These areas could be covered by Access Agreements or Orders (for example the Access Agreement on Bardon Moor, Yorkshire Dales National Park). They have however been ineffective in providing a large total area of 'access' land — only 100 000 acres (Bonyhady 1987). It is interesting to note that where the public already enjoyed de facto access, it was felt that there was no need to interfere with this and make access a matter of right. Since 1949 however *de facto* access has most certainly diminished.

There has been other legislation that, in theory, allows the public a right to roam on uncultivated land (*de jure* access). This includes:

- S193 Law of Property Act 1925 which confers on members of the public rights of access for air and exercise on urban common land (this is why a great part of the northern Lakeland fells have a right to roam — it was common land in Lakes Urban District Council)
- S39 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which allowed the creation of management agreements which could contain an access component
- local acts dealing with common land eg. 1871 New Forest Act or more recently the 1985 Dartmoor Commons Act
- local acts dealing with water catchment eg. Manchester Corporation Waterworks Act 1879 which prohibits the Corporation from 'interfering' with access around Lake Thirlmere.
- S29 National Trust Act 1907 and S21 National Trust Act 1971, allowing the public access to common land in the Trusts' ownership
- 'exchange for benefit' schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, Set Aside and S30 and 31 Inheritance Act 1984

have access components.

So why then is a general right to roam on open country sought by the access lobby?

The Ramblers' Association (RA) has campaigned tirelessly for the right to roam. Even before its formation in 1935 its predecessors in the form of rambling councils and federations campaigned and protested about the lack of access on mountain and moorland around the country. The focus in the 1920's and 30's was on the Peak District where many access rallies and mass trespasses took place. Today the need for the right to roam is still high on the RA's agenda and one of its main campaigns, Forbidden Britain Days, has created much healthy debate about the right to roam.

The fundamental need to be allowed to wander at will and not be treated as a trespasser has a long history. In the centuries before the enclosure movement walking at will through the countryside was generally unrestricted and tolerated. (The poet John Clare demonstrates this in his poem "Enclosure":
Just as the even-bell rang, we set out
To wander the fields and meadows about.) At the same time that access became restricted through enclosure, industrialisation and urbanisation began to occur. Many of the urban poor went to the countryside in an attempt to escape the squalor of the growing, unhealthy towns. The expanding middle classes went to the countryside seeking spiritual regeneration, following in the footsteps of the Romantic movement. But it was at this juncture in time that conflict arose with the landowners. They reacted to restrict access not only because they wanted to protect commercial interests but also to protect their exclusive rights of property.

So the right to roam has much to do with basic freedoms. As Alan Mattingly, Director of the RA states ".... freedom of speech, freedom of belief and freedom of movement are all seen as fundamental human rights. Yet in Britain freedom of movement is often strictly constrained. Or, at least, it is if the freedom you seek is that of roaming on foot over moors, mountain and heath of your native land" (Ramblers' Association 1993).

The modern walker feels there is a great attraction in taking one's own line over challenging country.Walkers need the freedom to explore summits, valleys, waterfalls and crags. From this they can experience wildness, freedom, solitude and individuality and as environmentalist Marion Shoard (1982) says, it provides "an almost religious experience". Being able to walk without constraint and without the fear of being on the wrong side of the law, would give a valued dimension of liberty to people who already live under many modern day pressures.

In a small scale survey undertaken by Whittington (1995), it was found that 90% of the walkers interviewed on Grasmere Common, Cumbria (common land covered by S193 Law of Property Act 1925 and thus having a right to roam) wanted a general right to roam on other areas of open country in England and Wales. They felt it was important for the right to exist so that they knew that by wandering off track they were not transgressing the law.

So what are the Ramblers' Association doing to make sure that this important freedom can become more than a long hoped for aspiration? In addition to the well publicised Forbidden Britain campaigns and Access Rallies, they have recently produced an important document for consideration by members and interested parties. Harmony in the Hills published by the RA in 1993 puts forward proposals that would bring about a reasonable and balanced scheme to providing a right to roam in open country. It is a realistic approach in that it shows that a right to roam can exist in harmony with commercial interests (hill farming and game management) and wildlife conservation. Measures would include a precautionary principle (access could be suspended if it were harming wildlife), suspension of access for grouse shooting, lambing etc., a code for walkers behaviour eg. they could be treated as trespasser if they caused damage, failed to shut gates etc. The RA is thus promoting the concept of 'responsible access' ie. no rights without responsibilities.

The RA also has a team of experts who are considering the format of any possible legislation taking into account the failures and successes of past legislation in this area.

It can be seen therefore that although some measures have been taken to allow a partial freedom to roam, a general right of access across open country has never been enacted. The Ramblers' Association believes strongly that such a freedom, removed from the populace many centuries ago, is a vital component and need in the lives of many citizens of this country. Can such a fundamental freedom be withheld from the public for much longer?

This article is based on a paper given at the IBG conference 'Accessing the Countryside' held at the University of Nottingham on 21/22 September 1994.

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Deborah Pearlman is a lecturer in Environmental Sciences at :
Division of Environmental Sciences,
University of Hertfordshire,
College Lane,
Hatfield, Herts AL10 9AB
Tel: 01707 284512

Jerry Pearlman is Honorary Solicitor to the RA and at:
Godlove Pearlman,
Russell House,
15 St Pauls Street,
Leeds LS1 2LZ

The Ramblers' Association can be contacted at:
115 Wandsworth Road,
London SW8 2XX
Tel: 0171 582 6878

Messing about on the River —
Access to the Countryside by Canoe

Carel Quaife, National Development Officer for the British Canoe Union, outlines the problems of access to Britain's rivers

Canoeing is a very healthy way to enjoy the open air and the countryside. The waterways of Britain can provide a wide variety of canoeing opportunities, ranging from touring on placid waters to the challenge of turbulent upland rivers, offering both recreational and competitive activities. Canoeing is a popular watersport with over a million people going canoeing every year. They come from all age groups and all walks of life; the young especially benefit from the education and character building potential of canoeing. The canoe is a traditional craft used throughout the world for exploring wilderness areas and observing wildlife without disturbing it. The canoe causes no erosion, noise or pollution and leaves no trace of its passing.

Like everyone else canoeists suffer from the problems of living on a densely populated island. However, unlike many others they have considerable difficulty in securing an equitable share of the use of the waterways. This is largely because there is no network of public rights of way on water equivalent to those enjoyed by walkers on footpaths. There are more than 12000 miles of physically canoeable rivers and canals. Novices or the less adventurous canoeists have access to under 3000 miles of waterways, open to them on payment of a licence fee to the appropriate navigation authority. With a few exceptions such as the Herefordshire Wye and the Severn above Stourport, most of the remaining 9000 miles are either private or else the public right of navigation is disputed. These include the steeper, faster rivers which are sought by "white water" canoeists, and more remote rivers preferred by those seeking tranquillity away from busy rivers like the Thames.

The British Canoe Union (BCU) has for many years been making representations to Government to seek a change in the law so as to level the playing field for the enjoyment of rivers, respecting the interests of riparian owners and other watersports or waterside activities and conservation. To date this has not met with success. The current Government position is that these problems should be solved by local negotiations and agreements between the interested parties. The BCU is concentrating its

An agreement on Devon's East Lyn permits canoeing in January and February and requires advance booking to restrict numbers of canoeists

efforts to make this work. The BCU has an agreement with British Waterways whereby the BCU pays them an annual sum so that its members are automatically licensed; negotiations are taking place to secure similar agreements with other navigation authorities.

The BCU believes in the need to co-operate fully with all waterway interests whether or not there is a public right of navigation. The BCU seeks representation on local waterway user groups. Where legal rights do not exist permissive rights secured from agreements can provide most of what is needed; permissive rights are easier and quicker to arrange and can be more flexible and more sensitive to site specific detail, providing a very effective basis for co-operation.

The BCU considers that it is reasonable for canoeists to be expected to pay sums in relation to the cost of special services and facilities needed by canoeists and provided for or shared with them. (Payment, that is, for provision of access facilities, rather than payment for access itself.) The challenge is to find inexpensive mechanisms for the collection of fair payments.

The BCU is pursuing successfully its priority to recruit and train teams of voluntary Local Access Officers, under the leadership of its Regional Access Officers. There are already about 150 in the team and there are at least two training courses each year. Agreements and the management of access are local matters making local officers the key players. The work within canoeing is co-ordinated by the BCU Access Committee. Watersport and riparian interests meet at national level as the Angling and Canoeing Liaison Group, under the chairmanship of the National Rivers Authority (NRA), to act as a catalyst for local action. The NRA offers its services as honest broker at national and regional levels to smooth the way to the negotiation of access agreements.

Agreements are vital to the maximum sustainable enjoyment by the public of the countryside, both land and water. The BCU would welcome the support of readers of Countryside Recreation Network News, who are involved in the management of the countryside. Through your work or leisure you may be able to promote cooperation by encouraging people to talk. Do contact the writer for the name and address of your local BCU contact or for more information on the matters touched upon in this short article.

Carel Quaife is National Development Officer for the BCU and can be contacted at:

British Canoe Union
John Dudderidge House
Adbolton Lane
West Bridgford
Nottingham NG2 5AS
Tel: 0115 982 1100
Fax: 0115 982 1797

Countryside Access - a commodity to sell?

Colin Beard from Sheffield Hallam University considers the implications of charging for access

In the Peak National Park people can be seen putting money into machines in the car park. The ticket is a receipt and says 'I'm supporting the Peak District Tourism and Environment Fund'. This machine only accepts voluntary donations — a further sum of money still has to be put into a separate machine to pay for your parking fee. But are we paying for our access several times over through our taxes, compensation arrangement, through subsidies, and voluntary donations? More importantly will we soon be paying at the gate?

The thrust of new direct charges for access are likely to be targeted initially at tourists and recreation users, not walking and quiet relaxation. People's attitudes to recreational use in the UK have however been shaped by free access to the countryside but now that free usage is under question and in Britain the countryside agencies have been busy researching a highly controversial subject: paying and charging for access on what is primarily private land. The government are keen to investigate the potential use of economic instruments i.e. money to influence future access arrangements. Using laws and other regulations, they argue, is more expensive.

Turning access into something to buy or sell is not going to be easy. Access may be perceived as having the characteristic of a 'public good' and is thus part of our collective heritage. Others might perceive access as something to sell or purchase as a part of their private land portfolio.

The Markets: real or perceived?

To what extent is the so-called market a real place to trade access — or is it best understood when it is accepted that it is indeed largely a contrived trading place with considerable intervention from the state? How near is the 'near market' approach — an important concept when setting the rules of trading principles for access in the natural environment?

The result of leaving the farming-landowning industries to the ravages of free trade and the market place may mean that like Rover, our land may turn out to be not entirely British! Competition and the removal of barriers to free trade may not then be seen to be so healthy after all, and getting access to 'foreign landowners and sellers' to negotiate access may prove difficult.

Who then are the 'buyers' and who are the 'sellers' — to use the language of the market place? Would the buyers of access act in the interest of the consumers? Will the money from the public purse be distributed equitably, dealing fairly with access from backdoor to outdoors, fron urban to rural, to benefit access for all legitimate public recreation. An important skill needed to survive in the market place is the ability to negotiate with other people for goods, for services and contracts. But the subject of negotiation raises some interesting questions. Who is invited to negotiate, what is the source of their money and who are the negotiators negotiating on behalf of?

The key players and their roles and interaction with each other merits further analysis. A recent advisor to the Countryside Commission referred to five different possible "payers" and "recipients" of financial instruments:

1. farmers
2. visitors
3. local residents
4. the state
5. economic actors [mining/industrial companies] using land for non-agricultural purposes.

Who then is 'selling' access?

The principal sellers are clearly the landowners. But there exists a stereotypic view as to who the landowners currently are. Figure 1 shows a simple analysis of landowners in England & Wales. If we are to pay for landowners to provide access then we require to understand that the principal landowners are not the traditional farmers and the primary purpose of land ownership is not always for agricultural purposes. Agriculture has changed from being the sole basis of the rural economy to having a relatively minor economic role. In negotiating access we need to be certain who we might be negotiating with and what it might cost!

Rather surprisingly we do not know who owns our land, and landlords have resisted any census since 1875.

Figure 1: Known major landowners in the UK

Forestry Commission*	521,336 ha
Ministry of Defence*	252,800 ha
The National Trust*	230,471 ha
Crown Estates*	101,175 ha
British Rail*	71,000 ha
Church Commissioners*	63,158 ha
Duchy of Cornwall*	51,873 ha
The National Trust for Scotland*	39,069 ha
Department of Health*	17,000 ha

The Duke of Buccleuch is Britain's largest private landowner with 288,000 acres (116,547 ha).
*Figures taken from Education Guardian, 22.10.92, p 1.

Who are the 'purchasers' of access — do we know?

Recent research shows that the number of people who are negotiating access on our behalf, paid or unpaid, is unknown (Beard, 1992). The number of Rights of Way Officers in the UK for example remains unknown. The British Canoe Union for example are known to have a trained group of voluntary access

officers to negotiate with landowners. The role of these volunteers in the 'paying for access' debate is largely unappraised and further work is needed in order to establish the size and nature of their work in the recreation market.

Some public authority buyers clearly have difficult multiple roles, acting as both enforcement officers and negotiators over changes in rights of way (e.g. Public Rights Of Way Officers) as well as negotiating new access. They wield both carrots and sticks. Some buyers are volunteers acting on behalf of organised recreational activities. But which of the purchasers can act as free agents around the negotiating table? Some will act as negotiating emissaries on behalf of the 'consumers' (the tax payers/the public/other recreational interests), to seek to gain public access over land and water, whilst others have political masters in the form of local government officers and politicians, some of whom are themselves landowners. Some are Countryside Commission staff who are able to enter into negotiations under the Stewardship Scheme — but hold the payments purse anyway.

Who decides what to buy?

Life in the marketplace is made more difficult for some purchasers as they need to decide, on behalf of the public, what to buy. If we ask the various purchasers how they decide and interpret what it is they are buying i.e. provision for access for quiet informal recreation, perceptual and cultural difficulties arise. To what extent is public money likely to be used to support access for canoeing or caravanning? The view of the above is interesting and sheds light on some difficulties with current trading principles. The current access policy is strongly guided by wording in the current rights of way law, i.e. 'quiet informal recreation'. What we might see is that some purchasers act as gatekeepers using their perception of what is quiet recreation or acceptable recreation to get access to tax payers money to purchase public access. Access however should be available to landscapes 'particularly valued by the public'.

Who are the consumers?

People who attend many caravan sites face an access problem. At a caravan site at Castleton adjacent to Losehill Hall in the Peak National Park families scuttle from the site across a very busy road which has a narrow path on one side only. The family moves along uncomfortably in single file to get to the countryside. Alternatively they get into their cars to get to the countryside, but there is an irony in having to get into a car to get to the countryside when one is in the heart of the nation's first National Park. So why not make a connection with the existing adjacent rights of way network? Well, the Caravan Club is a private club and why should the countryside agencies help to establish a footpath to connect with the existing public paths with public money to a private site? Well the people in the site, who are not all members of the Caravan Club anyway, are also members of the public when they are walking in the countryside. After all farmers operate a private business using large sums of public money. In late 1994 the media had a field day highlighting the flow of money that is currently being used to influence the agricultural markets. The Daily Mail (Feb 6, 1994) noted that the EU spends £27 billion to subsidise 'farmers' and Europe spends £240 million a day to dump and destroy food surpluses. However farmers are now being encouraged to diversify and to 'commoditise an ever-widening range of land-based activities and to orientate towards non-agricultural markets' .

Trading principles:

What is the purchasing power? What does access currently cost? Do we get value for money? Shouldn't we put access out to tender to get the best deal at the best price? Few figures are publicly available to inform the access-money debate, yet it is known that large sums of money are currently being spent on developing permissive access arrangements with landowners for relatively short time periods and which do not have the legal status of a right of way. This begs the question — is this an efficient use of money?

Many landowners who are potential 'sellers' of access, wishing to proactively secure access agreements to the countryside, are increasingly finding it difficult to understand what carrots are on offer. The complexity of the financial incentives is clearly apparent and both sides of the negotiating table have expressed concern about the situation (CLA, 1991). Consolidation and simplification are desperately needed and has been called for by the CLA and NFU alike.

How we use market instruments will indicate whether the support is in favour of the landowner rights or the public/community rights. The following is an illustration only:

Different mechanisms which could secure access

Public money is used to support the commoditisation of the countryside

The landowner is compensated for site access

The landowner is given management costs to support access

Cross compliance is used to gain access

The landowner is charged a fee for obstructing access

Compulsory legal access agreements are made with subsequent compensation

The landowner bears the cost of access

[adapted from work by Jacobs for the Countryside Commission]

Should we be paying for access?

Financial instruments are often quoted as simpler and cheaper than the use of regulatory instruments. However some wealthy landowners, such as those individuals owning huge tracts of land, or institutional land holdings (pension funds, European investors, biotechnology interests), may wish to see even bigger financial incentives (carrots) on offer in order to encourage them to even approach the access negotiating table. The reversemay also be true. Farmers who are struggling financially may be offering the same product at a reduced price. Is this symptomatic of the real competitive market place or just an uneven playing field?

Access costs: the case of a National Park

The power to form agreements with landowners to secure public access or to make orders if agreement is not reached has seen limited use except in the case of the Peak National Park where by 1970 19,328 hectares were subject to agreement. By 1985 access agreements covered 76 square miles of moorland and the compensation bill amounted to £11,500. The additional cost of the accompanying Ranger support service was said to be £100,000 /year in 1985.(Gunten, 1985) What will be the bill 10 years on? No one knows but it is likely to be substantial. Currently the agreements are all up for re-negotiation and the holding operation, where money is paid six months in arrears to ensure that landowners are not left out of pocket while negotiations proceed, is costing around £23,000 with the ranger support costing ten times that figure. The figure is however exclusive of costs — and the top class negotiators used on both sides do not come cheap! The Peak National Park now has some 20,000 ha under Access Agreements. These legal agreements under the 1949 Act have to consider the issue of statutory compensation in that the landowner should be no better or no worse off under the access arrangements. The landowners, who are astute in their negotiations, often use highly skilled agents to present their case. The Park must then do the same. To avoid going to arbritation and the Lands Tribunal let us say the Park employs a senior Chartered Surveyor and a barrister. The former might charge over £100 per hour and the barrister perhaps £500 per hour? Access costs start to go up considerably — costs for a 'case' might be £70,000-80,000. But much of these negotiations are however based on valuation principles to ensure some degree of fairness and equity, with the Peak Park acting on behalf of the consumers. Looking at the scenario of the market — if the same 20,000 ha by Access Agreement were to be considered under say a package similar to the Stewardship Scheme the Park would need £50/ha and the maths are simple — the Peak Park would spend about a million pounds on the access or one quarter of its budget in access payments not including the servicing costs such as the Ranger Service and the maintenance costs. The new Countryside Access Scheme details were announced in September this year by MAFF. The money involved is set at £90 per ha for access routes and £45 per ha for open field access. The price of access, using the markets, would be prohibitive.

Paying or charging for access will centre around a number of interesting principles:

Do we pay or charge money for access to the countryside because of the need —

1. for compensation?
   - reduction in market value
   - restrictions on farm operations
   - loss of rights
   - reduction in privacy
   - deterioration of landscape
   - disturbance of wildlife
   - foregone income

2. to pay for management costs?
   - labour
   - materials

3. for profit?
   - from lesiure and recreational use

4. to commodify the countryside?
   - putting a monetary value on land

5. to manipulate the take up/numbers of land managers using schemes?

Source: Current research
Beard, Bramwell & Broome, Paying & Charging for Access, Countryside Council for Wales, 1995.

We certainly need to be clear about the use of these basic trading principles if we try to sell or buy access in the market place! More frequent contact and understanding will be needed between the consumers, the sellers and the purchasers. But the farmers are beginning to get fed up too and they are feeling threatened. The endless confusion of schemes, grants and new ideas and the lack of clarity as to where access is now really needed is causing a reaction in the farming community. Life is being made too complex — unnecessarily so.

What is clear is that the access market place will be far from a free market, but it must always strive to be honest and fair, otherwise the consumers will once again vote with their feet — literally.

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Countryside Commission (1994) 'Access Payment Schemes — A Discussion Paper on the role of schemes under which national agencies pay land managers to improve public access to the countryside', CCP 443, Countryside Commission

Jacobs, M (1991) 'The Green Economy', Pluto Press, London.

Colin Beard lectures at the Countryside Recreation Management Unit, School of Leisure & Food Management, Sheffield Hallam University.
Tel: 0114 2532881

Colin Beard and Bill Bramwell from Sheffield Hallam University, and Geoff Broom of Geoff Broom Associates have just completed a research contract for the CCW on "Paying and Charging for Access to the Welsh Countryside".
Two documents have been produced. One is an extensive review of the literature and charging for access; a second document reviews existing practice and issues at Welsh sites.
For further information contact: Martyn Evans at the Countryside Council for Wales, Bangor on 01248 370444

The Redwood legacy

Dr Kevin Bishop reviews changes at the Countryside Council for Wales, which followed John Redwood's term of office as Secretary of State for Wales

John Redwood's occupancy of the Welsh Office cabinet seat marked a turbulent period in Welsh environmental politics. His actions, whilst limited to Wales, have important ramifications for the rest of the UK. So what has been the environmental impact of Mr Redwood's occupancy of the Welsh Office?

The Countryside Council for Wales

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) was established in 1991 as an independent non-departmental public body combining the functions previously carried out in Wales by the Countryside Commission and Nature Conservancy Council.

Following his replacement of David Hunt as Secretary of State for Wales in the summer of 1993, John Redwood questioned the effectiveness of designations and, more seriously, brought forward the normal five year Financial and Management Policy Review (FMPR). The FMPR effectively placed the CCW in limbo: all recruitment was frozen, work on the five year strategic plan was held in abeyance, an internal reorganisation to improve service delivery was halted and CCW delayed publishing important policy documents. The FMPR was submitted to the Secretary of State in August 1994 but apparently shelved.

In November 1994, a Parliamentary question tabled by Sir Wyn Roberts (formerly Welsh Office minister responsible for the CCW) asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intended to review the functions of the CCW and what plans he had to reduce the overhead costs of the CCW. John Redwood indicated in his reply that he was personally examining the functions of the Council and his own work would supersede the FMPR and result in an 'Action Plan' for the CCW.

The results of John Redwood's review were a £3.37 million cut in grant-in-aid for 1995/96 and a draft action plan which when leaked to the press led to the headlines "*Batty Redwood to Privatise Snowdon*".

The final Action Plan, together with cuts in budget, mean that CCW faces a cut of one third in staff complement between 1994/95 and 1996/97. It emphasises John Redwood's desire to see elected local authorities undertake more of the Council's work in relation to access to the countryside, country parks and day-to-day management of National Nature Reserves and some SSSIs. It also reduces CCW's ability to comment on proposed development schemes. In practice the Action Plan will mean:

- a substantial decrease in grant support to local authorities at a time of local government change

- decreased activity on public rights of way and problems in meeting the 1995 and 2000 targets for access networks
- no new country parks unless 100% funded by local authorities and/or private bodies
- reduced ability to finance experimental schemes
- an inability to implement the Habitats Directive within existing budget constraints

The thrust of the Redwood reforms question the very role of the quasi-independent central conservation agency. Much of the Council's work, like the Countryside Commission before it, is about empowering local authorities and individual communities through grant aid and specialist advice. Its grant aid often stimulates local action and levers additional resources from local authorities and voluntary groups. The structure of such an organisation is also of value to politicians; they can receive but do not have to act upon advice and they can use such agencies for initiatives which they wish to evaluate without commitment.

A 'Deep Blue' Green Agenda

Having extolled the virtues of local authority involvement and open decision making John Redwood launched his own "Environmental Agenda for Wales" (Redwood, 1995) in January 1995 without seeking the views of the public or of interested parties at any stage during its production. The agenda marks an environmental isolation from the rest of Britain in that it does not refer to the UK Government's sustainable development strategy, is long on recycled ideas and short on clear commitments or targets.

Further evidence of this 'environmental isolation' is reflected in John Redwood's effective blocking of the publication of six PPGs (Planning Policy Guidance Notes).He argued that they could be combined into a planning strategy for the new unitary authorities which will replace the existing counties and districts in April 1996. These PPGs would have done much to implement the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy and green planning policy. He also blocked the strategic planning guidance which had been drafted by all local authorities in Wales, at the invitation of his predecessor as Secretary of State for Wales.

The Government has acknowledged the need to revise its strategy for rural areas in England and Scotland to incorporate the practical implications of the sustainability agenda but it seems that Wales has been excluded from this on-going review of rural policies.

Towards a Second Class Environment?

For some, these developments point worryingly towards Wales becoming a second class environment where sustainability remains rhetoric and development exceeds environmental capacity.

Whilst it is right and proper for political leaders to probe the cost effectiveness and efficiency of agencies like the CCW, the Redwood reforms go far beyond this. The need for such dramatic cuts in budget were never clearly established — the FMPR was abandoned and a parallel, DoE sponsored, investigation about the merits of merging the Countryside Commission and English Nature commented favourably on the Welsh experience. Although the headline *"Batty Redwood to Privatise Snowdon"* was a gross exaggeration, the Redwood reforms did begin to question whether natural heritage was a legitimate area for public expenditure — a public or private good. And, on a more positive note, helped stimulate an on-going debate about he effectiveness of conservation mechanisms that date back to 1949.

References

Redwood, J. (1995) "An Environmental Agenda for Wales", Welsh Office, Cardiff

Dr Kevin Bishop is a lecturer at the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of Wales, College of Cardiff
Tel: 01222 874850

Reader survey

The results from the returns of the survey in the February CRN Newsletter

No of replies: A tremendous 38% of all survey forms were returned!
The winner of the draw is James Milligan who works as a volunteer for the Northumberland Wildlife Trust

The following results are given as percentages of total returns:

1. How would you describe your interest(s) in countryside recreation?

Active participation	50%
Research	28%
Conservation/environment	54%
Consultancy	21%
Countryside management	56%
Policy	27%
Education	58%

2. How much of CRN News do you normally read?

One or two articles	20%
Less than half CRN News	22%
Most of CRN News	58%

3. What sort of article do you/would you find of interest?

Sport/recreation	54%
Planning	42%
Conservation	74%
Education	41%
Countryside management	80%
Diary of training and events	52%
News of research	64%
Literature reviews	40%
News of others' projects	61%

4. Do you find the articles

Too detailed	3%
A good mix	92%
Too superficial	4%

5. How has CRN helped your work/interests? Through

Reading CRN News	82%
Following up contacts in CRN News	30%
Attending workshops/conferences	23%
Reading CRN publications	33%
Obtaining information directly from the Network Manager	5%

6. For what sort of organisation do you work?

Local authority	31%
Voluntary organisation, Trust or Charity	20%
Private practice	11%
Government department or agency	14%
University/College	15%
Other	9%

7.What things about CRN News do you think are particularly poor or particularly good?

particularly poor

Examples:
Infrequency of publication
Lack of input from Scotland and N. Ireland
No guidance on submission of articles
No correspondence column
Poor front cover layout
No index

particularly good

Examples:
Contact names and addresses
Topicality, depth and range of articles
Thematic approach of each issue
Choice of authors
No adverts
Price!

Follow-up action:
We will continue to consider the issues raised in the survey and do all we can to improve CRN News. — so watch out for changes. To help us on our way, please send more articles from Scotland and N. Ireland! (Ed.)

BT Countryside for All

BT Countryside for All is working to improve standards and produce guidelines in the provision of countryside access for people with disabilities.

Running from October 1993 to March 1997, BT Countryside for All is a UK-wide project. It is managed by the Fieldfare Trust on behalf of BT's Community Programme. The project is supported and overseen by an Advisory Group of governmental and voluntary agencies representing countryside, conservation and recreation management and people with disabilities.

The project is guided by the Fieldfare philosophy of working with, not for, people with disabilities. Throughout, people with various types and degree of disability are involved in the planning, design and implementation of tangible products.

BT Countryside for All works on the principle of bringing disabled people and countryside agencies together to identify existing barriers to access, and to investigate and implement appropriate solutions. This principle pervades the series of practical locally based schemes which address the issue of providing the full countryside experience for people with and without disabilities.

In its first year of operation, practical schemes looked at physical access, interpretation, and events management. These were supported by an awards scheme and a grants fund to encourage and promote good practice in countryside access provision. Both the grants and awards schemes will continue to operate for the duration of the project.

Already, on a practical level, BT Countryside for All has produced a number of positive outcomes. Physical access improvements have been made to six sites in Hampshire and South Wales. The Physical Access Scheme in South Wales and Hampshire worked through surveyors from local disability groups and rangers. Together, they identified the existing physical access barriers on the site with reference to the environment and not the people using it, and came up with solutions which were then implemented by the ranger services. See the article entitled "Notes of an artist" in the February 1995 issue of CRN News. This work was funded by Countryside for All in partnership with Artwork Wales.The project has also supported a range of countryside events around Britain, including theatre workshops and storytelling walks held at sites in north-east London.

Rangers have been increasingly recognising the importance of involving the wider community in site activities as a way of raising general levels of environmental awareness. People with disabilities are one of the customer groups they want to attract in greater numbers to their sites, but they have acknowledged difficulty in achieving this to date. Problems cited included not knowing how to contact and involve disabled people, and concern about causing embarrassment by asking people to discuss their access needs. Equally, it is understood that disabled people are handicapped by the environment, and that, as in the urban setting, natural barriers are more acceptable than man-made ones. The project is working to address these issues.

This process of working together has a number of positive outcomes. The rangers overcame their initial concern about working with disabled people when they recognised the professional approach adopted by the surveyors. They were reassured to find that they were not being asked to build motorways up mountains, and realised that by involving disabled people in discussions about access improvements from the start they would end up with good quality cost-effective access which would benefit all visitors.The surveyors saw that their suggestions were implemented, and developed a sense of ownership of the sites. Everyone involved recognised the value of working together, and the local network of contacts established through the Schemes will continue to operate after BT Countryside for All's formal involvement ends. This has to be the way ahead for the future.

This year two new practical schemes will address the issues of Information and Networking in more detail. The Information Scheme will work with rangers and disabled people in Northern Ireland and Scotland to identify disabled people's information needs. The Networking scheme will investigate the processes involved in successful networking, and will work to improve communication between the existing countryside and disability networks in the borough of Milton Keynes in Buckinghamshire.

Research is also being carried out into other examples of current good practice and the project will investigate training programmes for countryside staff to help them achieve access for all.

The outcomes of work will be shared widely through the production of standards and guidelines in access provision by March 1997.

BT Countryside for All works because of the shared commitment of countryside providers and disabled people to look for appropriate solutions to access problems. From all participants the response to BT Countryside for All has been 'this is what we've been waiting for'.

If you would like to know more about the work of BT Countryside for All, please contact them at the following address:
BT Countryside for All
c/o The Fieldfare Trust, 67a The Wicker, Sheffield S3 8HT
Tel: 0114 270 1668, Fax: 0114 276 7900
Minicom: 0114 275 5380.

BT Countryside for All

Woodland Access

Woodland Trust —Woodland Access Year

The Woodland Trust has declared 1995 Woodland Access year to highlight its commitment to free public access to its woods. For all those who enjoy fresh air, wildlife and fine scenery, throughout this year a series of guided walks, woodland management and tree planting events is being held in Trust woods all across Britain.

The Trust now has 700 woods which are freely open to the public. The signs at the entrance to each of these woods which say "visitors are welcome to walk in our woods" are there for all to see, but what does this commitment to access mean in practice?

In some cases ownership by the Woodland Trust can mean that access is secured for the first time. Stoke Wood, an ancient woodland, and one of the few surviving large woods in north Oxfordshire, was closed to the public for 170 years until it was bought by the Trust in 1993.

There has been some concern about loss of access to those areas of Forestry Commission woodland which are due to be sold. However, where the Trust is able to acquire the land continued public access can be guaranteed. The Trust is informed by the Forestry Commission (through the Estates Gazette) about a potential sale before the wood is offered on the open market and to date it has acquired 34 woods, covering 2,910 acres which were formerly owned by the Forestry Commission.

Some landowners report problems such as vandalism and litter left by visitors. But the Trust's experience shows that opening up a wood for quiet enjoyment and involving the local community in the care of their local wood reduces or even eliminates problems. Vandals prefer to operate where they are not likely to be seen.

Experience has also shown that the conservation of wildlife is not compromised by allowing access to those woods which are important wildlife habitats. In some cases, if a wildlife habitat is particularly sensitive, it may be necessary to divert paths to reduce the likelihood of any disturbance. In woods which have not, prior to Trust ownership, been open to the public access can be planned to avoid sensitive areas. Those enjoying quiet recreation offer no threat to wildlife and most walkers stick to the paths leaving wildlife undisturbed.

By planting trees to create new woods the Trust is offering completely new opportunities for access to countryside within easy reach of many towns and villages. At Formonthills at Glenrothes, Fife, a new 200 acre woodland on the edge of the town is to be planted. A new bridle path and trail for all abilities is planned.

Many people find it difficult to know where they can walk freely in the countryside. The Trust has taken a number of steps to make walkers welcome such as building new footpaths and installing information boards and one day the hope is that woods owned by the Trust will be marked on Ordnance Survey maps. In the meantime we hope to set a standard in encouraging access for everyone in search of peace and tranquillity.

For a full list of Woodland Access Year events please contact:

Noelle Fletcher
The Woodland Trust
Autumn Park
Dysart Road
Grantham
Lincolnshire
Tel: 01476 74297

Woodlands To Visit in England and Wales, 1995

This handy green book gives you the basic information you need to explore over 700 woods and forests open in 1995, where visitors are assured of a welcome. This is the third and final year of a joint project in which the Forestry Trust for Conservation and Education has played the leading part. During the three years the project has had financial support from the Countryside Commission, Countryside Council for Wales and the Forestry Authority. This year Esso has supported the publication as part of its Tree Initiative.

The green book this year is much more readable and the layout and use of the symbols builds on experience gained in previous editions to make the book much more friendly. At the time of writing there is every hope that the Forestry Trust will be able to continue to publish the guide and make still further improvements. As more and more privately owned woods are included the guide will be of increasing use to woodland explorers. As more owners put in their woods, others will be reassured. Research supports the view that the more access owners provide, the more they realise the benefits. Thus they are more likely to welcome access, which is good news for all!

If you have yet to obtain your copy, price £4.99, contact the Forestry Trust for Conservation and Education at
The Old Estate Office, Englefield Rd, Theale,
Reading, Berks RG7 5DZ
Tel: 01734 323523

Countryside Recreation Training & Events

With Map and Compass
Learn the skill and confidence to devise and follow your own routes
Preston Montford Field Study Centre
4– 6 Aug, Shrewsbury

Paradise Lost
1995 CMA National Study Conference
CMA
11–15 Sept, Cambridge

Managing Offroad Cycling
Discussing different approaches to management , problems and solutions
Offroad Cycling
12–14 Sept, Cumbria

Accelerating Leisure?
Leisure, Time & Space in a Transitory Society
Leisure Studies Association
12–14 September,
The Netherlands

Sports Development Seminar
ILAM NW Region
14–15 Sept, Rivington

Upland and Moorland Conservation Managment
Develop skills and understanding
Plas Tan y Bwlch
18–22 Sept, Gwynedd

Today's Thinking for Tomorrow's Countryside
Looking at recent advances in countryside recreation management
The Annual Countryside Recreation Conference
CRN
19–20 Sept, Salford

Rangers in the Community
The Annual SCRA Conference
SCRA
19–22 Sept, Edinburgh

Creating New Meadows and Grasslands
Innovative habitat creation techniques and diversification of improved grass swards
Kirklees Countryside Unit
21 Sept, Huddersfield

Ecology and Environmental Management in Europe
IEEM Annual Conference
21 & 22 Sept, Reading

Nature, People and Ponies
Ecology and environmental management in the New Forest
IEEM
23 Sept, Hampshire

BIOLINK '95
Biological recording in the Borders; environmental sustainability and surveys
BRISC
26 Sept, Scottish Borders

National Trust Centenary Countryside Conference
26 - 28 Sept, Manchester

Meeting the non-fossil fuel obligation in Wales
Windfarms and Wavepower, Barrages and Biomass
Short Course Unit, University of Wales
27 Sept, Cardiff

Maps and Surveying Skills
Enabling staff to interpret and use maps, to survey and use aerial photographs
Losehill Hall
2–4 Oct, Derbyshire

Wildlife Enhancement in Historic Gardens and Parklands
Integration of horticultural and wildlife management techniques
Plas Tan y Bwlch
2–6 Oct, Gwynedd

How Many More Can We Take?
Planning for access and establishing carrying capacities at countryside sites.
Preston Montford / CEI
9–11 Oct, Shrewsbury

Recreation Management on Conservation and Amenity Sites
For access and conservation
Plas Tan y Bwlch
9–13 Oct, Gwynedd

Interpretive Planning
For natural, historic and other sites
CEI, Scotland
10–13 Oct, Perthshire

Exploring the Internet
CRN
October, Bristol and Edinburgh

BRISC (Biological Recording in Scotland Campaign) — 0131 312 7765
CEI (Centre for Environmental Interpretation) — 0161 2471067
CEI, Scotland — 01316508017
CMA (Countryside Management Association) — c/o CEI on 0161 247 1067
IEEM (Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management) — 01635 37715
ILAM (Institute of Leisure and Amenities Management) NW Region — 01772 729640
Leisure Studies Association — Tel: 01232 640357 Fax: 644641
Losehill Hall — 01433 620373
Offroad Cycling — 01531 6335000
Plas Tan y Bwlch — 01766 590324
Preston Montford — 01743 850380
National Trust Event Organisers — 01772 881888
SCRA (Scottish Countryside Rangers Association) — Ann McKillop on 01786 432364
University of Wales — 01222 874845