

# Countryside Recreation Network Annual Report 2012-13



## Introduction

CRN is a network which:

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

CRN is funded by a range of Government Departments, Agencies and other bodies who share an interest in countryside recreation issues. CRN contracts its administration to Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland, Belfast.

## Aims and Objectives

To work together for people outdoors, to:

- Share knowledge
- Gather evidence
- Develop ideas
- Promote good practice

## Management:

Chairmanship	Jo Burgon, Independent (October 2012 – present) Wendy Thompson, Natural England, (April – September 2012)
Vice Chair	Mike McClure, Sport Northern Ireland
Budget Officer	Carl Atkinson, CCW (April to September) Wendy Thompson, Natural England, (April – September 2012)
Events Officer	Glenn Millar, Canal and River Trust
Communications Officer	Martin Key, Sport and Recreation Alliance
Research Officer	Vacant

## Staff:

Secretariat	Kathryn Callaghan, Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland
Finance Manager	Sylvia Watson, Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland

## Business Address:

Countryside Recreation Network  
c/o Outdoor Recreation NI  
The Stableyard  
Barnett's Demesne  
Malone Road  
Belfast BT9 5PB

## Contact:

*Tel:* 028 9030 3937  
*Fax:* 028 9062 6248  
*Email:* [kathryn@countrysiderecreation.org.uk](mailto:kathryn@countrysiderecreation.org.uk)  
*Web:* [www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk](http://www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk)

## Remarks from the Chair

### Wendy Thompson (April – September 2012)

It is encouraging to look back and see what CRN has achieved over the last twelve months. We adapted to a reduced budget, along with the organisations that make up the membership of CRN, but despite this I am pleased that we have managed to retain the core function of bringing together organisations representing recreation in the natural environment to share ideas and good practice across the sector.



Our meetings remain lively and we have been fortunate to have shared in the expertise of the extended network of members who have attended our meetings in the Cotswolds, Dartmoor and Manchester. Their insights and stories have provoked thinking and inspired other activities such as the CRN journals and the annual conference which you will read about in this report.

One of our members was always at the forefront of contributing to network meeting discussions. Sean Prendergast, representing the National Parks in England, sadly passed away at the end of March. He will be missed greatly by all, for his knowledge and vast experience, for his quick wit and his stories, and for his passion for providing better opportunities for all to enjoy the natural environment. Most of all he will be missed for caring. A huge loss to CRN as well as to his family and friends.

Within the year we also happily re-gained a valued member. Jo Burgon agreed to take over from me as CRN Chair in October. Whilst I, and Natural England, remain committed to CRN I was very pleased that Jo was prepared to take on the Chair, as a volunteer and in an independent capacity. He is well respected across the sector for his creative thinking as well as for his diplomacy and advocacy skills. So a huge welcome back to Jo!

### Jo Burgon (October 2012 – March 2013)

It has been a great privilege to take on the mantle from Wendy, who has guided CRN into its next era with considerable aplomb. I have had a long association with the network during my time with the National Trust and always valued the information exchange, seminars, field visits and fellowship with professional colleagues.



Returning to it as an independent Chairman, post National Trust, I have been struck by the strong commitment and enthusiasm of members and those who attended our annual conference or have participated in seminars during the year, even when economic circumstances are particularly tough in the public sector.

I think this says much for the value and importance attached to outdoor recreation; with the benefits it brings to people's health and well being, as a key contributor to the tourist-based economy and as a driver for environmental quality and improvement.

This brief annual report of our work over the last year I hope gives you a suitable picture of the themes we have explored and offered to the sector at large, whether through the journal or website or by running an annual conference on a topical subject. Our meetings of subscribing

members of the Network give us a rather unique UK and Republic of Ireland wide view of the issues facing outdoor recreation. We are able to put political and administrative boundaries to one side and focus on the universal needs of people to get out, experience and enjoy the outdoors.

We are looking to broaden the membership and so if you are interested in looking to come on board do get in touch. We also recognise that there are other associations and networks where some new partnership working would be beneficial.

We shall continue to play our part in helping those responsible for providing and managing a wide range outdoor recreation experiences whether in the public, private or voluntary sector to access information and good practice to support them in their professional work.

## Membership

The following organisations were members of CRN during 2012/13:

### Full members:

Organisation	Representative
1. Scottish Government	Helen Jones
2. Association of National Park Authorities	Sean Prendergast
3. Forestry Commission	James Ogilvie
4. Natural England	Wendy Thompson
5. Waterways Ireland	Sharon Roulston
6. National Trust	Philip Broadbent-Yale
7. Sport Northern Ireland	Mike McClure
8. Canal and River Trust	Glenn Millar
9. Scottish Natural Heritage	Rob Garner
10. Northern Ireland Environment Agency	Maia Taylor
11. Natural Resources Wales	Elinor Gwyn

### Associate members:

Organisation	Representative
1. Heritage Council Ireland	Beatrice Kelly
2. Sport and Recreation Alliance	Martin Key
3. Historic Scotland	Martin Gray
4. Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland	Caro-lynn Ferris
5. Lee Valley Regional Park	Nigel Foxall
6. Scottish National Parks	Fran Pothecary
7. Sport Scotland	Campbell Gerrard
8. Northern Ireland Tourist Board	Rosemary Lightbody
9. Welsh Assembly	Manon Philips

## Outputs

### Events

During 2012-13 CRN organised a number of events to allow its members to network with each other and with regional and national industry experts. The overarching aim of these events is to share information, knowledge, best practice and ideas.

The following events were delivered during 2012-13:

### Agency Meetings

#### *1. April 2012, Cotswolds, England*

Theme: Prospects for Walking – opportunities for tourism and local communities

Host: Natural England

Attendance: 13

The aim of this two-day Spring meeting and seminar was to learn about initiatives that embrace prospects for walking. Drawing on English initiatives, the group heard about schemes and projects which have the potential to strengthen tourism opportunities and enhance the outdoors for local communities. Local experts guided a visit to Leckhampton Hill where we explored the management of the Cotswold Way National Trail across the site. Members learned how the Friends of Leckhampton Hill (FOLK) work in partnership with the local community, the Cotswold AONB and Cheltenham Borough Council to maintain the popular recreation route across a special site for landscape, nature and the historic environment.

#### Speakers:

Jo Burgon, Cotswolds AONB

Paul Johnson, Natural England

Sheila Talbot, Walkers are Welcome

Jim Walker, Walk England

#### Site visits guides:

Julius Marstrand, Friends of Leckhampton

Gavin Stark, Natural England

James Blockley, National Trails

Ray Woolmore, Association of AONBs

#### *2. September 2012, Dartmoor, England*

Theme: Partnership approaches to engagement and outreach

Host: Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)

Attendance: 11

This two-day meeting explored the theme of public engagement, in terms of programmes and initiatives which are running / have been run in and around the DNPA area. We heard a range of informative and inspiring presentations from key speakers, as well as benefiting from a programme of site visits lead by specialist guides from the Park. Topics covered included during the course of these visits were: the complex

issues arising from multiple land ownership and facilities; the importance of positive public engagement; and the significance of developing partnerships with local organisations to deliver education in the outdoors. The presentations focused on partnership marketing; a stepped approach to participation; the changing accessibility of Destination National Nature Reserves; and sustainable access to the national park.

Member quote:

“Being my first time on CRN Member’s trip, the visit to Dartmoor National Park was an invaluable opportunity to network with fellow members. The site visit provided an insight into how the same problems are dealt, such as managing visitors in the outdoors but in alternative ways. The presentations about visitor engagement were thought-provoking and helped me expand my perspective on how organisations find innovative ways to sustain visitor demand through offering diverse products” Fiona Barbour, Outdoor Recreation NI

Speakers:

Ally Kohler, Dartmoor National Park Authority  
Zoe Goss, Stepping Stones to Nature  
Andy Bailey, East Dartmoor NNR  
Richard Drysdale, Dartmoor National Park Authority

Site visits guides:

Rob Steemson, Dartmoor National Park Authority  
Andrew Watson, Dartmoor National Park Authority  
Orlando Rutter, Dartmoor National Park Authority

### *3. January 2013, Manchester, England*

Theme: Funding opportunities and research discussion

Host: Manchester Metropolitan University

Attendance: 14

This one-day meeting included a morning research discussion and an afternoon seminar. The research discussion explored the potential for CRN to facilitate the ‘bringing the research and evidence gathering community’, while the seminar centred around future funding opportunities for those working in Outdoor Recreation. Members learned about the changing structure of EU funds and grant processes and what this would mean to them. They also heard from the BIG Lottery Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund in terms of their respective priorities for the future and how this will impact upon project funding.

Speakers:

Simon Caporn, Manchester Metropolitan University  
Phil Wheeler, Manchester Metropolitan University  
Phil Lakin, National Trust  
Tessa Wiley, BIG Lottery Fund  
Drew Bennelick, Heritage Lottery Fund

### Annual Conference

March 2013, Birmingham, England

Attendance: 59 paying delegates

The title of this conference was: Growing the Outdoor Economy: outdoor recreation as a catalyst for economic growth. The aim was to stimulate learning and discussion in terms of what is being done, and what could be done to deliver economic growth in the UK and Ireland.

The target audience was anyone involved in the outdoor economy, including activity providers, retail and service providers, voluntary sector, researchers, policy, decision makers and practitioners. During the day we heard from a variety of expert speakers from across the private, public and academic sectors, including a keynote address from Go Ape Managing Director, Jerome Mayhew.

Speakers:

Jerome Mayhew, Go Ape

Lyndsey Swift, Visit England

Pippa Langford, Natural England

Neil Ravenscroft, University of Brighton

Ruth Coulthard, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

Graeme McClean, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland

Richard Millar, Scottish Canals

Chris Gratton, Sheffield Hallam University

The proceedings from the conference have been collated into a special edition of the journal to be published in April 2013.

Delegate feedback:

*"Effective partnership working"* (anonymous)

*"Very good linking the cross-cutting themes of the topic"* (anonymous)

*"Thanks for organising a great conference and making me feel very welcome and looked after.*

*I really enjoyed it and everyone I spoke to thought it was a success, so congratulations",*  
Ruth Coulthard, Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

*"Thank you so much for a very good day in Birmingham earlier this week. There were some really interesting talks and some good discussion. I am very pleased to have been part of it",*

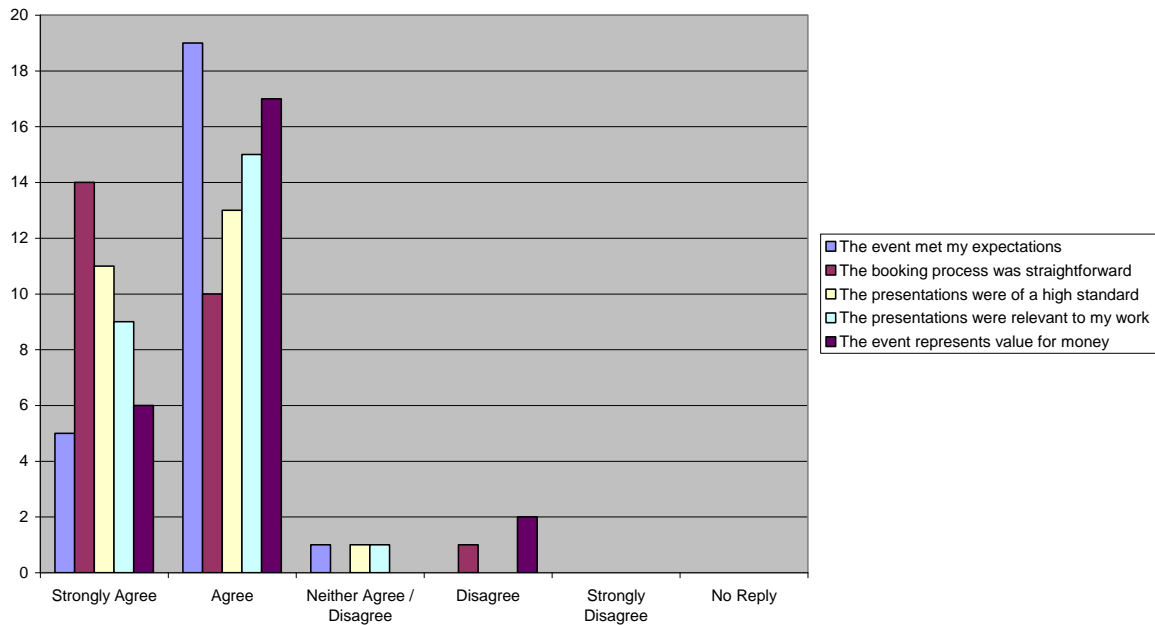
Neil Ravenscroft, University of Brighton

*"I found the conference really useful personally and particularly enjoyed Jerome's presentation regarding the success of Go Ape",* Richard Millar, Scottish Canals

Results from delegate evaluation form (completed on the day of the conference):



### Feedback from Delegates



### Teleconferences

In addition, 2 management team teleconferences were held during 2012-13.

### Communications

#### Journals

In September 2012 volume 20 of the CRN journal was published. The theme was Marine and Coastal recreation and it included 9 articles by a range of industry specialists from the following organisations:

- The British Mountaineering Council
- The Ramblers
- Natural England
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Durham Heritage Coast Partnership
- Dorest Coast Forum
- Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy
- National Trust

This was the first time CRN had invited a guest editor to direct its journal content – an approach which worked well in terms of the quality and range of authors published in the final document. 1,011 copies were mailed to the CRN database and it was also made available as high and low res files on the CRN website.

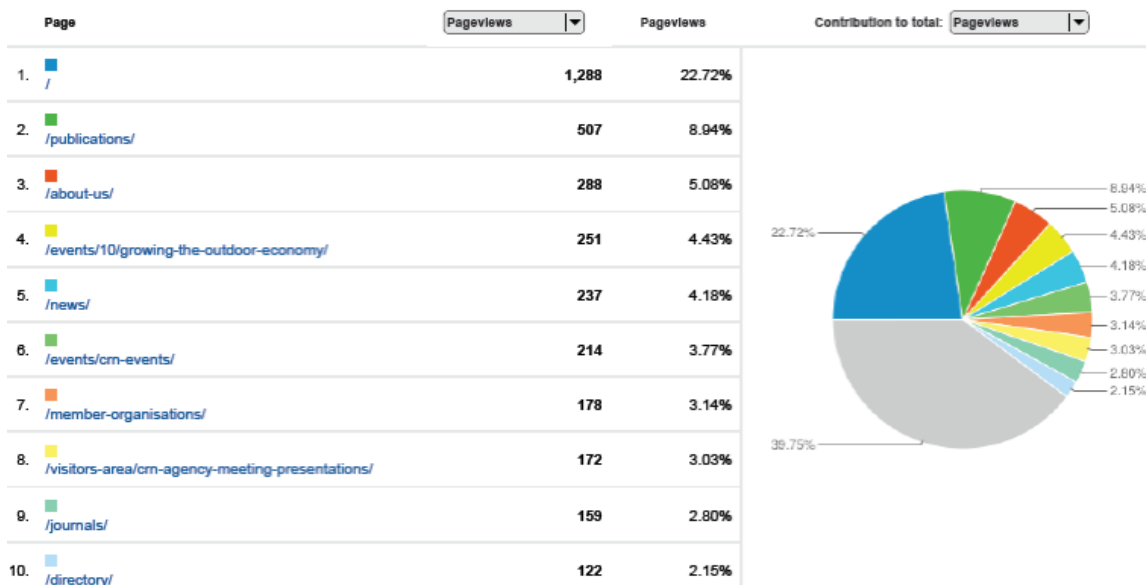
Volume 21 – Growing the Outdoor Economy, is planned for completion by the end of March 2013 (volume 21). This will include the March 2013 conference proceedings as well as articles from each of the conference speakers.

## Website

During 2012-13 it was agreed that CRN’s website structure and navigation should be improved. A proposal from the management group was approved by the Network’s members in January 2013, with all work completed by the beginning of March 2013. The website now offers visitors a more streamlined approach to navigation and provides new information (such as downloadable past e-newsletters and past events with associated documents).

Google Analytics have been active for [www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk](http://www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk) since 1st November 2012. From November 1 2012 to March 1 2013 the most popular 10 pages were:

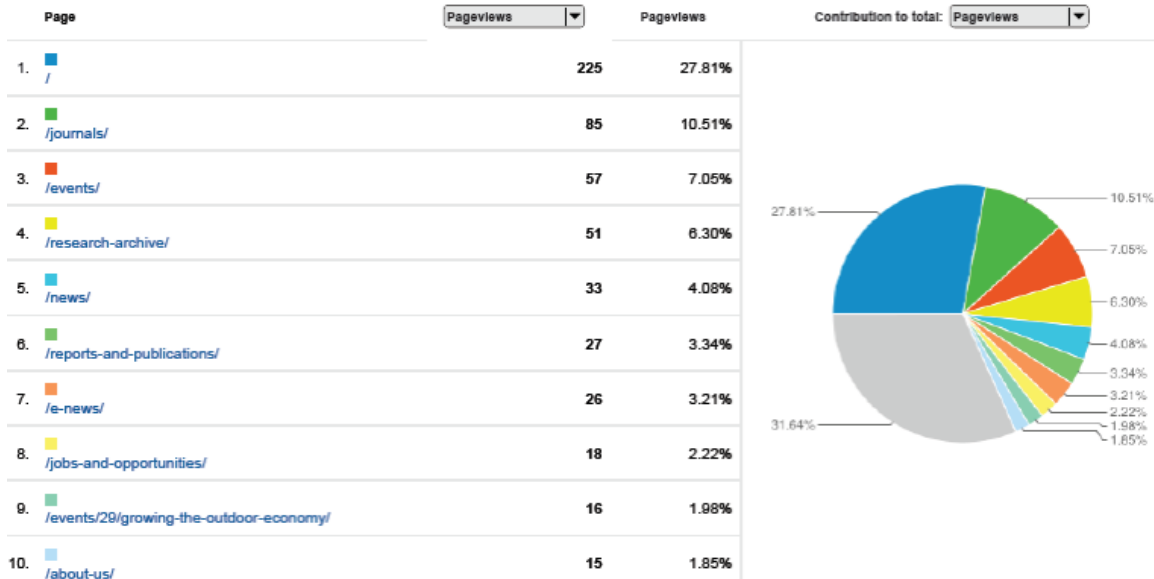
1. Home
2. Publications
3. About Us
4. Events – Growing the Outdoor economy
5. News
6. Events – CRN Events
7. Member Organisations
8. Visitors Areas – Agency Meeting Presentations
9. Journals
10. Directory



On March 2 2013, the revised website was launched. The most popular pages are as follows:

1. Home

2. Journals
3. Events
4. Research Archive
5. News
6. Reports and Publications
7. E-news
8. Jobs and Opportunities
9. Events – Growing the Outdoor Economy
10. About Us



Since Google Analytics has been running, the following unique visitor patterns have been recorded. The peak daily record (80 unique visitors on 7 February 2013) coincides with the distribution on the CRN e-newsletter, which was sent the day before.



Visitors came from the following regions:

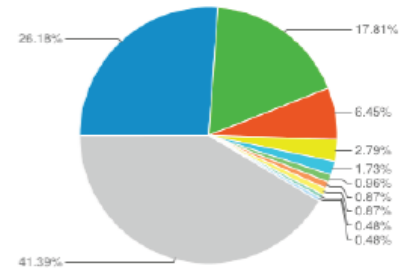


And via the following browsers:

Browser	Visits
Internet Explorer	1,032
Chrome	447
Firefox	220
Safari	212
Konqueror	20
Opera	16

Visitors found the website using the following top 10 search keywords:

1.	■ (not provided)	272	26.18%
2.	■ countryside recreation network	185	17.81%
3.	■ countryside recreation	67	6.45%
4.	■ http countryside recreation org downloads conference flier layers	29	2.79%
5.	■ countryside network	18	1.73%
6.	■ □ cm conference 2013	10	0.96%
7.	■ countryside recreation jobs	9	0.87%
8.	■ growing the outdoor economy	9	0.87%
9.	■ countryside recreation network uk	5	0.48%
10.	■ cm conference 2013	5	0.48%



## E-newsletters

During 2012-13 3 e-newsletters were published and disseminated in May 2012, October 2012, and February 2013. These were based on CRN agency meeting seminars and linked to guest speaker presentations.

This year's e-newsletters mark a change in format and content. Previously the content was based upon selected details from the members' information sharing pro-formas. The new approach is to summarise the seminar presentations from each agency meeting, along with any up and coming events. The response has been very good, with most people preferring this new style:

*"Just to say congrats on a superb newsletter! That captures and disseminates all the good stuff from the Dartmoor sessions, in a really lively format, plus the journal and other news, so it is a brilliant package. Great"* Rob Garner, Scottish Natural Heritage, October 2012

"It looks very good and a great way to share information from the member meetings to a wider audience" Wendy Thompson, Natural England, May 2012

### Database

Maintenance of the CRN database has been ongoing over the 2012-13 period. There are currently 1,094 subscribers to the list. Non-active subscribers were removed from the old list, resulting in significant print and postage savings associated with the distribution of CRN's journal.

## Annual Accounts 2012/13

Balance brought forward from 2011/12	21,179.00	Note: includes £8200 Pre-paid membership
Income	30,901.84	Note: See table 1
Expenditure	29,816.86	Note: See table 2
Balance carried forward to 2013/14	22,013.98	

Table 1 - Income

Income	Amount (£)	Notes
Membership Fees	31,200	This figure includes some membership prepayment for the 2012-14 financial year.
Annual Conference Fees 2013	7,320.00	
Delegate fee from 2012 conference	115.00	
Host payment for Cotswolds meeting room hire and refreshments	250.00	
Publishers licence	181.84	Publishers Licensing
Cairngorms National Park	35.00	Accommodation payment
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,901.84</b>	

Table 2 - Expenditure

Expenditure	Budget	Spent	Notes
Travel and Subsistence - Chairman	1,200.00	575.27	Cost to attend agency meetings and conference
Travel and Subsistence for 3 meetings - Secretariat	1,200.00	1,128.91	Cost to attend agency meetings
Journal	4,150.00	3,039.74	Published September 2012
Travel & Subsistence for Conference – Secretariat	600.00	433.12	Cost to attend conference
Conference 2013		4884.95	See income to offset expenses
Conference journal	1,800.00	0	Rolled forward to spend April 2013
Salary of Secretariat	16,154.76	16,201.00	
Overheads (15% of salary)	2,423.25	2,423.25	
Web/IT	250.00	900.00	Additional spend approved during the year for web site restructure.
Miscellaneous	572.00	195.62	Expenses from last year's seminar (speakers)
Information Commission		35.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,350.00</b>	<b>29,816.86</b>	