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THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONFERENCE

John Foster

Director, Countryside Commission for Scotland, Perth.

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to this, the 12th conference of the Countryside Recreation Research Advisory Group. My name is John Foster and I'm your Chairman for this first session.

My first duty as Chairman, and it is a very pleasant one indeed, is to introduce to you the Vice Chancellor and Warden of the University of Durham, Professor Fred Holliday.

We are delighted that Professor Holliday has done us the honour of joining us this afternoon. I know that he wants to say a word of welcome to us and I think, perhaps, add a few flames to the fires that may arise later.

WELCOME

Professor F.G.T. Holliday

Vice-Chancellor and Warden, University of Durham.

Thank you Chairman. It would be the least I could do to say a word of welcome to you and I do it very warmly. I think some of you know that I have other interests, quite specifically in the area you're considering at your conference. I can't resist this chance just to stir the pot a little bit. I spent most of the month of August idling and working in the countryside and I was reinforced in my view that there are many different views of it, but the old one of the town/city divide seems to me now to be less and less relevant. I find more and more people living in the towns who understand the nature and integrity of the countryside and I find fewer and fewer people living in the countryside who understand the nature and integrity of the countryside. That makes me rather sad and I think it illustrates that distance from the countryside is not now to be measured in miles, but in attitudes. I have to say, and I say it with regret, that this year I saw more violations of the Country Code committed by people living in the countryside than committed by those that do not: and that made me very sad.

However, enough of that. I am particularly thrilled with the topic of your conference. It is one which was near to my heart when I was Chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council and the examination of it is going to be daunting and difficult. May I suggest that if you feel inclined, in one of your groups or maybe after dinner, you play the party game of 'expectations'. I don't know whether you know this game, but it is played by two consenting parties, each of which has some relationship with the other. Each one writes down, either in relation to a special issue or to a theme in general, what Party A expects of Party B, and vice versa. It sometimes helps to have a third party acting as a prompter, asking each to write down expectations in terms of time or money or aims and objectives of management. Then the two parties swap sheets and compare their two sets of expectations.

Now the expectations game, like all party games, has all the sweetness of a razor blade. But I commend it to you. I play it regularly in the University and I think it is one way of separating out the differences and the similarities between two groups.

Now, Chairman, I've done more than simply welcome you, but you know that you're welcome anyway. I am personally most intrigued, interested and passionately want to know the outcome of your conference. Whatever it is, I'm sure you're going to enjoy your stay here and I'm sure you are going to have a most rewarding time. If I may I'd like to sit in for at least a little of the afternoon.

John Foster (Chairman)

Thank you very much indeed Professor Holliday for your welcome and for your encouragement to us to do something about 'expectations' this evening.

This is the first CRRAG conference I have been to, but I regularly see the papers of them and I know the subjects that are chosen for them are topical, to the point and with a good cutting edge. This year is no exception, because our subject - the Voluntary Sector in Countryside Recreation - is certainly topical and to the point - because government policy is pressing upon private interests and voluntary interests to be more active, to do more things and to do them with the public sector. Also, there is in the United Kingdom - and I say United Kingdom advisedly because we have colleagues here from Northern Ireland - a long tradition of voluntary activity right across the board and certainly within our own field of countryside. We also have a long tradition of joint work between public authorities and voluntary bodies. I see a good number of colleagues here both from the voluntary side and from the public sector who have been involved over the years in many different joint projects to good effect and I'm sure that we shall hear from some of you during the course of the afternoon.

Our subject certainly has a potential cutting edge and I hope very much that our deliberations both today and tomorrow will do something to hone and sharpen that edge to good effect in our minds.

I think we should be grateful to a long-standing member of CRRAG - Philip Daniell - whose idea it was that a CRRAG conference should be devoted to the voluntary sector. It has come to pass, and we're very grateful to Philip.

After that brief general introduction, can I now turn to the programme for this session in which we are quite logically laying foundations for the more specific contributions which will follow in later sessions. Our concern here and now is with the nature of the voluntary sector in countryside recreation.

Bob Hall, who is Chairman of BTCV, is the discussant and I'll introduce him more adequately later. First of all we have two papers to be given by Foster Murphy and Paul Hoggett with Jeff Bishop.

Our first paper is concerned with the range and scope of voluntary activity in the countryside. The speaker, Foster Murphy, has been director of the Volunteer Centre at Berkhamsted for the past two years. He was educated at Dublin and Cambridge, in classics and theology and he brings to our deliberations this afternoon a wide range and expertise and experience. Prior to Berkhamsted he was Deputy Director of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, responsible there for project development and particularly involved with unemployment, juvenile delinquency and inner city issues.

In the international scene he was a United Kingdom delegate to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in 1976. He was founder chairman of the Ecumenical Youth Council for Europe in 1969. He is currently the chairman of the British Council of Churches Youth Unit, as well as being involved in a whole range of advisory groups and panels.

THE RANGE AND SCOPE OF VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Foster Murphy
Director, The Volunteer Centre, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire.

1. THE CONTEXT OF VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY IN THE 1980's

Before coming in detail to look at voluntary action in the countryside, it is appropriate to look briefly at the overall context of voluntary action to draw a sketch map of the voluntary sector generally and to draw on available knowledge about the prevalence of volunteering.

1.1. Social and Economic Trends

A reading of the weekly literature, or even the annual statistical tome Social Trends gives an agreed picture:

There are more elderly people living in Britain than ever before: more of these are very old. There is great pressure on health and social services, but even greater on carers at home.

There are more divorces, legally constituted, than before. This and other factors, means a greater number of one-parent families, a much more diverse pattern of family life and a greater public concern for the welfare of children.

The number of teenagers has now peaked and a particularly large 'bulge' has reached the age where they would expect jobs. School closures and youth unemployment are results.

There is growing concern about the consequences of re-organisation of secondary schools in earlier decades. Too high a proportion of young people fail to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills. This month the Youth Training Scheme came into being as a response to this crisis.

There are fewer jobs available in our society - and more people looking for them, as a result of the population bulge. This is one explanation of why unemployment has increased, behind it lie changes in the world economy, inflationary pressures and controls, technological change and the other factors.

Unemployment exacerbates the endemic gap between richer and poorer in our society. While the grinding absoluteness of poverty in earlier eras in this country and in the majority of countries in the contemporary world is no longer found, relative poverty at a time of higher expectations as well as an emphasis on materialism, is all too present - especially for some of the vulnerable groups already mentioned. Families with one, or two, breadwinners often increase their living standards dramatically. Others find that two breadwinners are a necessity to maintain minimum standards and in parts of the country expectation of jobs is at a minimum.

In spite of declared attempts to limit Government spending the proportion of the Gross Domestic Product incurred by Government expenditure has in fact increased since 1979. Following this year's re-election it is clear that options are currently being examined to see which of the high-spending elements can be curtailed. Basically this

means asking if we can as a nation afford the cost of salary-related pensions introduced in the mid-1970's, as well as the level of benefits paid to unemployed and other disadvantaged people. One opinion poll shows that, contrary to the Government's pledge to cut taxation, a majority of the people would be willing to increase taxation in order to offer a reasonable level of monetary compensation to people requiring benefits and allowances.

Two other facets of the current Government's policy should also be taken note of. Central-Local Government relations have in the last four years been dominated by the policy that Local Government levels of expenditure had advanced too rapidly and therefore Central Government allocation of resources should become much more stringent. At the same time 'disengagement' from detailed planning and the management of the resources, once allocated, was the keynote of ministerial speeches. Hand-in-hand with this has gone the attempts to diminish bureaucracy in both central and local government and an emphasis by ministers on achieving a new point of balance between statutory and non-statutory welfare systems.

In summary, we are living through a period where new manifestations of poverty emerge in our society: among isolated women with children, the very old and those caring for them at home and those living in areas where job opportunities have disappeared. These people have to face no less than a struggle to survive: in the midst of a rich country, (still one of the seven sitting down at world economic summits) under a Government committed to policies whose outcomes have disproportionate effects on the new poor.

1.2. The Scope of Voluntary Activity (1,2,4,5)

Voluntary action has two streams (3): the philanthropic stream of work in the service of others and the mutual aid stream of a collective response to problems, to which all contribute and from which all potentially may benefit. Within voluntary action, there is public voluntary work where the individual volunteers join an association or submit to the mediating organisation of a voluntary or statutory agency; and there is private voluntary work, where the term 'volunteer' is never used and where individuals respond to the needs of others either directly or through informal associations.

The spectrum of voluntary organisations is a large one (3). It starts with mutual aid organisations which exist to enable their members to pool their resources for mutual benefit (a co-operative or Alcoholics Anonymous). Similarly, there are self-help organisations, which usually bring in a dimension of campaigning e.g. tenants' associations. Next are the volunteer organisations, established for the purpose of providing or obtaining some service for others and almost wholly run by unpaid volunteers, with a small core staff - Samaritans and Pre-School Playgroups are examples. Then there are what is usually regarded as the typical national voluntary organisation - employing both volunteers and professionals to provide a service or a variety of services for others, e.g. the Spastics Society and the Red Cross. Among the large bodies of this kind are what could be called private, non-profit making social service organisations: run almost exclusively by professionals, but having a volunteer board and involving volunteers in fund-raising, e.g. Dr. Barnardo's. Finally there are organisations almost wholly sponsored by Government, almost entirely professional in composition, but directed by an independent board - quasi-voluntary organisations like the Volunteer Centre.

Although there are a variety of approaches to the term voluntary organisation (rivalling that, perhaps, of the well-known 57 varieties' firm), they share the following characteristics:

(i) the contribution of resources (including money, time and materials) from independent sources exceeds in value the contributions from statutory sources

(ii) the organisation has a constitution that guarantees its independence and autonomy

(iii) the membership of the ruling body is composed of a majority of independent members of the organisation

(iv) the activities of the organisation are so arranged as to maximise voluntary participation and to minimise the distinction between those who give services and those who receive them.

The field of voluntary activity as it is here conceived embraces not only social welfare but also education, health, culture and recreation. It should also be noted that there exists a category of activity that is designed to enable or support others to engage in voluntary action - locally, Rural Community Councils, Councils for Voluntary Service and Volunteer Bureaux fall into this category; nationally the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Volunteer Centre are examples.

Central Government, through the policies of a wide range of departments (6) (e.g. DHSS, NHS, MSC, Probation Service) supports and depends upon voluntary action to supplement and complement its own services. Local Government, through grant aid, the payment of fees, the employment of community workers and voluntary service co-ordinators and through the more intimate relationships with the voluntary field that can be established by parish and community councils, also promotes voluntary action. The boundaries of acknowledged responsibility between the statutory and the voluntary sectors are not by any means fixed and indeed, as indicated above, have seemed to change significantly in recent years. Central Government transfers over £124 million annually (1981 figures) to voluntary or non-government organisations and gives fiscal privileges to registered charities on top of that. A recent trend has been the development of ministerial initiatives with targeted programmes - the Intermediate Treatment funding, the Opportunities for Volunteering scheme and the Voluntary Projects Programme are the best-known examples. Each in their own way are small funds in government terms but channel resources directly from the centre to local projects in specific areas of work. The Urban Programme, on the other hand, which has been active for some years, is an example of central-local funding in combination. The growth of these targeted funds at a time when funds for local authority expenditure have been cut in relation to demands put upon them, has affected considerably the outlook for local voluntary organisations - both negatively and positively. Negatively, development work may have been sacrificed to meet crises; the attitudes of some councillors towards voluntary organisations have hardened (a recent article in Labour Weekly gives an example of this). Positively, some local authorities have recognised the importance of developing partnership and pluralism and have increased or set up patterns of consultation or increased levels of grant aid (e.g. the GLC)(7).

A number of bodies at one remove from Government are important sources of finance, advice and other resources to voluntary bodies in the countryside, including the MSC, the Countryside Commission and the Development Commission. Their funds are directly targeted also - but

these quasi-Government bodies have had a longer life, have been maintained under successive Governments, and have developed a sophisticated pattern of dealing with both experimental grants and grants for on-going core-funding.

1.3. The Prevalence of Volunteering

In 1981 the Volunteer Centre, with a grant from the Social Science Research Council, combined with a survey organisation (SCPR) to undertake a large-scale national survey (8).

The picture the survey revealed was startling. Of the representative sample:

18% had undertaken voluntary work in the preceding week

27% had undertaken voluntary work in the preceding month

44% had undertaken voluntary work in the preceding year.

Other surveys show a 10% prevalence of regular volunteering - a 1977 survey by S. Hatch, a 1981 local survey in Stockport (9) and the General Household Survey. Significantly, also, a study just released by the Manpower Services Commission, showed that 10% of unemployed people in a number of cities were also engaging in volunteering (10). Whether the higher figures (which compare closely with a Gallup Survey in the USA of the same year) on the lower ones (possibly based on a more restricted definition) are more accurate, both show a very large incidence of volunteering. There is indeed a lot of it about.

Patterns of volunteering are changing also. Although it is still the case that most volunteering is undertaken by people under retirement age, by people in non-manual socio-economic groups, by people who own and drive a car and by women, it is possible to discern significant shifts. There is more community development activity and much greater involvement in self-help and community-based voluntary action projects.

1.4 Charter for Volunteers: A Proposal

At its Annual Conference on September 15/16, 1983, the Volunteer Centre launched a proposed charter which it would like to see voluntarily adopted by all organisations concerned directly or indirectly with volunteers. This charter has nine clauses:

1. Volunteering to produce social benefit is legitimately:

   - an expression of humanitarian concern
   - a means by which the individual makes a personal contribution to and takes part in, the life of the community
   - a means of enhancing the quality of life for the whole of society
   - a means of enabling society to meet its obligations to its members
   - a means of expressing the interests of individuals and groups.

   It may take place in many different fields, such as social welfare, the arts, sport and political life. To volunteer should be the right of every citizen.

2. The right to volunteer may also be expressed informally between family members, neighbours or members of mutual help groups. It may take place in the framework of a voluntary or statutory agency.

3. Volunteers, while they generally give their time and work without pay, are entitled to consideration and treatment at least as good as that of paid workers in other respects. The organisation for which they work should recognise an ethical contract which requires at the minimum, proper management, clear expectations, training where it is appropriate, indemnity against reasonable risks and reimbursement of necessary expenses.

4. All citizens who voluntarily contribute within an organised framework have the right to be consulted on all major decisions that will affect what they do. Existing and planned public policies should be reviewed to ensure that they take account of the needs and interests of volunteers where appropriate and that as a minimum they do not unintentionally limit the rights of volunteers.

5. Every citizen, irrespective of personal means, has the right to make that contribution according to personal talents and capabilities so long as this does not restrict the rights or reasonable expectations of others. No citizen should be prevented from volunteering because of lack of economic resources or other handicap.

6. Volunteering is not the prerogative of the majority or of any racial group in society. All racial groups develop arrangements to support disadvantaged members within their communities and provide volunteers for initiatives which serve all races.

7. Unnecessary obstacles in law, in systems of taxation or income support should be removed where this will enable more citizens to undertake action as volunteers. Where, for reasons of physical, mental, legal or other restriction, individuals do not have the full liberty of other citizens, they should be enabled to give and receive from society as volunteers.

8. Citizens who volunteer have the right to expect that they will not be exploited and that the true social value of their contribution is recognised and respected by the authorities concerned.

9. Both volunteers and paid workers should recognise the particular tasks that each is best able to perform. Each should acknowledge the value of the other's contribution, should support it and should not attempt to undermine or replace it. In particular, codes of practice should recognise the collective interests of paid workers in trades unions or professional associations vis a vis the collective interests of volunteers.

2. HOW THINGS ARE TODAY: VIEW FROM THE SATELLITE

2.1 Caring (11)

The general view is that a village community still looks after itself as it always has done and that 'community spirit' exists in an elastic manner.

Such research as has taken place (12) indicates that social need is high in rural areas as compared to towns. Factors influencing this are:

- inaccessibility to services and jobs
- high per capita costs of services (public and private)
- high percentage of elderly people with the consequent effects on society and the costs of servicing.

The statutory social services, as well as the range of voluntary initiatives are working in the context of the problems caused by economic recession, low wages (a traditional rural problem) and social security benefits (where take-up is exceedingly patchy), as well as the poor job opportunities (see below), the isolation caused by the withdrawal of transport services and the inability of people to compete in the housing and education markets.

In the last decade in rural areas a response to the needs for social service provision has been the emergence of a range of groups, calling themselves Community Care groups, Good Neighbour Schemes, Neighbourhood Care Schemes, Village Help Groups. Such groups at one end of the continuum of care needed in our society are voluntary associations of individuals coming together to support and help local people in need and to foster a spirit of caring and 'neighbourliness' within the community. In rural areas these groups may be seen as substitutes for the informal networks and relations which the growing proportion of incomers, second-home owners and the elderly may be breaking down.

The launch of the 'Good Neighbour Campaign' in 1976 by the Secretary of State for Social Services was one catalyst in the growth of such groups. Both the churches and the Women's Institute movement have given much support. In rural areas, where people tend to know rather more about each other's activities than elsewhere, simple visiting and personal contact is something which there may be little need to formalise. What is notable however is the range of other services which community care groups are providing in rural areas:

- providing or arranging transport (a simple listing of car-driving volunteers prepared to offer their services or a more formal social car scheme providing regular journeys);
- a prescription/delivery service;
- a 24-hour telephone help service;
- running a day centre;
- providing meals on wheels.

The community care group is able to provide the help that a Social Services Department might be unable to give - building up on existing informal networks and a pool of voluntary support and a close understanding of individual and community problems. A challenge for the future will be the development of arrangements whereby Social Services Departments and community care groups can explicitly develop partnership arrangements (W. Sussex and Norfolk SSD's are developing this). This partnership will be needed to challenge problems of professional expertise versus voluntary enthusiasm, of deciding which clients should be referred, feelings that the State is opting out of its responsibility, the difficulties of a group facing a heavy workload but with limited financial help and lack of information and support for groups.

Recognising the need to give some positive financial help to voluntary initiatives in rural communities a number of local authorities have established funds which are available to provide pump-priming

grants to local projects. Such 'Rural Initiative Funds' exist in Newark, Winchester and Lewes District Councils and Hereford and Worcester County Council. The operation of a rural fund can free an authority from the constraints of considering grant applications on a strict departmental or committee basis.

A Village Ventures competition inaugurated under the current Government attracted in its first round 1200 community projects representing examples of innovation, good practice and partnership. The knowledge transmitted through the schemes across the country has been an important by-product.

The role of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service should be mentioned. An organisation whose relationship with the Home Office is very close but which locally depends on the unpaid endeavours of a wide range of volunteers, the WRVS often is a catalyst in partnership arrangements with statutory departments, as well as having a prescribed role at times of disasters in the community to care for casualties. WRVS has had the reputation of being singular in its approach but recent experience gives evidence that co-operation between WRVS and other voluntary agencies is on the increase.

Examples of Caring Activities.

(i) Kennerton Community Care (Hereford & Worcester pop. 420)

Umbrella group for transport, disabled (special wheelchair events), community fund (helping playgroup, doctor, mothers and toddlers groups, emergency heating for the elderly, etc.). Plus helping individuals in need and campaigning to save local school.

(ii) Glaven Community Care Scheme (Norfolk)

Serves 12 participating villages and provides home nursing, day centre, home visits and a range of support services for the elderly. Based on a doctor's practice it uses a wide range of volunteers.

(iii) Coldwaltham Village Help Scheme (W. Sussex)

Serves three hamlets of 400 houses with a volunteer force of 40. It deals with referrals from the Social Services Department and arranges visits for the elderly, arranging to collect pensions, gives emergency help, undertakes transport for those in need.

2.2 Conservation

The view from the satellite will be reinforced by a ground level view in Session 3 (13). But looking at sources of volunteers the Countryside Commission categories (14) are helpful. A range of organisations operate:

(i) national co-ordinating organisations:

e.g. British Trust for Conservation Volunteers: 20,000 people are involved each year, the majority of whom 'migrate' from urban environments to be volunteers in rural settings. Thus work is divided between the activity of (usually) summer-time residential activity and day projects by local groups undertaken throughout the year.

Community Service Volunteers (16): provides some long-term volunteers for this setting.

(ii) local co-ordinating organisations (16), e.g. BTCV local groups,

International Voluntary Service local groups, Young Farmers Clubs.

(iii) specialist organisations, e.g. Chilterns Society, Inland Waterways Association, National Trust – Acorn camps and Young National Trust groups, Ramblers' Association.

(iv) non-specialist organisations (17), e.g. school groups, Scouts/Guides, Women's Institutes, Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes.

The scope of activity is very wide and covers a wide range of skills (15). Within the scope of this section it will include:

- conserving natural resources (energy, water, etc.)
- volunteers against pollution and danger (litter, health and safety hazards)
- historic buildings
- gardens
- restoration work
- museums
- archaeology (industrial and marine)
- wildlife
- landscape and countryside.

The effectiveness of achievement by groups will generally reflect on the level of organisation within the group. Many resource owners (land-managers for example) now realise the strength and potentiality of the voluntary groups though many still hesitate (or are unaware of the need) to provide supervision and preparation. There is a growing realisation of the need of the volunteer to gain something from his/her experience: but the manager of the resources still has the problem of not knowing when/if the task will be completed. Most volunteers put a lot of their own money into the work and it is probable that the majority are not reimbursed for their expenses. Partnership with statutory bodies is closely examined in R. Simpson's study; there seems to be litle problem with trade unions as there are not, in fact, many paid jobs in the field and few are unionised. In fact, volunteering in the conservation field to a high degree of commitment and skill, is often a pre-requisite in acquiring a paid job in this field.

There can be a considerable overlap with MSC schemes, particularly those which under the Youth Opportunities Programme have involved an element of service to the community (18). MSC schemes often have greater resources but the young people involved may not have the same motivating factors and commitment as 'regular' volunteers.

In the field of conservation an innovative Award scheme was begun in 1982 based on a interesting form of alliance between sponsoring industries, Dr. David Bellamy and a television network. Some 600 entries were received for this and again considerable interest, publicity and the transmission of information about good practice was achieved. Since 1970 Shell has been running a Better Britain Campaign annually for young people.

2.3 The Housing Field (19,20,21,23)

Local people who need housing in rural areas suffer considerably

from the effects of escalating house prices and the decline in rented housing in villages. It is not wholly a matter for local authorities to make fuller use of both their housing and planning powers. Other forms of local initiative involving voluntary action include the work of housing associations, co-operatives and self-build groups, so as to widen housing choice.

Self-Build Schemes can provide low-cost housing for owner-occupation, involving little or no public subsidy and being particularly suited to the use of small building sites and meeting relatively small-scale housing needs. They could be called a form of 'mutual aid' group as they call for a high degree of co-operative spirit and control by the would-be occupiers. They are small groups of 7 – 20 people who form a housing association to build houses together using their own labour. Using small plots of land they are likely to meet the tight planning and servicing constraints that exist in many small villages.

Housing Associations have become known as the 'third arm' in the provision of housing stock in order that there should be greater choice than owner-occupation and local authority housing. Relatively little new rural housing, however, has been provided by housing associations, though examples of successful rural schemes do exist as models for further developments. A model is the parish-based, Chiddingstone scheme in Kent, which is a two-tiered partnership between existing associations and community groups. The Hanover Association (formed initially by Help the Aged) have demonstrated the potential for the elderly in small villages. They have provided a scheme for retired estate workers in Hampshire (Warnford). The Housing Corporation, funded through the Department of the Environment and the channel of funding for the voluntary Housing Association movement has recently shown a welcome tendency to move from its inner-city and urban priorities in recognition of the need for provision of housing in rural areas.

The housing field is a complex one where voluntary activity in the delivery of services is not traditionally notable. Private and public provision has been the norm and voluntary activity has often been confined to campaigning (see below). However, it may be that in this field of social policy, which is one of shameful provision in many aspects, one can expect to see an opening up of new provision and emphasis as a result, for example, of the National Federation of Housing Associations working party chaired by the Duke of Edinburgh (22).

2.4 Employment (24,25)

Many rural areas suffer from high levels of unemployment, with a growing proportion of long-term unemployment, or from lack of opportunity for employment or income, or both. The resulting personal damage, social malaise and economic cost of unemployment is the spur to a range of activity by voluntary organisations working in co-operation with a variety of Government programmes for job creation and training. The lack of opportunity for employment shows in the out-migration of people, particularly young people of working age, low activity rates, particularly among women and low incomes. People suffering severely from these problems include school-leavers, women, the over 50s and the unskilled.

Voluntary organisations can join in partnerships with agencies working to create employment in rural areas: including the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas (COSIRA), the Manpower Services

Commission and local authorities.

The special programmes of the MSC aim at providing training and work experience for young people and unemployed adults. In both their earlier and most recent guises (the Youth Training Scheme, the Community Programme and the Voluntary Projects Programme) they have used a range of voluntary organisations as sponsors. Under one phase of YTS a large number of places in Community Projects and Training Workshops will continue to be supplied by the voluntary sector. The logistics of dealing with people living at a distance from schemes headquarters and managing such schemes are problematical. Many Rural Community Councils and other voluntary organisations have successfully met these challenges.

Local enterprise trusts represent an interesting new form of non-statutory organisation - often based on the business community, but involving aspects of self-help. As independent, unbureaucratic and local organisations they can be a useful resource as well as stimulus to employment creation - providing advice, managing premises and combining with MSC schemes (one entrepreneurial example is the Askrigg Foundation in North Yorkshire). Community co-operatives (workers' co-operatives entirely owned by those who work within them) have worked well in remote parts of the Scottish Highlands and Islands and Wales, and could be developed in other parts of Britain, given a rural community's experience of collective action and decision making.

Examples

- Askrigg Foundation, N. Yorkshire. A charitable Trust seeking, as part of its aims, to promote employment by supporting local services.
- Promotion of Rural Enterprise, Hereford & Worcester. Has identified and organised a large number of female homeworkers and found work for them.
- Wiltshire Employment Promotion Project. An attempt, through the work of one officer in the Rural Community Council, to stimulate an awareness that people can create by their own efforts means of supporting themselves.
- A scheme run by the landowner, Lord Heniker, in Thornham Magna to provide training for unemployed youngsters.
- Concordia - Youth Service Volunteers (established in 1944) runs work camps, mainly fruit picking. In return for an allowance the volunteers pay for their keep and the administration of the scheme. This voluntary organisation would seem, in one way, to be providing very low paid seasonal work.

2.5 Recreation (26)

One use of leisure time is in day trips and outings to the countryside, while sport and active recreation may also be performed in rural areas. There was a considerable growth in day trips in the post-war period - mainly to the countryside and to the underdeveloped coast, involving attractions such as historic houses and safari parks, Country Parks and picnic sites, forest parks, zoos and wildlife parks, historic houses, gardens, open-air museums. Included among the providers are a range of national and local voluntary bodies (the National Trust, a voluntary body brought into being by Act of Parliament, has 1.1 million members and is the third largest landowner in England and Wales). Three-quarters of the population of England and Wales visited

the countryside at least once in 1977: the economic recession has affected this. The decades since 1950 have shown considerable growth in membership of the major national voluntary organisations active in this field - the two National Trusts, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the County Naturalists Trusts. The same growth in public interest is shown by the response to wildlife programmes on TV and the mass readership of books about the countryside.

Voluntary activity across the spectrum is important. Individuals, families, social groups and neighbourhoods can all focus their resources to meet their own needs. Voluntary organisations are a direct extension of the 'people' as leisure providers. It is part of the British genius to form clubs, associations or other groups as a means of organising and pursuing leisure activities. The scope of activities is long; to list but a few: the Scout troop, the WI, the rambler's group, village halls, local history societies, horse riding and angling groups. In any local community the number of clubs or societies pursuing some form of leisure interest could well run into double figures, even in scattered populations and in small towns into hundreds.

A vital element is access to premises - especially premises that are as 'local' as possible - halls, playing fields, changing facilities and camp sites.

Recreation can overlap with other headings e.g. conservation. Many individuals will volunteer to be active in their leisure - for example, in wardening activities such as guiding, information provision, planning (an example is the Cotswold Warden scheme) - and often in relation to open-air museums (Weald and Downland or Chiltern).

An important aspect to worry the voluntary sector is the restriction on recreational activity caused by poverty, disability or other disadvantage whereby mobility is restricted. Special efforts have to be made to ensure that countryside recreation is not a preserve of the upper social classes - but again certain voluntary bodies specialise in this very matter: to take one example, holiday playschemes for children who otherwise would not get the chance of developing an appreciation of the countryside.

2.6 Campaigning

From the most local action to avert the closure of a village school, post-office or other essential service, to the sophisticated activity of the alliance of nine national organisations representing rural communities (formed in 1980, almost three years ago this month), campaigning is a notable part of voluntary endeavour. Within the strict terms imposed by the antiquated charity law of the country an extensive range and scope of lobbying, pressure grouping and campaigning goes on. Some rely on the support of the media, national and local, in order to build up a campaigning momentum, others rely on their extensive membership networks (the churches and the WI for example) as well as their closely-honed working relationships with civil servants, Members of Parliament and Ministers.

Nationally, Rural Voice (27,28) is a model which must be the envy of other such alliances. Included in the alliance are:

Council for the Protection of Rural England

Country Landowners' Association

National Association of Local Councils
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
National Farmers' Union
National Federation of Women's Institutes
National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs
National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers
Standing Conference of Rural Community Councils;

a very heterogeneous group of organisations whose grass-roots go deep into the hearts of rural communities, who include all sections of society and who include sophisticated organisations in their own right (WI and NFU are case studies of campaign groups as single organisations) who nevertheless recognise the considerable extra dimension that an alliance brings. Setting out their main concerns in a strategy document, producing an excellent review of progress 15 months later and pursuing relentlessly their chosen issues, Rural Voice's impact deserves a wide measure of praise. Michael Dower and Kay Young, the two chair-people to date, and David Clark, its tireless secretary, have provided excellent leadership.

But just as important are the myriad of local campaigns (some of which became national news): the success in keeping post offices going in village halls; representing the needs of disabled people for care, support and employment; the preservation of a school meals service; campaigns to preserve public transport, to value the village shop, to stop school closures. Knowledge of these can be gleaned from a variety of media sources as well as through the regular publications of the Rural Department of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, whose support and guidance through Rural Community Councils down to local level provides much practical help and guidance.

A further alliance, whose aims are broader than campaigning is the Council for Environmental Conservation (CoenCo) which was established in 1969. Nevertheless, it has engaged in studies of policy issues affecting conservation and followed these up by discreet lobbying activity.

One agency, which is very much a behind-the-scenes doorkeeper into Whitehall for the voluntary sector is the Development Commission. A unique, permanent, Royal Commission, led by volunteer Commissioners, with its staff provided through Civil Service mechanisms, it considers rural development policies and gives grants to the voluntary sector. But an unsung virtue of the agency is that by its very existence, it is a gateway into the government machinery as well as a benefactor of the sector that sometimes wants to bite government, the hand that feeds it. There is something uniquely and traditionally British about this facet of voluntary-government relationships which should be preserved against the tendency of any government to maim reasoned criticism from its client bodies. Our politics - and indeed our policy and practice - would be much the poorer were that to happen.

3. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: A VIEW INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL

Set against the social and economic trends outlined earlier in this paper, what are the outlines of policy and practice which are likely, possible and desirable?

3.1 Major Trends (29)

Starting with major areas of social organisation, some changes are desirable so that a better climate for voluntary action can be created. The centres of decision-making seem very remote and opportunities for playing a meaningful part in local society correspondingly reduced. A move towards a more participatory model of democracy, in the light of the way in which representative democracy has become ossified, would enable a more genuinely pluralist society to be created where the voices of more minority interests could be heard. Such a participative model would encourage far more direct user-involvement in the planning and delivery of services, from health to education and from town planning to welfare. Bureaucratic organisations also need to be replaced by more organic forms of organisation that can be more demand-responsive and creative.

A third vital aspect relates to the need to develop new ways of regarding professionalism, where the relationship with 'clients' may be less than satisfactory. Professionals should be encouraged to depend more on the expertise they possess and less upon maintaining exclusive rights over those areas of activity for which they claim responsibility. By sharing their knowledge through a teaching, enabling relationship with their clients and others who are concerned with their client's needs, professionals in a broad range of social services can make a more valid contribution.

3.2 Government Action

Given new ways of thinking about democracy, administration and professionalism one can then discern patterns of governmental support that may be likely and which could be welcomed.

The Volunteer Centre, in time for the 1983 General Election, issued a series of guiding principles for government on the development of voluntary action (30). They deal particularly with volunteering rather than voluntary organisations, but bear repetition.

What Government can do to support volunteers:

1. Modest policies and measures are required, directed specifically to volunteering rather than helping volunteering by accident, not design. They should be pursued over periods long enough to ensure that their intentions are achieved and should not be subject to abrupt withdrawal. These policies need not involve spending large amounts of money.

2. In both the statutory and voluntary settings, the structures required to support volunteers are small in scale and need to be carefully nurtured. Programmes that make money or other support available should reflect this and should emphasise consolidation of a network of basic resources rather than experiment and innovation, which is often at the expense of long term priorities. In addition, government must steer a careful course between providing support and dominating even unintentionally, the direction taken by volunteer effort.

3. Although volunteers normally give their work free, voluntary work even in very informal settings requires adequate resources. These include sufficient staff, administrative costs, transport, telephone and out-of-pocket expenses and the cost of appropriate training. Even simple examination shows that the basic resources for the

deployment of volunteers (such as designated staff, suitably trained and experienced) often do not exist and that without them the quality of volunteer work will often not reach its full potential.

4. Central government policies and measures intended to encourage volunteering lack consistency, have often been opportunistic, without real direction and are frequently the by-products of other measures. Responsibility for volunteering should be assigned to a minister of cabinet rank, who is not burdened with heavy departmental duties. In addition, all major policy measures should include a review of their impact on volunteering.

What Government should avoid.....

1. To the present, what volunteers do has not been a focus of political contention between parties and governments, but has received general and increasing support both in principle and in practical form.

   It is of the greatest importance that volunteering does not become a matter of political controversy and that no steps are taken that would diminish all-party support.

2. In a time when the limits on the resources of the Welfare State are thrown into sharp relief, government must look for the most effective ways of meeting its obligations. Voluntary work however is not a substitute for services that should properly be provided through statutory channels. It is essential that the balance between these is acceptable as far as possible to all the parties concerned. Hard and fast demarcations cannot be applied universally and means of making equitable arrangements are required that will be appropriate to particular circumstances.

3. The concern shown by trades unions over the role of volunteers and their relationship with paid workers is readily understandable and care needs to be taken that the involvement of volunteers does not appear to threaten the livelihood or conditions of work of paid staff. In many circumstances, especially in the public services, the goodwill of trades unionists is necessary to enable volunteers to carry out their accepted roles. It is essential that the goodwill of volunteers towards the people they serve is not used as a means of applying leverage to paid staff. Correspondingly, government should take steps to allay unfounded anxiety about the transfer of paid services to volunteers, or the use of volunteer work as a palliative for unemployment.

In supporting voluntary organisations the National Council for Voluntary Organisations likewise issued a blueprint for action (31).

Agenda Point 1

NCVO believes in a diversity of organisations delivering a diversity of services. For the voluntary sector to be effective it requires the moral and practical support of central government and other statutory authorities, particularly local authorities. Public acknowledgement of the role and value of voluntary organisations should take account of their various functions as service providers, innovators, resource centres and advocates for change. Material assistance should be given in such ways that voluntary bodies can undertake long term commitments, in their general and special fields, of an experimental and traditional nature

complementary to statutory provision. An example is NCVO's recent proposal for a pilot Community Care Fund.

Agenda Point 2

NCVO does not accept the Government view that VAT relief for charities would prove intolerably complicated: 260 MPs supported an Early Day Motion on this subject. The Charities VAT Reform Group has a fast rising membership of voluntary bodies pressing for this reform.

Agenda Point 3

There should be arrangements whereby companies can make one or more single donations, with single donations totalling no more than 5% of their pre-tax profits, to charity without incurring liability to tax.

In the short term the Government should treat individual donations as one year covenants. It should also consult the voluntary sector about its plans for computerisation and for self-assessment tax procedures so that the new systems will enable individual charitable donations to be tax deductible.

Agenda Point 4

A number of Government Departments give grants to voluntary organisations, whether for general administrative expenses or for programmes and projects at a national and local level. Here NCVO is concerned about the differences between Departments in their support for the headquarters' expenditure of national voluntary bodies. The DHSS Section 64 grants are invaluable in helping to maintain a number of organisations in the fields of health and social services. The Department of the Environment, for example, has no similar system and many environmental bodies face considerable difficulties.

Agenda Point 5

The voluntary sector is being asked increasingly to do more. This applies particularly at a local level where Councils of Voluntary Service, Rural Community Councils and other such bodies face growing demands. The Government should recognise this by providing annual grants against matching grants from local authorities and other sources for voluntary agencies in each local district to give development support and resource centre facilities to the voluntary sector.

Agenda Point 6

Section 137 of the 1972 Local Government Act has been interpreted in an ambiguous manner by some local authorities. These ambiguities should be removed to ensure that the '2p rate' can be fully used for local authority support for a wide range of voluntary agency activities. Also, the rate should be increased to restore its 1972 purchasing power and arrangements made so that it retains this purchasing power in future.

Agenda Point 7

There have been few periods recently when Britain has undergone such rapid social change as it is now experiencing. Unemployment, inner city deprivation, a decline in public services, racial tension, present new challenges to voluntary organisations. If they are to meet these challenges at a time of decreasing private assistance the Government must recognise that they cannot work effectively without realistic financial

support for management, training and overheads being built into those programmes which involve the voluntary sector.

Agenda Point 8

The nature of the voluntary sector has changed a great deal over the last few decades; but in our view, charity law has failed to keep pace with that development. Although sweeping changes are unnecessary, amending legislation is needed. Such legislation should establish as valid charitable purposes the general welfare of children and families, human rights, racial harmony and the furtherance of international understanding.

Agenda Point 9

The right of appeal against decisions by the Charity Commission is hollow. Few voluntary organisations can afford the costs involved in taking their cases to court. A limited legal aid fund would not only help them to define their positions, it would also give the Charity Commissioners case law on which to build more realistic guidelines.

Agenda Point 10

The Charity Commission's guidelines on political activity are unacceptable to the voluntary sector and we do not believe they accurately represent the existing law. Unless they are withdrawn, legislation should be enacted to the effect that charities may freely engage in any (non-party) political activity provided it is in pursuit of their established charitable purposes.

Agenda Point 11

Central government should involve voluntary organisations as appropriate in the formulation of policy and the planning of programmes. The Government Departments chiefly concerned are the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of the Environment, the Home Office, the Department of Energy, the Department of Trade, the Scottish, Northern Ireland and Welsh Offices and the Overseas Development Administration.

Agenda Point 12

Every encouragement should be given to local government to involve voluntary organisations not only in the running of services but in their planning. Working Together (32) describes ways in which this partnership can come about.

Taken together these statements from the two major national support agencies provide modest, achievable targets - but ones which will require further struggles to bring about.

3.3 Unemployment

An in-depth series of interviews with fifty volunteers conducted for the Volunteer Centre (33) explained their volunteering in relation to their employment, either present, past or anticipated. For these individuals employment and volunteering are related in a number of ways. Some people are using volunteering as a substitute for their employment, because they have retired, because family obligations prevent employment, or because employment is not available; others are using

volunteering as a means of enhancing their employment prospects; and a third group look to volunteering for rewards they are conscious of not receiving from their employment.

Setting these individual views against some more theoretical viewpoints about the future of work we see the emergence of a body of theory which says that the current unemployment crisis is not just a short-term hiccup (33,34,35). The meaning and place of work in society is undergoing re-examination: the call for a conventional return to 'full employment' is not being responded to. Few agreed panaceas exist – the debate is not really out in the open: (a recent 'You the Jury' in which Charles Handy and Arthur Scargill confronted one another about job-sharing exposed some of the arguments to listeners). But the revival of local economies, the revival of the household, a fairer share of work between men and women and the expansion of part-time employment are some of the causes/solutions being advocated. Essential also is the continued growth of special arrangements for people for whom it will be difficult to get employment or organise work for themselves. Here will be the further development of community enterprise projects, youth opportunity projects, work experience projects, local amenity projects, on lines begun in recent years with MSC and local authority support where voluntary organisations have shown considerable innovative flair.

Two strands can thus be foreseen in a confusing decade that lies ahead – voluntary action involving organised attempts to provide new forms of employment, as well as a growth in the recognition that for increasing numbers of people volunteering has instrumental rewards which employment, for a range of reasons, is not giving to individuals. The 'gift work' (to use Handy's phrase), that contributes vastly to the well-being of society, may need enhanced status. Volunteering as part of this likewise could play a vital part in offering 'meaningful activity' to the nine million people of working age who will not have full-time jobs.

3.4 Values

Finally, the next decade will differ in no way from the centuries that have gone before: voluntary action will depend on a set of values, explicit or implicit. From earliest days endeavour arose from a philanthropy which grew out of charity and relied on religious motivations. In the seventeenth century the concept of 'mutual aid' and co-operation spread abroad in this country and had both secular and religious connotations. The nineteenth century saw Samual Smiles' individualistic 'self-help' assuming a value base whereby aspects of voluntary action such as standing on your own two feet, were pressed by the more fortunate on the less fortunate in society.

David Gerard's recently published book (38) contains a well-researched section on this facet. He shows the roots of co-operation in biological and cultural evolution and outlines three norms arising from these foundations – reciprocity, beneficence and solidarity. Reciprocity sustains mutually beneficial exchanges between individuals or groups. Beneficence governs personal responsibility to those in need, largely accepting inequality as given. Solidarity involves identifying with and sharing the reality of life of the poor in some demonstrable sense, is related to notions of equality and self-determination and emphasises social and political action. It also carries dangers, however, of imposing the activists' perception and methods of evaluation and action on the target group and attempts at social engineering. Although operative, in some degree, in all forms of voluntary activity, each norm is especially related to a particular form of institutional expression –

reciprocity to mutual aid agencies; beneficence to social-order based charities; and solidarity to agencies devoted to social change.

A combination of these three norms is likely to be a continuing feature of the value-based system. It can appeal broadly. What would, in my view, be regrettable, would be a situation where an ethos of self-fulfilment and self-help were to be encouraged as the prevailing value system. Instead a combination of struggle and service is called for.

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J. Foster (Chairman)

Thank you Foster. Paul Hoggett and Jeff Bishop will now present their paper. This was commissioned to extend on their work on voluntary groups in leisure undertaken for the Sports Council/SSRC Joint Panel on Leisure and Recreation Research, and to apply it through looking at some of the groups in countryside recreation in the county of Avon. Jeff is by training an architect and Paul a social psychologist working in the School for Advanced Urban Studies at the University of Bristol.

PURPOSES, STYLES AND ORIENTATIONS OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

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INTRODUCTION

In trying to provide some sort of descriptive and analytical account of 'The Voluntary Sector in Countryside Recreation' we can at least reassure ourselves that this is easier than accounting for the whole world – but only just. It is perhaps inevitable, given the current level of knowledge and ideas about the voluntary sector, that very broad and often rather dangerous terms are used, so hopefully we will be excused for starting our account by asserting that the phrase 'Voluntary Sector in Countryside Recreation' can be a rather misleading label for what we are all attempting to locate and discuss. We will of course proceed both to justify and probably qualify this assertion, although we feel rather embarrassed to find that we cannot come up with any better terms. Clearly our paper will elaborate upon this assertion but it could be useful at this stage just to take each component of the title phrase and suggest why it is that the words are inadequate. The word 'inadequate' is chosen in preference to 'wrong' because the problem is that one short phrase is being used for such an enormous variety of groups and agencies that its application can, at times, be misleading.

Starting with Voluntary, a glance at the conference programme or at some magazines would show a number of notions of voluntary. Does it really include MSC; are school pupils always 'volunteers'; why does a member of a small fishing club refuse to recognise that he is indulging in voluntary activity when he helps out at a competition? (Foster Murphy will map these variations more fully).

Moving to Sector, surely this suggests something about a common view or objective, territory or style. Why should hang-gliding enthusiasts sit down with industrial archaeologists, or cyclists with botanists? Can such a range of groups be labelled a sector unless they perceive themselves as one?

Countryside might appear to be a fairly clear concept but does it include all the villages, small towns, urban fringe areas, urban parks, etc.? Is one dependent upon a purely visual definition of countryside or is there a more functional one which can come to terms with the way in which modern agriculture is turning into a 'boundary-fencing, keep out, beware-of-pollution industry' like any other? What about rock climbing in the Avon Gorge in the centre of Bristol or yachting in its City Docks?

This leaves us with Recreation. Can we really bundle together sub-aqua clubs with horse-riding groups with conservation volunteers with steam railway buffs? Where does recreating emerge from leisure into conservation or even social activities? If recreation refers to specific physical activities, how does one account for the rowing club secretary who has never attempted the activity, but regards his 'job' as his only recreation?

These comments should not be taken as evidence of some kind of destructive intent but as an attempt to disaggregate what is in fact a complex and diverse area of study. The description 'voluntary sector in countryside recreation' applies equally to the National Trust (an organisation which is perceived by much of the public as a national landowning institution scarcely distinguishable from a quango-type body) as it does to a local hunt. The danger is that we might speak of 'a sector' as a short-hand way of referring to something which actually lacks real homogeneity but then begin to believe that something as neat and tidy as 'a sector' actually exists. If this occurred we are fairly sure it would be at the expense of some of this diversity and, as we point out later in this paper, it is the smaller, localised and more self-contained groups which are the ones most likely to be overlooked. This would be a sad loss and we hope that our attempts to disaggregate the category 'voluntary sector in countryside recreation' will help to alert people to the existence of this plethora of small groups.

We intend to use two heuristic devices to facilitate the presentation of what is a very preliminary analysis. First of all we will present a case illustration of a hypothetical part of the countryside, voluntary groups to be found there and patterns of interaction. With just a small degree of artistic licence the case is actually an accurate portrayal of what goes on in an existing stretch of countryside with which we are familiar. Secondly, we will overlay this with a quasi 'life-cycle model' of voluntary organisations, one which sees such organisations as passing through a number of life crises brought on by previous phases of development, each crisis presenting the organisation with a number of choices with regard to its future direction and development.

Before proceeding with this, however, we suggest that the reader looks at Table 1. Here we have attempted to itemise all the different types of group which might exist in any area - probably a county. If the Table, at first glance, appears to be dominated very heavily by the small, local, single activity groups (cycling, archery and so forth) the real point to remember is that there will be very many of each of these in any county whereas there is quite likely to be only one of the more familiar groups such as county wildlife trusts. We can offer no statistics to suggest the relative memberships of small or large groups, merely another assertion - that in numerical terms it is the small groups who form the bulk of recreational activity, not the large groups.

TABLE 1
Voluntary Organisations Engaged in Countryside Recreation in the Avon Area

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The list of voluntary organisations which follows is based on our knowledge of Avon. The list is by no means comprehensive. All the organisations referred to exist in our area except for those marked with an asterisk. In such cases we have good reason to believe these organisations exist but have not been able to substantiate our claim in the time available. The list is divided into four classes, a division which corresponds to the one pursued in this conference paper:

Bitton Light Railway Society	)	
Syston Pony Club	)	small
Severn Road Club (cycling)	)	and
Switchboard Fishing Club for the Disabled	)	local

	Somerfords Fishing Association	organisations
	Avon Valley Scooter Club	
	S. Gloucestershire Beekeepers Association	
	Bantam Racing Club (motorbikes, not chickens)	
	Wick Football Club	
	Bromley Heath Hockey Club	
	Cleeve Archers	
	E. Bristol Rifle and Pistol Club	
*	Pensford Clay Pigeon Shooting Association	
	Downend Wildlife Photography Club	
*	Keynsham Scramblers Club	small
	Hanham Naturalists	
	Downend Natural History Society	
	Avon Metal Detectors Club	and
	Hanham Cricket Club	
*	Thornbury Road-runners	
*	Midsomer Norton Pigeon Racing club	local
	Midsomer Norton Hare-coursing group (informal)	
	Kingswood & Hanham Boating Club	
*	Conham Rowing Club	organisations
	Lansdown Golf Club	
*	Keynsham Athletics Club	
	White Horse Motor Club	
*	Avon Rockclimbers	
*	Somerset Potholing Society	
	Avon Canoe Club	
	Bristol Model Boating Club	
	Avon Community Council	
	Bristol Ornithological Society	
	Bristol Sub-aqua Club	middle
*	Mendip Hang-gliding Association	
	Greenare Trust	
	The Thornbury Society	range
	Avon & Somerset Geological Association	
	Avon Archaeological Society	
	Cotswold Society	organisations
	Avon Play Association	
	Kennet & Avon Canal Trust	
	Bristol & District Amalgamated Anglers	
	Grimsbury Farm Trust (for the disabled)	large
	Higher Horizons (riding for the disabled)	& local
	Avon Wildlife Trust	organisations
*	Thornbury WI (Nature Study Section)	
*	Bath Rotary Club (Volunteers Section)	national
	Avon Area Ramblers Association	
	Bristol Branch, Caravan Club	organisations
	Community Service Volunteers	
	British Water-ski Federation	with branches
	British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	
	British Deer Society	and/or
	Salmon & Trout Association	
	British Field Sports Society	active
	British Mountaineering Council	
	British Horse Society	memberships
	Camping Club	

Commons Preservation Society	)	in the area
Mammal Society	)	
Watch	)	
Fauna & Flora Preservation Society	)	national
Historic Churches Preservation Trust	)	
Council for the Preservation of Rural England	)	organisations
Men of the Trees	)	
National Trust	)	with branches
Friends of the Earth	)	
Keep Britain Tidy Group	)	and/or
British Naturalists Association	)	
Youth Hostels Association	)	active
Field Studies Council	)	
National Playing Fields Association	)	memberships
National Council for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	)	
National Association of Environmental Education	)	in the area

It is in fact our work on such small groups (for the Joint Panel on Leisure and Recreation Research of the Sports Council and SSRC) which has provided much of the evidence for the central arguments of this paper, although a small grant from CRRAG has enabled us to look quickly at other parts of the 'territory'.

COLOURING IN THE MAP

Having both asserted that the broad title of 'Voluntary Sector in Countryside Recreation' tells us little and then listed a great variety of groups and agencies which operate within this title, we must now move on to seek ways of patterning the territory to make it more legible and useful. In order to achieve this in a way which is not merely analytical and abstract, we will continue by elaborating an example, based very closely on a real place, its groups and its problems, which serves to bring out some of the major characteristics of the many groups and especially those which seem to be under pressure to change the nature of their activity.

Setting the Scene

The Conwood Valley is not the best-known part of Kingsdyke (now a District Council area) but perhaps deserves to become so. Along the valley runs not only the river Bray but the derelict Bray and Baslow canal. The most attractive stretch is some two miles, during which the river and canal are also crossed by the disused North Haslett Railway, which used to run into nearby Haslett - a large city. In recent years the County Council (Westria) has attempted to start a number of initiatives which will 'place Conwood on the map' as far as both local and regional countryside recreation are concerned. The other public body with a major interest in the area is the Weston Water Authority, although the British Waterways Board continues to have an interest in the canal.

There are a number of groups currently operating in and on the Conwood valley. The Conwood Naturalists have helped to lay out a nature trail in the valley. The East Haslett Rifle and Pistol Club have their premises by the river and are trying to establish an outdoor range. The Westria Wildlife trust has 'adopted' the main river and

canal walkways to tidy up, develop for wildlife, prepare educational/interpretation materials for and so forth. The Kingsdyke Society has a general interest in the area's development. The Haslett Rowing Club has its clubhouse on the opposite bank to the Wildlife Trust walkway and obviously uses the river. The Haslett and District Amalgamated Anglers own the piscatorial rights to several stretches of the Bray and some smaller groups use other areas and the canal. The Bray and Baslow Canal Preservation Trust are hoping to open up the canal to boat use within a few years and have already completed some lengths. The same applies to the North Haslett Railway Preservation Society although they have only managed one short stretch so far. Volunteer groups (e.g. BTCV) have been brought in to help with some of the practical restoration work along the walkways. There is a Caravan Club 'recommended site' along the river. The County Council, District Council and County Wildlife Trust also make use of MSC labour on some of the local work.

Profiles of Some Groups

Conwood Naturalists Society: There are about 25 members of the Conwood Naturalists Society, most of whom are middle-aged or elderly. The Society was set up in 1975 and mainly concerns itself with arranging films, talks and outings for its members. The society is very much based in the village of Conwood on the outskirts of Haslett. It emerged partly from informal networks within the community and is still largely sustained by them. Thus social ties between its members are very important. The society is, in our view, typical of many of the smaller groups one finds in the countryside. They are a group of amateurs or 'dabblers', not easily entered by 'outsiders', with limited objectives and thus not interested in growing either numerically or in terms of their range of activities. If more ambitious individuals join the group they soon leave, frustrated by the group's 'lack of drive' and passivity. The group's members are, however, happy with the way things are, for the group fulfils an important function for them – a hobby, providing interest without too much exertion, pursued in a pleasant social context.

Following overtures from the local District Council (specifically a young woman planner with considerable interest in conservation) the society took on the task of laying a nature trail in the Bray valley. This was the first project it had undertaken in the 7 years of its existence. After initial interest, enthusiasm for the project waned and most of the work was eventually performed by two of its more active members (both of whom were pensioners). The society has mixed feelings about the Westria Wildlife Trust – a newer, larger and more professional outfit – which, although its concern is for the entire county, nevertheless has focussed its work on the Bray valley and is in the process of building its headquarters there. Whilst the society welcomes the fact that a younger and more dynamic outfit has become established they are afraid that they may lose members to it and even go out of existence.

In our experience their fears are probably quite legitimate. Groups like the Conwood Naturalists, because of the self-containment of their objectives, make very few demands upon either the physical or organisational environment. Their unobtrusiveness is such that many local authorities are unaware of their existence. The key point we would like to establish is that such organisations have made a choice. They have chosen to be local, parochial, amateurish, passive and self-limiting

because this is what their members want. We would argue that organisations such as these constitute the vast majority of those that would fall under the label 'voluntary sector in the countryside' (a representative sample of such organisations can be found in the first class in Table 1). To an outsider such organisations may be extremely frustrating to relate to as they seem cautious or uninterested in any 'grand schemes'. The temptation to encourage or cajole them into a more active role may be considerable, but, we would insist, should be resisted. Organisations such as the Conwood Naturalists have chosen to be as they are and outsiders, often professionals working for local authorities or larger voluntary organisations, must respect that choice. If they do not and instead try to impose their own concept of organisational and community development on such groups, the result may well be an intrusion upon that organisation, upsetting its balance and possibly leading to its destruction.

Bray and Baslow Canal Preservation Trust: Why one group should choose to become self-contained whilst another chooses growth and development is difficult to guess. Nevertheless the choice is an important one not just because the larger organisations tend to become involved in more ambitious projects and hence begin to make real impact upon their physical and organisational environments, but also because growth has important internal consequences which means that some of the typical features of the small voluntary organisation give way to other characteristics typical of middle-range organisations.

By 'middle-range' organisations we mean those which may have a large and more geographically dispersed membership (possibly up to a thousand or two), whose activities may generate considerable income, who may own considerable assets, but who do not employ any salaried professional or business staff. A good example is the Bray and Baslow Canal Preservation Trust.

This organisation was established 15 years ago through an amalgamation of three smaller groups each with an interest in preserving smaller and separate stretches of the same canal. The canal's total length is nearly 60 miles of which 40 have now been restored to use by the Preservation Trust. The Trust, as an organisation, displays a number of interesting transitional characteristics. It still retains some of the localism of the three smaller groups and membership of the Trust is still drawn heavily from the immediate area. However, as it has grown, a number of 'outsiders' have become drawn into its activities - the President is a retired Major who has only recently put down roots in the area but has brought considerable organisational drive to the Trust.

As the Trust has grown, so a number of qualitative shifts in its activity have occurred. It has now restored to use a number of old canal-side buildings. As large sections of canal became opened it won the right to manage the navigational and piscatorial aspects of the canal's life. The Trust has renovated a number of long boats and now runs 'pleasure trips' for the public on a number of stretches of water. In other words, as it has grown it has begun to own and manage more property and has started to generate considerable income.

Despite the large number of activities in which it engages, the Trust is still entirely voluntary. The restoration work has been conducted entirely by its own members with occasional but solid help

from BTCV (although there has been recent trade union concern over volunteer labour). The management and running of buildings, boats, cafes and shops is performed by its own members as is the not inconsiderable amount of secretarial and clerical work needed to keep the venture running (annual turnover of around £25,000). The Trust is run by an elected committee and members of this committee are responsible for all of the Trust's dealings with outside organisations – in the case of the Trust the most important of these is the British Waterways Board.

The Trust clearly has a much greater impact upon its physical and organisational environment than any of its constituent groups had previously. The canal is now mentioned in the tourist brochures of a number of adjacent District and County Councils and the Trust is now engaged in negotiations with the British Waterways Board to open up the final stretch of unrenovated canal. The pressures on the group to change its organisational structure are considerable and they come from two directions. Firstly, as the conservation tasks of the Trust increase in number and complexity and as demands upon it for use of its facilities from statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations grow, so the pressure on it to employ full-time professional staff increases. Secondly, as its income generation from sources other than the membership increases, so the Trust finds itself assuming the role of a small business and hence the pressure on it to conduct itself in a business-like fashion grows.

These kinds of pressures are fairly typical for middle-range organisations. The problem of being both a voluntary organisation and a small business is one which besets railway preservation societies, countryside museums and a variety of other groups. How an organisation copes with these pressures is again for it to decide. Clearly some of the larger railway preservation societies (the Severn Valley society has a turnover of £¾ million and employs 35 staff) now run themselves very much along the lines of a not-so-small business; for example by endeavouring to attract individuals with financial and business backgrounds onto their Boards. The problem is of course that if a group goes too far along this road it can begin to lose its voluntary flavour and its membership can become increasingly passive – withdrawing both from the management of the organisation and from the pool of voluntary labour that was its initial life-blood.

Other middle-range organisations, as they grow, become landowners (e.g. the fishing group which follows). The 'estate management' function rather than the 'business' function may affect the organisation's structure and culture in such cases. For other organisations, especially those with a conservation focus, the main pressure relates to the professionalisation of the organisation. We feel this pressure is particularly important and will examine it in more detail in an ensuing section.

The Haslett and District Amalgamated Anglers: So far we have considered examples of small and middle-range organisations with a conservational or preservational focus. In other words, so far we have only considered those groups whose business has become the maintenance and improvement of the countryside's resources. Clearly however the vast majority of 'voluntary' organisations involved in countryside leisure activity – angling, field sports, ornithology, hang-gliding, sailing, to name a few – are concerned primarily with the consumption of countryside resources through recreational activity rather than with the maintenance of these resources.

The Haslett and District Amalgamated Anglers is a good example of a middle-range organisation with a purely recreational focus. The society acts as a city-wide umbrella organisation for many smaller angling societies based on clubs, pubs, works and neighbourhoods within the city. Unlike some other city-wide angling associations (e.g. Birmingham) it employs no full-time staff - its complex co-ordinating and management functions being performed by skilled volunteers. The organisation owns a few stretches of water (mostly ponds and gravel pits), controls the piscatorial rights to large stretches of a number of rivers (mostly in Westria but some in quite distant counties) and has joint access to a number of lakes and reservoirs owned by the Weston Water Authority. Liaison and negotiation with statutory organisations, especially the Water Authority, is a key element of the society's activity. Interestingly enough, as local angling clubs have multiplied and the district society has grown, its role in mediating access to stretches of water for its constituent clubs has become increasingly important. In many respects its role is analagous to a district football league in a city. Here the league negotiates access to scarce playing field facilities owned largely by the local authority, the league then administers these resources by making all decisions about which team uses which pitch, on which day and so on.

There is one important difference however between the district angling society and the football league. Whereas in the latter instance there is little connection between consumption and maintenance of resources (i.e. pitches) because the local authority has sole responsibility for resource maintenance, in the case of angling societies (and indeed for many other countryside leisure groups), the connection between consumption and maintenance of resources is much more immediate. A major factor here concerns 'ownership'. Whereas a playing field is an identifiable and manageable resource, the resource that most countryside leisure groups make use of is the environment in the fullest sense of the word (air, land and water), in other words a resource which does not fall into any manageable or identifiable sectors. Users of the countryside must therefore rely on their own efforts to maintain the countryside's resources much more than their urban equivalents - this is the case even where local authorities have a clear statutory duty to maintain countryside resources such as footpaths.

For another reason, this connection between the consumption and maintenance of recreational resources is, we feel, common to most groups involved in recreation in the countryside. The experience of the Haslett and District Amalgamated Anglers is therefore germane to many other primarily recreational groups. As the number of anglers in the area has increased and as competition for access to stretches of water has also developed from sailing, rowing, water ski-ing and other pursuits, so the angling clubs themselves have become increasingly concerned with maintaining the quality of the resources they use. In other words the anglers themselves have become increasingly responsible for making sure stretches of water are not over-fished; limitations are placed upon use of ground bait, snagged lines are retrieved and not left to entwine themselves around resident waterfowl or passing water-craft, etc. Thus the Secretary of the Haslett and District Amalgamated Anglers spoke of the organisation's efforts to curb the activities of 'cowboy' anglers - the 'cowboy' being a comparatively recent innovation in angling terminology.

We hope this example illustrates the way in which many countryside groups with a recreational focus begin to extend their objectives into areas more closely identifiable with resource management and conservation. Anglers, ramblers, ornithologists, even hang-gliders often begin to develop a certain conservation consciousness for purely pragmatic reasons – i.e. failure to do so may mean that there are no fish left to catch or birds to watch, or no access to stretches of open hillside to ramble on or launch hang-gliders from. The somewhat selfish motivation for this conservationist attitude should not in any way underestimate its importance. Indeed self-interest has proved to be one of the firmest bases for attitudinal continuity. The widening of perspective towards 'conservation' also offers the fishing community a common vocabulary with those in government responsible for the planning and management of the countryside. Indeed one central pressure towards the formation of amalgamations such as the Haslett and District is the requirement of having to negotiate with Water Authorities and County Councils. The vocabulary alone would be no help to very parochial groups, nor the size alone to large groups (if they cannot share a language).

The Westria Wildlife Trust: As we move along the scale in terms of 'life-cycle', we begin to find groups who have some element, if very small, of professionalisation. There may be no differentiation from earlier groups in terms of size (indeed the Wildlife Trust has fewer members than the angling group) but they have taken the crucial decision to introduce full-time paid staff. While the terminology is rather unclear, we will call such groups 'Large Local', if only because the introduction of full-time employees enables them to have a much greater public impact. Professionalisation is not however the only issue relevant to the Wildlife Trust, as will be seen.

The Westria Wildlife Trust was started in 1977, once it had been found that the two old county trusts which covered what is now the new County of Westria could no longer be expected to serve an area which was 'under new management'. It sees its aims as the general protection and enhancement of wildlife, habitats and the environment. It sees itself doing this through direct action, (e.g. developing its own nature reserves), through public promotion and education and through lobbying of all relevant bodies, both public and private. It was in fact this last – lobbying public bodies – which finally led to its creation. The two old trusts could simply not afford the time and effort of relating to two distinct County Councils, especially as the parts now in Westria were rather small and not the most important in wildlife terms. There was therefore a need to establish a body which could talk on equal terms with Westria County Council, even if the boundaries of that county had little meaning for habitats. This phenomenon is, in our experience, quite common, where groups reshape their geographical boundaries to relate to local government, National Park or Water Authority boundaries (which are of course not themselves consistent). The reason is very simple – to have a legitimacy in any communication with such authorities – although the effects can be to impose a (normally) larger format on groups whose more natural locus may be areas much smaller than, or different to, those of the relevant authority.

Given the need to develop a major lobbying role – affecting the County Council, District Councils, statutory undertakers, private landowners and impacting on the local media – there was also a need to go for a fairly large and formal structure. This would attract the right people as trustees (from the media, industry, local government etc.) and

give the right status for a body which would hope to attract a wide variety of members throughout the county. The membership includes individuals with no other wildlife interest, many who are members of other related local groups, schools and other groups. Membership was heavily promoted and is now quite high. With the use of family memberships, donations and covenants they can now afford to employ permanent staff - a secretary (administrative not clerical), a biologist, an education officer and a typist. They can also afford to call on professional assistance for promotions and publicity (a graphic artist) although some of these skills were at first available free from Trust members. More practical skills are also available - free through the use of members (and any non-members) as volunteer labour at nature reserves or at special events such as their annual Wildlife Fair.

In the first few years almost all members were local residents (i.e. from Westria) but now a number of people from outside - but with local interests or historical connections - have joined. Some of these have been drawn in quite specifically because they have special knowledge or are powerfully placed for lobbying. This has caused some resentment amongst committee members because they feel that they are in danger of losing their area base. Such resentment is probably natural in that it will always be felt by the founding group about the second or third generation who slowly take control over time, but this feeling can be fuelled by other changes - such as the acquisition of professional staff - to create a feeling of loss of local identity. Does the group remain 'ours' or does it become a group run by 'them' for 'us'?

There is also a reaction from some ordinary members about the extent of collaboration with the County Council Planning Department. The county do in fact have a representative on the committee and some have commented that the Trust is now far less likely to make a fuss about new actions such as planning permission for quarrying than it did in the past. The Trust is now very dependent upon the County Council and the District Councils (although it meets mostly with the former) because they help to provide possible nature reserve sites, involve the Trust in projects on footpaths and the use of MSC labour on what will be the new base for the Trust, an old house and mill. Dependency is in fact quite crucial because it can instil in a group the feeling that the major thrust of their activities has been shifted away from the original focus and that any loss of (for example) MSC support could now threaten the whole existence of the group. There is also a feeling that the lengthy involvement of MSC groups can set up an overly strong link between the full-time professional staff and the volunteer groups at the expense of a sense of control by the group as a whole.

Many members see the new base in the mill as a mixed blessing. Some of the first members now find themselves merely the recipients of the professionally prepared newsletter (which used to be written mainly by members even if it was rather scrappy), worry about being unable to get on the main committee and influence policy and worry that they often find themselves treated as 'fodder' at the end of a production line (to be quoted as statistics when needed, to give money or called upon to come and build a wall when needed). The committee are very aware of these tensions yet also suspect that they cannot develop without more money, a good physical base and more professional staff.

It is this tension which is at the heart of the problem over 'choice' at this stage. We have detected, in many settings, a feeling of

loss of contact with the centre of a group, a feeling that it is 'drifting away' from the members, which is counterbalanced by some pride in the range and increasing 'professionalism' of activities and publications. In the case of the Wildlife Trust, some members have now chosen to return to their specific subject groups (bird-watching or wild flowers) for this reason. The tendency for professional staff to raise the level of knowledge and discussion in a group should not simply be thought of as necessarily a good thing: for, to the ordinary member, it is important to feel that he or she is in touch with the level of the group as a whole if not its most knowledgeable members. .The word used to us by a naturalists' group about its local wildlife trust was 'highbrow', a style which serves to distance members from the centre. This does have its benefits because, in Westria, the professionals - one planner, one biologist and one teacher - feel that the Trust is near to a position when it will be the natural focus of all wildlife issues for the County Council and that this will launch it on a new wave of activity. They meet frequently with professionals from other trusts, visit national groups in London and have good personal contacts with the planners and ecologists at County Hall. However they have little contact with the other local groups because no others have professional staff.

The commitment to the Bray River Walkway project is very important to the Trust if it wishes to show that it can 'perform'. The walkway was designated by the County Council and attempts are being made to get groups to 'take over' lengths of it both to tidy it up and then to maintain it. The Trust has almost set up a separate sub-group to run this project and contact with the MSC has enabled it to appoint a special project officer. This and the way in which the publications section has started to make a lot of money, has caused some anxiety for the committee because there has been talk of setting up completely separate organisations for such things. There is some concern also about the way in which the 'tail' of the walkway project is beginning to 'wag the dog' of mainstream activities.

The Westria Branch of the Caravan Association: Up to this point all the groups described have been locally based (depending upon how one defines local) even if, like the Wildlife Trust, they have firm links to national bodies. Our stage-by-stage model therefore loses its continuity here because we now move to groups which are primarily national but which have local branches in varying relationships with their national centre. The professionalisation issue still applies, because the central office will almost certainly have professional staff even if the branch structure remains firmly voluntary. The issues which now begin to emerge are very much about the style and quality of this relationship between local and national and our opening example is of a very centralised structure. The Caravan Association has a large membership in its Westria branch, having been established very shortly after local government reorganisation and the creation of the new county. They are in fact the only local branch of the National Caravan Association which has its headquarters in Basingstoke (since moving from London to reduce costs). The branch does very little itself in terms of membership and promotion because everybody joins through the national organisation and is then referred to the relevant local branch. This inevitably means that there is a big majority of local members that nobody has ever met - they just use national books and guides and go off on their own. This is one of the perennial worries because mere membership of the Association cannot guarantee that the owner is not a 'cowboy' - one of those who loads improperly, drives too fast and camps inconsiderately.

The secretary feels that joining through a local branch might provide better 'vetting'. Part of this concern is also for the whole character of camping. There is little feeling of belonging to a club and many members are determined individualists wanting a bit of certainty on good places to stay. This inevitably leads to bad behaviour and the Westria branch feels that its contact with local government is often spoiled by reference to such actions. There is a feeling amongst the few people who do meet regularly - the branch committee - that their role should be much wider and even, in some ways, an educational one to teach people that they are just one group among many competing for scarce resources and that care and concern for the countryside in general and sites in particular, is very important and for their own benefit.

The difficulty for the branch on this issue is that the Caravan Association has never been that much of a club or group and has many characteristics of the Automobile Association (for example). It is perceived by many members in terms of what it offers them rather than what they offer it and there are no easy solutions for coping with such divergences of view. The pattern is common in many nationally based groups and is exacerbated in those which have a very strong centralised system, because it is only at the local, and hence personal level, that attitude change can begin to develop. The major role for the branch is to arrange a series of special sites/events throughout the year to which its own members - and others - can go if they wish. The central office gives out all information about approved sites (also open to the public), route maps, advice, insurance arrangements and so forth, leaving the branches with little to do except organise new sites. In most areas some friendly farmers will be well known and sites will have been used for years. In order to proceed with making these available the owner's agreement is needed, followed by a temporary planning permission/licence from the local Planning Authority. In some authorities this is still a problem but most of the branch's sites are in Westria and here they have very good first name links with appropriate staff in the Planning Department. There may be local objections on new sites but mostly the relationship is good, even if the branch feels the authority could be a little more positive in locating suitable sites now that they have become more difficult to find. Finding sites in other counties can be awkward because of the need to go through the local branch and the planners are different people with (almost always) different forms.

Once sites are arranged and timetabled throughout the season, information is posted to local members to enable for them to book up. This is the most important link with the members and using this service as its basis, the brochure tries to arouse more interest in the actual branch - mostly without success. Even when people arrive at the sites, some do not appear to wish to become involved with other members in any way and it is only a small proportion (usually the club officials) who get together, arrange trips and children's games.

There has in fact been a recent move by the central office to standardise some procedures on selecting and booking sites, booking places and even standardising the planning forms. The branch feels somewhat cautious about this because they like the friendly link with the local planner and feel that more centralisation will merely make it more difficult for them to make a real club out of the disparate local membership. On the other hand, of course, there are some benefits

associated with centralisation and historically the centre played a major lobbying role in the granting of the first temporary licences and is now needed to make the views of caravanners heard in broad planning discussions. This tension is of course the same as that in operation in the Wildlife Trust in relation to its own professional staff and can be seen in many groups who must, in some way, find a solution to the problem of facing in two directions at once – towards the members and towards an outside world which can, if ignored, influence that group's action space.

The Secretary of the branch did in fact try a new idea last year to bring people together, partly because it was simply a good thing and partly to discuss the likely closure of the Conwood Valley Caravan Park. He arranged with the Westria Education Department to have a weekend meeting on a school site. This got a fair response and the branch held its first proper AGM to appoint officers (other than by post). The discussion of the possible closure produced no real answers. Members decided to talk to the owner and perhaps 'guarantee' income/usage, to talk to the council to see if they could take it over, to talk to the potential new owner about at least carrying on with two special weeks each year and to consider buying and managing the site themselves. The committee all thought the last was a good idea but clearly the membership were worried (and presumably the individualistic absentees more so) that this would mean more organisation, perhaps professional staff and generally a shift in character for the whole group. Nobody actually said this. A similar problem had arisen a few years ago with an attempt to get a formal, signed, code of practice agreed for all members – clearly too pushy.

Again, from this, one can see the impact of a move towards commercialisation as having some parallels with a move to professionalisation. The concerns of any member are much the same in both cases – a loss of the original dynamic which shaped the group.

Westria Conservation Volunteers: an alternative model for any national organisation is to form a 'confederation' in which the major emphasis of the organisation rests with the branches, each of which has considerable autonomy and the centre has little more than a co-ordinating, promotional, lobbying role. The Westria Conservation Volunteers is one such local branch. It was formed when the County Planning Department and the Wildlife Trust decided on a possible programme of environmental improvements needed in the area, including the Conwood Valley. A brief look at the resources available through MSC suggested that this could never be adequate for the task and therefore it was decided to look around for volunteers. The County and the Trust began this initiative by planning 'activity weekends' but soon they were able to get money from the Community Programme part of MSC to organise a special volunteers group. This new group now exists in its own right, although it still does all its work for the local authorities (Districts as well as County) and the Trust. The organisation still depends on CP money and could cease if this source dried up. The Volunteer Organisers (funded by MSC) are responsible to a committee of lay people drawn not just from the Trust and statutory bodies but also from other local agencies and the private sector (one major local housebuilder). The organisers get a list of sites from the authority then attempt to locate volunteers to work on these sites on specified dates. There is a limit to how many weekends can be used and to how many people are available, so a lot of planning is necessary – especially

contingency planning because some volunteers are always missing on the day. Attempts have been made to draw labour from near to each site but this petered out and the main sources - university, polytechnics, schools, youth groups etc. - generally tend to work on whatever site comes up next irrespective of its location. Here again we see the issue of 'localism' emerging because there are many lobbyists for environmental improvements by volunteers who argue very strongly for the principle of people doing it for themselves in their own area. This is of course difficult, sometimes impossible in many countryside locations because there are no true residents.

The biggest problem for the local organisers is what can be called 'perpetual briefing' - most volunteers know nothing of the job, come a number of times, get good enough to be left alone or help others, then leave. 'Training' is therefore very important. The County Council arranges seminars for WCV staff (and really keen volunteers) to teach them about site management, safety, basic techniques and so forth to a level where they are all capable of running the elements of a job but no more. For particular tasks (soil preparation, puddling clay etc.) specialists are brought in from wherever they can be found - a landscape architect from a District Council, a retired estate manager, etc.

The second key problem comes with the motivation of the volunteers. They are all keen to work (often too hard) but they are also there to enjoy themselves, so it is sometimes difficult to take down a completed stretch of dry stone walling and insist that it is done again, only better. The work they do - except for real hack labour - is never as good as professionals would manage and so the 'clients' must be very clear about what they are getting. Not surprisingly there can be conflicts between the orientation and standards of the professionals and the orientation of the volunteers towards enjoyment or recreation.

There have been one or two examples of people staying on with WCV for more than a year but it is unlikely that anybody starting as a volunteer will carry on long enough to become a committee member so there is always a feeling that <u>they</u> (staff and committee) are deciding things for <u>us</u> (volunteers). But almost everybody sees this as inevitable and the last thing most volunteers want is to be bothered with organisation (in fact, some people have even wondered "whether all the volunteers really have an interest in the countryside given the mess they often leave behind").

On the Bray walkway project there have been some delays because the District Council wanted to involve as many 'really local' people as possible. However, in reality it proved difficult to find them and it has been said that 'locals' would be worse than other volunteers when it comes to performance because they would, by definition, only be involved in their own area and then stop when a new area was to be tackled. There is no doubt that one reason why the WCV gets asked back is because it performs well and quickly - a result of good central organisation. There has also been strong resistance on some sites in the Bray valley to volunteer labour from certain trade unions concerned with the canal and the railway.

Having described the group itself at the local level, a few comments are necessary about the national organisation. There are few problems between group and centre because each has distinct roles and the

groups are left to get things done on their own. If there is any tension at all it is about the nature and style of pressure group politics and, in particular, Parliamentary lobbying. There have been examples of successful lobbying of Government and some central staff think this would be better if the whole organisation spoke with one clear voice at all levels. There is also the question of local action and the status of the national body as a charitable organisation. Recently the Midshire group became very political and took direct action to prevent a piece of new road being built over an area it had improved the prevous year. The central group worries that it may need to have more control and make protest more legitimate and less radical if it is to retain 'a legitimate lobbying voice and, quite crucially, its charitable status.

The Groups Acting Together

The fact that all these six groups and the others mentioned earlier, are acting upon one single piece of local environment should not be taken to mean that they are working together. It is unlikely that anybody knows about the Caravan Association branch's interest in the caravan park. The Naturalists operate very much on their own and the Rifle and Pistol Club only knew about other activities when their car park was improved by the council on condition that it was made accessible to outsiders walking the river or fishing. The Railway Society tends to operate very much alone, although the fishing, boating, canoeing and wildlife groups all have some degree of contact because they literally share a common physical resource. Only the Wildlife Trust, the County Council and the District Council know all that is happening, although knowledge amongst district council employees is spread amongst different departments; (very recently, the County Education Department was surprised to learn that so many schools had worked on the walkway). At the moment there is no proposal to bring them all together, partly because there seems little reason and partly because some would probably not even come along to any meeting. The Rifle and Pistol Club used to send someone to the district Sports Council but nothing relevant to them was ever discussed. The Canoe Club attended more consistently and in fact it is its pressure which has led to the Planning Department attempting some small link-up through a Bray Users Group. The fishing fraternity are very sceptical of this initiative because they remember the earlier attempts (before the new County) when it became clear that the authorities were seeking their views - quite reasonably and fully - but were then setting themselves up to take decisions about access to the riverside entirely alone. However the Canoe Club secretary made the suggestion because of his experience of a similar group where the County merely tried to act as information-broker, co-ordinator and scribe for meetings. In this instance each local group had felt that it was they - the actual interest groups - who had taken the decision, not the planners.

The prognosis is quite good because of the personal qualities of the current planning liaison officer, but one key problem is clearly that she has too many tasks on her plate and can give only limited time to this particular arrangement. The Canoe Club secretary has come to realise why planners often prefer to work through one general local group - at least it can be done in the time available. The other good sign is that the planner involved has been working for some time on recreational issues - a major change from the norm, when previous people have had little or no knowledge of the hopes and aspirations of individual recreation groups.

CONCLUSION

We pointed out in our introduction that most of our research experience concerned small-scale voluntary activity in recreation and this has been mostly in urban environments. A growing consensus has emerged within recent research which leads us to feel concern for the 'sectorisation' of voluntary activity. Evidence suggests that by the time policy makers have become sufficiently interested in an area of voluntary activity to refer to it as 'a sector' (e.g. the voluntary 'sector' in welfare) that voluntary activity has started to assume a character and set of parameters which is so expressive of the public sector to which it relates that it is well on its way to losing its independence and becoming 'colonised' by values and methods alien to voluntarism - i.e. an extension of the local bureaucracy rather than its antithesis.

Given that the title of this conference refers to the 'voluntary sector' in countryside recreation we thought it might be appropriate to conclude this paper by sounding a warning about the path this may lead you down. Some arguments in what follows are bound to appear rather speculative but we are sufficiently confident of the initial impressions we have gleaned of the area to put them forward nevertheless.

We would like to start by noting a contrast between recreation in urban and rural contexts. Whereas in the urban environment recreation is increasingly becoming the primary concern of recreation managers (often located within Recreation & Arts Departments) in the rural environment recreation is primarily the concern of planners; indeed (and here we are willing to be proved wrong) we have not been able to find one Shire County authority with the equivalent of a distinct 'Rec. & Arts' Department. This contrast has caused us considerable puzzlement.

A second puzzlement of ours concerns the notion of 'volunteer' when it is used in conjunction with the term 'recreation'. If one considers a number of strictly recreational countryside activities - rowing, bird watching, angling, etc. - it is difficult to see how these activities (whilst undoubtedly performed voluntarily) bear any relationship with volunteering; most anglers would be puzzled if asked to recollect when it was that they first volunteered to go angling. Now it is certainly true that some anglers volunteer to become committee members of angling clubs, but here their voluntary labour is of a strictly organising form and is undertaken for themselves. Somehow or another our guess is that this is not exactly what most people from the public sector attending this conference have in mind when thinking of 'the volunteer'.

We have found that we could only resolve these two puzzlements by coming to the following conclusion:

We doubt whether anyone has a strategy for promoting voluntarily organised recreation in the countryside (i.e. for those sports and hobbies which are best conducted in a non-urban environment); if anything the strategy is to contain such activity. On the other hand it does seem to us that there is an attempt to develop a strategy for promoting voluntarily organised conservation and preservation work in the countryside. There is no problem in talking about 'the volunteer' in this context, indeed volunteer labour is central to those kinds of activities. However, let us be quite clear about this, conservation is not the same as recreation. This distinction is quite apparent in, for

example, the distinction the Ramblers' Association draws between Ramblers' Clubs (purely recreational, largely concerned with organised walks) and Ramblers' Groups (concerned directly with footpath preservation, etc. as well as walking) or the distinction between a local ornithology club (a hobby and therefore purely recreational) and a local branch of the RSPB.

This interrelationship between recreation and conservation is, we feel, a crucial one and it is in danger of being blurred. Recreation is concerned primarily with the consumption of resources. In the city this might refer to the wear and tear on playing fields or gym equipment. In the countryside the resources consumed concern the natural environment - hillsides, riverbanks, and so on. Conservation and preservation both refer to the maintenance and improvement of the environment, in other words, their concern is for 'resource management' rather than 'resource consumption'. Much of this 'resource management' work is undoubtedly fun, but then people also enjoy politics and religion but this in itself does not make them recreational activities. Blurring the distinction between conservation and recreation can only lead us into terminological, theoretical and practical confusion. Our guess is that the title of this conference reflects this confusion rather than leading to any resolution of it. Referring back to our opening comments, the danger is that the confusion will eventually be resolved by defining 'a sector' which actually excludes or obscures many groups which by all rights should be there.

Given that the predominant professional group involved in 'countryside recreation' from a public sector position has a 'planning' rather than 'recreational' background our guess is that strong pressure will be exerted to define the sector at the expense of two specific types of voluntary group:

1. small local groups, like the Conwood Naturalists, whose passivity, limited ambitions and inward-looking contentment often proves highly frustrating to more dynamic conservationists;

2. groups, small and large, with a recreational rather than conservationist or preservationist intent.

We feel that such a development would be unfortunate for a number of reasons. Firstly there are many times more people involved in countryside recreation than there are involved in conservation, yet there are no national or local strategies for its development and few 'recreational professionals' in any rural local authorities. Secondly, voluntarily organised forms of countryside recreation do in fact provide the public sector with one important source of voluntary labour. As our example of the district angling association shows, the public sector can devolve quite a lot of time-consuming decision-making and administration to voluntary organisations. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, our preliminary impression of voluntarily organised groups involved in countryside recreation suggests that, as their numbers grow, so issues relating not just to resource consumption but also to resource management begin to come to their attention. A key sign that this process is underway is the identification of the 'cowboy' category by the group concerned. For as soon as this concept enters the vocabulary of a group of anglers, metal-detectors or what-have-you, one can be sure that self-regulatory group mores are becoming established and the first glimmerings of an environmental awareness can be discerned. So

long, however, as recreation and conservation are regarded as if they are opposing initiatives within the countryside, in the long run (given that recreational demand can only increase) it is recreation that will lose out. Thus our warnings against any premature sectorisation which might in fact formalise an artificial counterposition between these two areas.

If the process of 'sectorisation' can, in certain conditions, correspond to the process whereby the public sector defines voluntary activity in a manner which reflects its own image, so the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of voluntary activity may also, if not guarded against, become a further expression of this same tendency.

As voluntary organisations grow, whether recreational or conservationist in focus, the need to engage with the complex surrounding organisational environment becomes paramount. Small voluntary organisations can more or less function as closed systems because their interaction with other voluntary organisations and larger private or public organisations is minimal. Larger voluntary organisations, however, tend almost inevitably to become bound up in a complex negotiating/lobbying framework. This may concern negotiating access to stretches of water, obtaining planning permission for developments, haggling with farmers over rights of way, bargaining with other voluntary organisations about who uses what stretch of water, for what purpose and on what day, taking part in public enquiries to oppose commercial or governmental developments or even lobbying at national level in an endeavour to influence aspects of proposed government legislation. Whatever the nature of this activity, the knowledge and skill required in handling the interface with an increasingly complex surrounding organisational environment means that the pressure to obtain professional staff becomes considerable.

In our experience, as soon as a voluntary organisation makes the decision to employ professional staff a certain tension may manifest itself at the level of objectives, methods or organisation and it may be handled in any number of ways. Some organisations seem able to retain a vibrant voluntary base served by central professional staff, others lose this base and become centralised and bureaucratic. In our view such organisations may still be 'independent' but we wonder whether they could still legitimately be called 'voluntary'. Voluntary activity in welfare is now replete with organisations which are top-heavy, with a largely passive membership and which are so well integrated into the Welfare State that they are scarcely distinguishable from it. The sphere of recreation and conservation in the countryside is still many years away from reaching this state of affairs.

There is now a strong lobby within the 'welfare' voluntary sector seeking a return to 'welfare pluralism'. Our guess is that we already have a form of pluralism in operation in the sphere of countryside recreation and conservation in the relationship between voluntary, private and public sectors. It would be a shame if things 'matured' here in such a way that in 20 years time CRRAG's annual conference was organised around the need to return to a pluralistic pattern of relationships.

DISCUSSION

Chairman

Thank you very much Jeff and Paul. We have had another very useful presentation in the second paper. Jeff's 'almost real' example from the 'Conwood Valley' I guess would ring bells with a lot of you from your own experience - it certainly did with me.

To open the discussion we have Bob Hall, a man of many hats. This afternoon his notional hat is that of chairman of the Council of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Bob is a graduate of LSE, he is a geographer and a planner, having worked in the Countryside Section of the Planning Department of Berkshire County Council. Since 1976, he has been Recreational Planning Officer for the British Waterways Board.

He joined the BTCV as a lowly volunteer back in 1970, and in 1980 he became its Chairman. He is also very much involved, as a member of CRRAG, with the activities of CRRAG.

R. Hall (BTCV)

Today we've had two papers which are complementary: we've had the view from the satellite downwards from Foster Murphy and the view from the grass roots upwards from Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett. What I'd like to do is inject a third dimension to it, which is based upon over 10 years' experience of one organisation as a 'lowly' volunteer. No doubt you all have your own experiences and perhaps by the end of the discussion period we'll have some idea of what we're all talking about.

What we're trying to do in this session is to get some sort of understanding of what the beast actually is: what we mean by the voluntary sector in countryside recreation, and what its strengths and weaknesses are. We will then go on to discuss its potential in later sessions.

I would make one plea to you and that is, that we don't spend too much time discussing definitions. My reason for saying that comes from an experience I had in my first week at university, when as an undergraduate I started my geography course. We were given the first essay title of "What is Geography?" As time went on I got more and more concerned about it, because I couldn't answer it. After a while my belief in what I had committed myself for three years to do totally shattered, until one wise old lecturer said to us, "Geography is what geographers do". I commend that attitude to you all.

I would like to take Foster Murphy's paper first of all. I think he has given a very good distillation of the broad range of activity in the countryside, but I'd like to take issue on two points. Firstly, his account is very much flavoured with the social services side of things and I would argue that the countryside recreation voluntary sector is distinct from that of the social services. To go back to his six types of activity - I think there is a difference between caring, unemployment, housing, campaigning and conservation and recreation. The first three are concerned with people, the last with resources, be they water, land

or whatever. So I think we are talking about a distinct sector of voluntary activity in conservation and recreation.

'So what?' you may say. I think there are a number of implications from this. The first is that there are a lot of different skills required by this particular sector and not by the other ones and a greater range of skills. Not only do we require skills in estate management, conservation and practical work, but also the people management skills, which are also required by the other sectors. So I think in this sector there is a greater need for training and I was disappointed not to see that highlighted in the paper.

The second point I would like to make is that I think there is a difference in the relationship between volunteers and paid staff of voluntary organisations in the conservation and recreation side of things compared with the other ones. In my experience, much of the expertise and continuity resides in the volunteers rather than in the staff in conservation and recreation, and I think that may be different in the other areas.

I do wonder whether some of his comments are that relevant to our sector. To quote from page 21 of Foster's paper, "Professionals should be encouraged to depend more on the expertise they possess and less upon maintaining exclusive rights over various areas of activities for which they claim responsibility". Is that really what it's like in our part of the voluntary sector?

Another point I would like to pick up is that I think there is a different relationship between the voluntary sector in conservation and recreation and the public sector. As I understand it - and I'm open to correction here - in the social services, the voluntary sector has got involved with activities which the public sector has for a long time been involved with. In the countryside it is somewhat different, in that the voluntary sector has become more involved in activities which private landowners used to be involved with, or in new activities such as hanggliding, sub-aqua etc. which no-one had been responsible for. So I feel there is a much more equal partnership between the public and the voluntary sector than has been alluded to by the writers of both papers.

Something else I'd like to pick up from his paper, is the question of 'values'. I think that if you went to a filthy volunteer who had spent an afternoon in a silted up pond pulling out weed and asked him whether over the last three years he had experienced 'beneficence, reciprocity or solidarity', I know what answer you would get!

Just to be provocative, I raise the question of whether there is a difference between the motivation of volunteers in the countryside and in the welfare sector; or to be really naughty, whether there is a difference between the views that professionals have of why volunteers get involved, and the reality from the volunteer's perspective. In my experience, most volunteers come first of all for one reason: they have some sort of community of interest, they are interested in conservation or learning hanggliding etc. They come back a second time, and again and again, for a different set of reasons: firstly, they feel they have achieved something, be it a pond they have dug out, or a line of trees

they've planted and they feel they have learnt something they didn't know before, be it about a recreation activity or indeed about wildlife.

Secondly, they've been with people of like mind and I think that is important. Last of all, they've had a jolly good social time and I think it is vital that you understand the social element of volunteering. I want to make this point because in our subsequent discussion it is important that we understand what the motivation of volunteers is really all about. It's like understanding the fuel to get an engine going. I think this will permeate the rest of our discussions. If you know why volunteers are doing it, you've got a much better chance of being able to manage, use and maximise the benefit from them. If you get it wrong you've had it and somehow to me 'beneficence, reciprocity and solidarity' don't quite ring true!

I'd like now to turn to the second paper, which I found fascinating as a view of activity in the 'Conwood Valley'. I felt rather like a mole, suddenly popping up under the Naturalists' Society and seeing what they were getting up to and then going on and popping up under the Caravan Association and so on. I felt we got a very good feel of the incredible mix, the idiosyncracies, perhaps the rather strange activities in the voluntary sector. I must say I found great difficulty in understanding the 'Mid Shire Conservation Volunteers' and I can't begin to recognise them.

The main thought I'd like to inject into the discussion results from my own view of volunteering. I remember 10 years ago being very intrigued by one publication: it was called '50 Million Volunteers' and was published for the Stockholm Conference. Since then I have been inspired by its concept of the vast majority of this country being involved in some sort of volunteering work. With that approach I started to look at what was going on in the Conwood Valley and I'm beginning to wonder if in fact we are ready to meet that sort of challenge.

I must say, I look forward to the day when we can see the majority of people involved in volunteering; when perhaps the general public will accept volunteering as being as natural as eating ice cream or going to the seaside. I think we've got a long way to go but that's the vision I have.

I look forward to the day when every public body has volunteering so firmly on its agenda that it values volunteers as scarce resources, it nourishes them and has a set policy on involving volunteers, in just the same way that it has policies for its own staff, or its finance. But I think we're a long way from that particular point.

I also look forward to the day when the managers of public facilities, be they country parks or museums, or even urban parks, are forced to face the question, "Why do you not have volunteers involved?" With that sort of perspective,if we look at the activities of the voluntary sector as portrayed in the paper, we find one or two things lacking.

I wonder if the range and diversity of voluntary organisations we've found is a strength or a weakness. Is it confusing to the public, the possible volunteers and those with sources of money? Is there too much competition going on between voluntary organisations for scarce

resources such as funds, work and volunteers? Is it a weakness of the public sector that, faced with such variety, it is very uncertain about the quality and quantity of voluntary activity and so is rather tentative about using it? Is that holding us back?

I wonder about the ability of the voluntary sector to recruit and retain volunteers - whether it is sufficiently professional about it. Should we recognise that we are in fact serving some of the same needs as parts of the leisure industry and so are competing with quite a lot of strong attractions, and perhaps ought to be using some of that industry's techniques for getting and keeping people?

Is there something unique about voluntary organisations that makes them tend to spend a lot of time in questioning the roles of staff and volunteers, the roles of central and peripheral organisations? A lot of energy seems to be wasted in that. I wonder if we can somehow get a much better idea of partnership over, so we don't waste so much time in internal conflicts and spend much more time spreading the gospel to the British public.

I also wonder whether voluntary organisations have spent enough time trying to sort themselves out in terms of where they are going in the future. Again to be provocative, I thought I'd quote from an article which was published two years ago in 'Management Today'. "In general, charities have too many short term objectives absorbing their funds, very few medium term aims and seldom, if ever, the one long term objective which all should have, which is to work themselves out of business". I find that quite a challenge.

I'd like to end by putting the other side of the picture. I think the voluntary sector has got great strengths, particularly of flexibility, of economy and above all, of enthusiasm. Somehow I don't feel that these papers really captured that and I hope we can just remember that in our discussion.

The question I'd like to leave with you is whether the four of us, through our different contributions, have identified correctly the nature of voluntary organisations in countryside recreation. Have we identified the strengths and weaknesses of the 'beast' and is it really able to meet the challenge that seems to be before us?

Chairman

Thank you very much Bob for adding another dimension to the discussion. There have been many things brought up by these papers, so may I have the first question?

T. Robinson (Countryside Commission)

There is a fundamental point of divergence which Bob raised in his discussion, between his view and that of our speakers. The point of having these papers this afternoon was based on the assumption that there is a continuity between volunteers, no matter what sector they are operating in and therefore, I do question whether there is a lot to be gained from trying to see where the environmental sector of volunteers is different from the others as Bob has done.

If we're talking about motives being the rawest of raw materials in volunteering, it seems to me that the mix of motives which causes people to give their time and energy in a voluntary capacity is the same right across the whole spectrum. I would be very wary of seeing a distinction between countryside volunteers and the health and the social service volunteers. The environmental volunteers might be grappling with natural resources in part, but at the end of the day they are just as concerned with people as the others are.

Chairman

Does anyone agree with this?

Max Nicholson (Land Use Consultants)

I think that there are very big differences in motivation, particularly if you take conservation of nature. We have had such a terrific effort pictorially and in other ways in bringing home to people the actual situations which have to be dealt with on the ground.

If you go back as far I can on this, you'll see that some of the variety of organisations brought out in these fascinating papers is to some extent the result of different stages of development: as you get people coming up against resistance, they get shifted from a hobby interest to having to answer serious questions about aims and organisation.

I am Vice President of a body called the Association of Shooting and Conservation, which would have been considered a complete contradiction in the past. It was the Wildfowlers' Association but we had very intense discussions 20 odd years ago and we hammered out a common ground. You do go through this evolution, which I quite agree about. We on the wildlife side especially have been through this a good many years earlier than some people, who have only just woken up to the fact that there is a price to be paid for the use of natural resources and that if they're misused you do come up against quite a lot of flak.

Another point which I think is very important is the relationship of the national based bodies to the local bodies. I am President of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and we have 365,000 members. We have 170 members' groups up and down the country and I had a meeting with about 100 of these groups the weekend before last. We are grappling with this very real problem of the relationship between the professionals at the centre and the enormous number of keen members who want to be in on the action. The trend as we see it is that the professionals at the centre cannot now dictate as much as they used to think they could. We find we have to respond to the grass roots, at the same time that we are playing a more and more important role nationally.

P. Millmore (East Sussex County Council)

None of the speakers has touched on the fact that if you look at the total membership of voluntary bodies in this country, it is enormous, particularly voluntary bodies in relation to the countryside. Fundamentally they are all after the same thing: that is, a better environment for all of us in the future, be it for recreation purposes or

whatever. Yet they all act independently and they are often in conflict with each other. Yet if they combined they would carry more political clout than any one political party in this country. They could actually run the country, because their total membership exceeds that of any one political party! None of the speakers seems to have touched on this potential co-ordination of the voluntary bodies and the political force it would carry. Would any of the speakers like to comment on that?

Max Nicholson

In the RSPB, we have twice as many individual paid up members as the Labour party and six times as many as the SDP. We do not however have any ambitions to run the country; we've got quite enough to do ourselves! We've had this argument over and over again: isn't it untidy, isn't it a waste of effort? We've had numerous bodies in ornithology alone. However, we are pluralists and we are quite convinced from 30 years experience of trying different things, that within reason the more bodies, the more people can get experience of leadership, of training etc. We are very much against the tidy, monolithic approach.

Chairman

How do others feel about this? I'm really asking this of those of you who are activists within the voluntary sector.

D. Fletcher (Pennine Heritage & Manchester Polytechnic)

This question of the professionalism of the volunteer concerns me. There seems to be almost a suggestion in some quarters that perhaps the volunteer shouldn't be too professional, that he should muddle through. I'm not sure that I can go along with this. I think quite the reverse on some occasions, that the volunteer has to be more professional than the professionals in order to gain the credibility to be taken seriously.

As members of the voluntary sector we are judged by our track record. This brings us to the definitions that have been put forward of the voluntary sector and the alarm that there seems to be in some quarters about the voluntary sector having full-time professional staff and moving over to become some sort of bureaucratic organisation. It is not such a clear cut distinction in that I am a professional and I give my time to a voluntary organisation. That voluntary organisation employs people to give their full working time to its aims and objectives. But in a sense, although they are paid by the organisation, they are still volunteers. I'm a professional on a reasonable salary, giving part of my time, while they are professionals, on quite often a very much less than reasonable salary, giving all their time. I think we need to be careful before we start drawing sharp lines. I would rather deal in terms like 'commitment', 'enthusiasm', 'conviction', and a wish to contribute.

J. Ashdown (Kent County Council)

I'd like to go right in the opposite direction. For perhaps every one professional volunteer, there are possibly just as many people who run away from organisation. They are quite prepared to get out into the countryside and look after a path, clean up a building or a piece of land, only if there is somebody in that area who says, "Come on chaps,

this job needs to be done, let's get out and do it." To my mind, they are just as important as the RSPB or anybody else like that. They must be looked after just as keenly, but they are much more difficult to handle. I think it is a question of changed attitudes towards these people which could lead us to quite a big step forward in the voluntary sector.

J. Iles (BTCV)

I am interested in developing a little more the idea of conservation as a recreational activity in itself. I am interested to hear if any one else has had much experience of this area.

We have run one or two experiments where people were able to drop in on an activity. We did a project a few years ago in the Peak District National Park, where anybody walking past the site could pick up a spade and join in for a while. There was no commitment and no organisation. I wonder if people in other parts of the country have tried similar sorts of 'conservation involvement days', where people can join in, look round the area and do something practical.

Chairman

If I could ask a question about the Peak situation: what about supervision?

J. Iles

Well in fact the supervision was on site already.

Michael Gee (Consultant)

If I could just add to that comment my experience in the Lake District in August, when volunteers were required at 24 hours' notice for a task. I think I could have raised 150 volunteers from boy scout and girl guide camps. The idea that the young people would be away from the scout and guide leaders for a day was universally welcomed. So it is very easy indeed to get volunteers if you've got mechanisms.

Going back to the point the Vice-Chancellor made right at the start, one is often in the countryside dealing with people who come from the towns. Therefore the nature of the voluntary activity is very different, and you've got to have mechanisms to enable them to operate, and they're not the same mechanisms that might apply in the towns, where generally speaking, the volunteers can join a club that's just round the corner or can join a scheme that's on their doorstep.

T. Robinson

As I'm from the Countryside Commission I'm in a position to respond to John Iles' suggestions. We have been told, from other countryside research, that people in the countryside do not always know what to do. I think the idea of professional people 'ambushing' them and getting them to 'put something back into the countryside' has a lot of attraction. It has been tried and I think the lessons that have been learned are the more general lessons from managing volunteers in general.

The Lake District National Park has a scheme where you can spend a day with a ranger and you're likely to end up building a stone wall. The Yorkshire Dales National Park runs tasks where people merely turn up on the day in response to adverts. In the Tame Valley there is not quite so much of an 'ambush' of the unsuspecting; but they have community clean-ups at pretty short notice and the actual commitment to that one task is for as long as the volunteers are prepared to give. I think it is a very commendable approach, but it's very difficult to make it work.

J. Sully (West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council)

Could I come in on that? I think you've picked up a point which is not really mentioned in the second paper; that very often voluntary organisations require sustaining. To sustain the activists you've got to have a professional base. The second paper was talking about groups of volunteers viewed separately, not together, in that they might have the professional background elsewhere for the kind of work that they were doing.

Mr. Hall spoke about how volunteering in the countryside is different from volunteering in the social services. Yet I'll give you two illustrations of the similarities: first of all, a church providing a luncheon club for senior citizens. This depends on the volunteers turning up every week and if they don't turn up there are 40 or so people who get no lunch. The same applies in the countryside with, for example, leading guided walks. If you've got – as West Yorkshire has – volunteer rangers providing guided walks, and the volunteer rangers don't turn up, you have people turning up with no walk organised. You rely on your volunteers turning up and being there to do the jobs that are given to them. In both cases you need something to sustain this kind of organisation: in the first case a church, in the second a County Council. You can't just volunteer without having some sort of organisation: you can't suddenly say, "I want to lead a guided walk" and just go off and do it, you have to have a professional background to it.

G. Lord (Carnegie United Kingdom Trust)

A lot of the comments and papers are coming back to the issue of motivation and I would like to make one point. The key thing about motivation is that there is little difference in motivation in whatever sector you are working in. There is very little difference in the main motivation whether in social services and hospitals or in the countryside. One of the main aspects of motivation is that people want to occupy themselves and this is something which should never be overlooked. It is a key issue in all aspects of motivation for volunteering. But one of the things that people tend to overlook is the interest of people involved. You should never ignore people's interests.

One of the things that worries me is some of the extreme statements that Robert Hall made, if I can take him to task, when he took a quotation about charities out of context, just a little to denigrate voluntary organisations. In fact, most organisations are not charities: they may be charitable, they may be registered as charitable; but they are not charities in the sense that their main aim is to work themselves out of existence. I think it is wrong to suggest that this might be the main aim of all charitable groups.

I would like to ask a question of Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett. Again, they made an extreme statement in their paper. I'm wondering what evidence they have for the statement, "The work they (voluntary organisations) do is never as good as professionals". 'Never' is a very strong word. I can give evidence that suggests that work done by volunteers can often be better than that done by professionals. What evidence have they to suggest that the work that volunteers and voluntary organisations do is never as good as professionals'?

Barbara Mostyn (Applied Social Psychologist)

I happen to do motivation research which seems to be a key subject in this discussion. But I want to make a more general point and that is one that Foster Murphy alluded to in his paper, which has to do with social trends.

Looking back over the history of volunteering, you will see that people spent a great deal of time taking care of the sick, the elderly and the handicapped and perhaps also helping with housing and education. As the state took over some of these duties people have had more leisure time and smaller families. We have had the luxury in the last 20 or 30 years of doing voluntary work in our own environment. But, as Foster also said, times are changing and one of the big social issues of the moment is unemployment. Recently a member of the European Parliament asked me to write a proposal to look at the exclusive use of unemployed volunteers for environmental improvement. That's where the money is, in the EEC, to do research. I think we have to look at the future and realise that unemployment is a very serious problem and that the environment always has been and always will be important.

C. Bonsey (Hampshire County Council)

I just wanted to finish off by saying that I think we're spending too long on name tags. So many people in voluntary work are 'poachers', they turn into 'gamekeepers' and they become 'poachers' again! To give one example: I have a canal manager who used to be Chairman of the Canal Restoration Society. He is the same guy, with the same motivations, he just happens to be wearing another hat at the moment. I think we should not spend too long worrying about what people call themselves. I agree absolutely with the definition of geography: it is what a geographer does that matters.

Chairman

Now we'll have a very quick response from Jeff, Paul and Foster.

J. Bishop (University of Bristol)

Can I answer the question about whether voluntary groups can ever do work as good as professionals? The descriptions of each group we gave in the paper are those extracted from the conversations we had with them. So that's not our assertion; that is an assertion by the people that run the groups. I can't comment whether it is true or not. The work I used to do as a volunteer was at least as good as anything professionals do!

The crucial thing I want to say, that's come out of all the discussion, is that the moment we finished our paper everyone went back to talking about volunteers and volunteering. It's almost as if we didn't give a paper! Very little has been said about the organisation of BTCV, the organisations in volunteering work.

To take a couple of examples: people claim that all groups are after the same thing but are always sadly in conflict with each other and why don't they get together and act together? Why shouldn't they be more professional? With a lot of the tiny groups we're talking about, the argument about why don't they act together would be perfectly acceptable if the sole reason they were involved in their activity was for the activity in its own right.

Torkildsen, talking about voluntary groups, said, "Most groups are social clubs, whether the primary activity is social or not." So in fact the vast majority of people belonging to the Conwood Naturalists aren't really there for naturalism, they are there for other things. As soon as you start saying, "Why don't they cooperate and fight for the environment?", they will only do it at a loss of some of the things which are fundamental to them in the first place.

There was the comment that we can't ignore the interests people have, that that is what decides what they go into. It doesn't, I'm afraid, in recreation. In recreation and leisure, a large number of activities particularly the nature study and cultural ones, are completely substitutable. The basic reason why people end up in a naturalist society is not because they want to study natural history, but because they happen to know someone who was introduced to them when they arrived in an area and invited them along. If you then say we've got to develop voluntary organisations which can fight for conservation, then clearly you have got to professionalise, you've got to organise, you've got to control and you've got to manage. But I think that everybody here must accept that once that happens, the fundamental motivation for people joining together in groups is gone for good, and will never come back again.

P. Hoggett (University of Bristol)

I think most of the contributors to the discussion have still tended to talk, by and large, about the volunteer in the countryside. We would maintain our assertion that most of the recreational activity in the countryside is not really to do with volunteering or voluntary work: hang-gliding, fishing, rambling, bird watching, rowing etc. The people who participate in those kinds of activities in the countryside are not volunteers. You need to begin to think of what kinds of strategies of involvement, and what kinds of strategies of interaction we in the public sector are going to develop for these people, as well as volunteers involved in conservation. I think the contributions have tended to overlook this other much larger group who don't actually happen to be primarily interested in conservation.

F. Murphy

I am reinforced in my view that we're talking about a whole complex range of situations and that's come out very clearly to me in these two hours. I think I could justify my case to Bob Hall, if we were to

have half an hour of talking to one another - my statement that those six segments of voluntary activity are all part of a whole. I think we're talking about a continuum and that's an important sense which comes from the local studies done by Jeff and Paul. They have looked at a little bit of a continuum and the whole problem is what we call this. I've tended to call it volunteering and voluntary activity and they've just called it group activity: what the word is I don't know. When you examine motivation and insist that volunteering must be for the benefit of other people or the environment, to change it or to preserve it and you fail to recognise that doing it is fun, doing it with other people is lots of fun, you miss something out. So I think it is a very complex and interesting subject, which has not really been researched, not a lot has been written and we're at the beginning of an exciting period.

It was ironic, the way Barbara Mostyn put it, that there is lots of EEC money for research on unemployment. My first reaction to that was, how awful; apart from pouring money into milk lakes and butter mountains or whatever, they're putting lots of money into research on unemployment! Couldn't they be doing it for unemployed people to help them get jobs? But then my second reaction was, it bears out what I was trying to suggest as one of the fundamental things that we will all be facing in the next 15 to 20 years. That is the blurring of what we currently call work, what we currently call employment, and what we currently call volunteering. All those things will become blurred as our society is affected by technology, population changes etc. Work and volunteering will no longer be imposed, they will be allied much closer together.

Chairman

I hope that at the end of this first session you will feel that Philip Daniell's persistence in getting this as the subject for the conference in 1983 has been fully justified. We have had a good session and we are all grateful to our four speakers here beside me on the platform. Our thanks to all of them for their contributions to our consideration of the nature of the voluntary sector in countryside recreation.

KEY ISSUES IN THE RELATIONSHIP

Terry Robinson
Recreation and Access Branch,
Countryside Commission.

Robert Hall
Chairman, BTCV.

Terry Robinson

I think that the organisations that work for what they identify as the betterment of the environment, are extremely bad at working together be they voluntary organisations amongst themselves or the statutory and voluntary working together. There does seem to be, for some of the reasons which we've already explored, a resistance to co-operation and collaboration even where it is in the interest of all parties. A recent article in the Museums Journal was written by a designer and archaeologist and was about the construction of archaeological displays in museums. At one point it spoke about the two different approaches of the two specialists involved and I quote from it, "Here is an archaeologist: 'I want to tell everybody about the archaeology of this area. The objects I have are of course so intrinsically beautiful that all I need is a few Edmonds cases, some explanatory notes and a few diagrams'. The designer knows that what the archaeologist really means is, 'Every object in the store and reserve collections must be on display, nothing short of an encyclopaedia will suffice for labelling'. We go over to look at the designer. The designer's role appears to be different. 'I am primarily concerned that the eye and interest are perpetually excited. To bring out the beauty of the objects they must have lots of space and subtle lighting; they must shake off rigid forms with interesting shapes and colours and people must be made to love archaeology by having their senses attacked at every turn'". The article goes on to say, "The product of all this is, of course, chaos. It is the lack of understanding of each other's respective roles that is fundamental to distrust at this level". Those comments rang very true to me. I'll bring it closer to home and just quote one or two anecdotes about the strength and weaknesses of the systems we have for getting voluntary groups and statutory groups to work together.

I'll start off with one or two examples of what can be achieved for those who are prepared to fight their way through the morass of problems. Look at Operation Woodpecker, run by Northamptonshire County Council in one of its country parks where with one permanent member of staff and some MSC help and the rest of the input coming from volunteers, for four weeks on three days a week, 120 children every day are looked after in a countryside playscheme and able to take part in up to 20 different activities, all of a countryside nature. Take as another example Gibraltar Point Visitors' Centre. One of the first countryside visitor centres in this country, produced by collaboration between local government and a county naturalist trust, attracting already 180,000 visitors. Take the community clean-ups that go on in the Tame Valley around Manchester, where, for the price of a few adverts in the local paper, 130 people will turn out on a Sunday morning and fill half a dozen skips with rubbish from just one stretch of a river valley.

I'll turn to some other more substantial examples where the working together is actually brought out. This is from '50 Million Volunteers', a publication which is about 10 years old, but some of these examples are still pertinent. It talks about environmental projects and surveys. "Surveys which produce distribution maps of plants and animals were probably the first to be organised and involved a large number of voluntary naturalists. The Botanical Society of the British Isles produced the Atlas of the British Flora using such maps and not the Biological Records Centre." "The Countryside Commission for England and Wales has also run a hedgerows survey which involved many schools and other volunteers. These and other surveys are good examples of essential research coordinated by government agencies which would not occur without the assistance of large numbers of volunteers".

Someone earlier referred to the fact that volunteers had to be professional in their approach. Here's an illustration, "The Rights of Way Group of the Chiltern Society has surveyed more than 3,000 paths in the 500 square miles of the Chilterns and are engaged in the clearing of those which are obstructed. They define their job specifications quite clearly; they demand reasonable undertakings and reliability from their volunteers and they have a waiting list a mile long".

Here are some of the things that can go wrong. "A group of young volunteers saw the need for youth provisions to cater for girls and boys in the 9-14 age range, as there were no facilities for them in area X. The group applied to the local churches and the Local Education Authority for grant aid to bring the young people together. The churches provided accommodation and basic running expenses. The authority argued that, given its expenditure in the field of work including their renewed support for an adventure playground, they were unable to support the group, particularly as they did not fall within the age limits of the youth service provision". Lack of will, in other words. Here's lack of wit. The following quotation describes the dealings of a voluntary movement with a London borough. "We had been offered a short term loan of a building. The project was supported by sufficient professional expertise and we were aware of our obligations to satisfy the laws. However, the attitude of the local authority department was unhelpful at the best and absolutely hostile at worst. We were given the impression that they felt 'We are God and you will obey'".

I suppose I've got to be honest and admit that I've had my unhappy instances as well. The most awful was when I was working as a paid member of staff and was told that a group of foreign visitors were coming to the patch of land I was working on to volunteer and I was asked to find them something to do. I found them some survey work, spent probably three days preparing it and a day and a half briefing them, including taking them for trips round the place. When I arrived to meet them on the first day of the survey, they were just setting off for the beach!

The proposed charter for volunteers that Foster Murphy has already referred to has as its last clause: "Both volunteers and paid workers should recognise the particular tasks that each is best able to perform. Each should acknowledge the value of the other's contribution". So it seems that it is a key task to iron out points of dispute and identify what each group requires of the other. We need to be careful that any relationship - and we're talking about human relationships

here – the relationship can stand or fall on seemingly ridiculously small points of detail just as much as on broad strategy and overall direction. So attention to detail is absolutely vital. Ways of working would appear to require pretty good understanding from each side of the other's position. Here is the Deputy Director of the Volunteer Centre, Peter Stubbings, writing in an article called 'Volunteer – Hero or Victim of Social Policy'. "Although volunteers work out of goodwill, their involvement also requires goodwill on the part of those among whom they work. It is hardly a bonus for a busy ward sister whose nursing complement is already down, to find herself having to manage full-time unemployed volunteers, as well as having on her ward WRVS, Community Service Volunteers, the League of Hospital Friends, the local school social services project, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, Youth Opportunities Programme workers, young people on intermediate treatment and others."

Understanding your own motives and your own position seems to be the next important part of the equation. We can mislead each other fairly easily. In the same article, Peter Stubbings says, "Volunteers and voluntary groups need to take the blame for having in the past, or some of them need to take the blame, misled the policymakers; implying for example that volunteering is free and requires no organisation; that it operates like any other formal organisstion – inputs in, outputs out – and that to will it is to do it, there being no time-lag between the giving of an order and its execution; that volunteers are just another kind of manpower, who live on air, not wages and can be directly substituted for paid workers."

An example: it is one thing to say there is nothing a twelve year old boy or girl can do about the pollution of a nearby river; it is quite another matter to devise a project for him or her to survey the contents of that river over a three week period, to follow up the results by working out the sources of the pollution, and to take it perhaps to the stage of writing to the factory to find out why nothing can be done about it.

The key question that we ought to consider at a conference like this is do we see volunteers as a force for change and increased community involvement, or do we see them as a way of maintaining the status quo? That was almost a quote from Foster Murphy! So I'll finish with a genuine and encouraging quote from him to send you to your groups. If you're feeling a bit out of your depth, he remarked, after a week long conference on international volunteering about 18 months ago that, "Volunteering takes a week of patient unravelling and then we are only beginning to discover that it is a multi-faceted, heterogeneous activity which we try to simplify or mystify at our peril".

Bob Hall

In order to stimulate your ideas in the discussion groups, we thought we might give you a bit of light entertainment. Let's move just for a few minutes to 1984 and I'd like you to imagine the scene in a local authority which, as a result of the 1983 CRRAG Conference, has thought that volunteering is an excellent idea and has just given a member of staff new responsibilities for volunteers. Our man has just taken up his new challenge. (Imaginary telephone conversation between Bob and Terry).

Terry: Hello! Planning Department, Implementation and Aftercare Section.

Bob: Are you the person I should be speaking to about volunteering?

Terry: Yes, er, I have been asked to deal with this. I understand its good for your education and will give you something useful to do in your spare time and further my Council's new policy of encouraging community involvement. Right, which do you want to join: Ramblers' Association, Friends of the Earth or the Scouts?

Bob: Well, none of them. I was watching a film on television last night about coppicing and there is a wood next to our housing estate just crying out for it. So I thought I would form a local group to look after it.

Terry: Ah, that's not so easy. How old are you?

Bob: 17. I left school last year and have not got a job yet.

Terry: That's even more difficult as you are still a minor. Wouldn't you rather join the Scouts? Never mind, where's the wood? You can't just go blundering onto someone else's land you know. Farmers are the best conservers, they probably know what they're doing. I expect it's perfectly well looked after at present.

Bob: It's People's Wood.

Terry: Oh, yes, we own that. It is a bit tatty isn't it? Now, if you want to work there, you have to get written permission from the Estates Department. That could be difficult. They're not going to want a load of amateurs bashing around in there not knowing what they're doing. How do we know that you'd know what you were doing?

Bob: Well, I've got a friend who's done a lot of work with the school conservation group.

Terry: Who is leading this group?

Bob: Well, I wondered if you could suggest anyone?

Terry: Council staff work nine till five, Monday to Friday. I suppose we could spare someone. When do you want to come?

Bob: Saturday afternoon.

Terry: Yes, as I said, Monday to Friday is OK but....

Bob: I'll find a competent leader, but can we borrow some tools from you?

Terry: Ah, now, there's a problem: our stores manager, now there's a tyke! I can't see him wanting untrained people mucking up his tools. Why don't you buy your own?

Bob: That'll cost money and I'm on the dole.

Terry: Easy. Lots of local charities; or you can apply to the Shell Better Britain Campaign.... Ah, sorry, you're too late for them. Or you can go to the QSJ, I mean the Queen's Silver Jubilee fund. Now is it a local fund or the national fund? Oh, you may find their forms a bit complicated. Or you can try the Conservation Volunteers. No, I don't think I'd go near them. Alternatively you could raise the money yourself. How about digging people's gardens – at one pound an hour you could raise one hundred pounds working on 4 consecutive Saturdays.

Bob: OK, I'm sure we could get hold of ropes, axes, billhooks and things.

Terry: Well, we still have a problem here – the Health and Safety at Work Act. Now it wouldn't be right would it to have all you boys and girls in there chopping off each other's arms and legs. Can you imagine what the local paper is going to say? I think the answer to this one is that you go on a training course to make sure that you can use them properly and on a first aid course in case you don't. Now, have you got a management plan? You will have to prove that you are capable of a good standard of work, you know. Oh and you are also going to need to write in duplicate to our Personnel Department to get them to clear it with the Unions. Oh yes and you will need an indemnity. So that's four copies please of a letter to our Solicitors Department. Wouldn't you rather do litter picking along the footpath outside the sports centre – it's awful there you know?

Bob: No, it's People's Wood that I want.

Terry: All right, you're obviously a persistent young man. How many people could you raise?

Bob: Well there's me and my friend Maurice and his girlfriend and...

Terry: Ah yes, what you need is 'volunteer recruitment'. Somewhere I've got a list of ideas. Get some display panels into a Building Society's window with before and after photographs of your work and get the local press along to a work site. Nicely designed posters for our libraries and schools and perhaps local radio and television....

Bob: But I've got no money, no photographs and no work. After all, I only want a few people, not hundreds.

Terry: Well, volunteering isn't that much fun. By the way, in order to encourage volunteers, the Council gives grants for publicity to voluntary organisations. Oh dear, it's only

available to groups that have over 50 members and have been going for a year. Now, there's a point: how do I know that in 10 days' time this craze won't have worn off? You'll be into something else then like running discos, I bet. As a public body we can't rely on fly-by-night operations you know. Why don't you come back in six months' time when you have got some experience? I am sure we can help you then.

Bob: But how do I get experience?

Terry: You could always do the litter picking with the Scouts. None of our workmen is going to touch that footpath....

Bob: (Slams down receiver)

Terry: That's the trouble with volunteers: no enthusiasm!

THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Plenary Discussion Led By

Barbara Mostyn,
Applied Social Psychologist.

Terry Robinson,
Recreation and Access Branch, Countryside Commission.

M. Masterman (West Yorkshire County Council)

We would like to structure this evening's session by demonstrating first of all, the motivations of volunteers and people in public organisations. We'll then go on to look at the frustrations of volunteers and the frustrations of the organisations. Thirdly, we will look at the relationships between the partners who come from different starting points and have different approaches to the work. We will set out the difficulties of the relationship but then we want to try to look at how, given the willingness and co-operation of the partners, we can offset these problems, moving towards a situation where there is a blurring of the boundary between the public sector organisations and the volunteers. A fusion, if you like, where the divisions of public agency and volunteers is substantially or totally lost.

Finally, we want to ask the question: "If we are able to achieve such a blurring, is that something worth achieving?" It may not be. It may be that the view is that we're better, with all the problems, in struggling on in the way we have. Somebody earlier in the day said that the tensions between us are what makes the relationship tick.

I have one other pleasant duty to perform and that is to introduce our second speaker, Barbara Mostyn. She trained at the New York Institute for Motivational Research specialising in Humanistic Psychology. She has worked for over 20 years in applied social psychology, both on quantitative and qualitative consumer and social issues. She lectures for the ILEA and the universities and at conferences. She has a number of books to her credit and she's also a regular contributor of articles to journals of social psychology. She is a committed conservationist, both in the city and in the countryside, and furthermore, she's a canal boat owner, which will certainly commend her to some in the audience.

Barbara Mostyn

Today we have frequently used the word 'motives'. As a psychologist I am fortunate – or unfortunate as you might see it – to research into the motivations of people in an attempt to explain why Jones does or fails to do X. In other words, one might say why does Jones get up early on a Sunday once a month to pick up the litter on Parkland Walk, which is a disused railway line near to where I live in North London and why does Smith, who has also been asked to come along, fail to appear? In other words, what motivates people to volunteer, especially what motivates people to do nature conservation work?

I have been very fortunate in the last few years in being able to conduct two research projects that are related to the subject of this conference - volunteers and conservation. The first was a study among current and past volunteers for the Volunteer Centre, called 'The Meaning of Voluntary Work'. The second study, for the Nature Conservancy Council was conducted among men, women and children involved in doing voluntary work in conservation areas, entitled 'The Personal Benefits and Satisfactions Derived from Participation in Urban Wildlife Projects'. Both these reports rely heavily on quotes from people: no sums, no tables, and even including drawings that people did for us to show the experiences they had in conservation work or in enjoying an urban wildlife site.

As a psychologist I'd like to draw your attention to what sort of things motivate people to do conservation work, and, therefore, what personal benefits the people who do voluntary conservation work see. They come in four categories: the first is the emotional benefit. Now what might this mean? What was found in both of these studies was that very often voluntary work, especially voluntary work in conservation areas, is a real escape. It's an escape from the routine of home and work, the four walls, the boss, the teacher and the concrete. It's an escape from rules - don't ride your bike, don't walk on the grass, don't sit here, don't walk there, don't touch, don't smell, don't sniff, don't breathe!

This leads to a second benefit: psychological licence. The psychological licence to do things that are normally restricted to you and therefore to expand yourself as a person. You can climb a tree justifiably if you're going to put a nesting box up on it. You can pull up the undergrowth if you're going to make a nature trail. You can burn down shrubs if you're going to create different soils for replanting. You can even get rid of a lot of aggression by chopping down a tree, splashing and wallowing in a puddle. Even adults like the idea of getting dirty legitimately. The result is that we find people repair their emotions by getting rid of a lot of this energy and by being unrestricted.

There is also the pride in doing something that gives some sense of achievement. A cleared pond, trees with room to grow, the blackberry bushes I once helped plant at Highgate Cemetery to keep out vandals, the stone walls - all of these things give a lot of satisfaction of having done something worthwhile. For many people, to see the fruits of their own labours tangibly, is a very great reward. After all, what many people do in their everyday jobs doesn't lend itself to concrete realisation and cannot give the satisfaction that some of the children got in planting a rockery at a church or dredging a pond for the Sue Ryder estate.

Another area is the intellectual benefits that people derive. It's not just seeing plants, trees and wildlife in books that helps people appreciate them, it's being close to them and being able to touch, feel and smell them and handle them. I'll never forget the look on a boy's face in Birmingham who had worked many, many hours in Moseley Bog when he said, "You know it was marvellous to actually see this fern that I had seen in so many textbooks". This can stimulate the mind tremendously.

The skills that people learn: anything from building a fire to using a chain saw or just a simple axe, for city people especially, can be very rewarding. Then learning local history: every nature conservation area has a history and this also can be very rewarding to people to feel that they know something about a particular area in its ancient and recent history.

The next benefit is the social benefit that has been mentioned earlier today by quite a few people. If everybody is splashing around a pond together, divisions of age, sex and class do tend to disappear. There is also social participation. Many people, children and adults alike, enjoy the fact that everybody can contribute to a conservation project. Everyone has a value, unlike sports where you have to be good at catching or hitting the ball. A very shy introvert with an axe can discover another dimension to himself! Team spirit: again, it is equally important for many adults who find themselves constantly in competitive situations as well as children, to find that they are actually doing something co-operatively. It takes ten people to pull a log out of a pond: ten people all working together. Not one boss and nine people, but ten people all pulling together. This can be the making of many people, being involved in a team activity and more importantly, being responsible. Not only being responsible for the person at the other side of your chain saw, or the person helping you chop down a tree, but also being responsible for one's own heritage. This has often been the making of some people, particularly adults, but also children who have become more socially and politically aware of their environment because of work on a conservation project. Many of the children I interviewed on one project decided to become vicars, vets, civil engineers or politicians because of their awakened interest in the social world around them, and several adults got into community work as well. In fact, one of the vicars in an area became a very big conservationist.

It does work, this whole idea of being responsible. Different experiments have shown around the world that if the community plants the trees, builds the nature walks and the fences, they expand their defensible space, and they will try to protect these areas rather than let vandals take them over.

Lastly, we have the physical benefits. It's not just fresh air and exercise, although I'm sure you could get more volunteers if you pointed out that many volunteer activities are aerobic and it might be especially good for that diminishing group of non-joggers and non-marathon runners! But it also expands one's own senses of touch, smell and hearing, just by being in a different environment where these senses can be stimulated.

So essentially the volunteer sector of the population, which I think is pretty much everyone, can be persuaded to participate. Motivations of these sorts can be tapped. People often ask how do you get people to come along to experience the particular of being volunteers in a conservation or environment project? You don't have to worry about that actually, since word of mouth is still the best advertisement there is. In fact, even in the commercial world word of mouth is still the most effective form of advertising. Once people experience something they share it with their friends and family and bring them along.

I am wondering if some of the rapporteurs, particularly from groups A and C, have additional benefits of volunteering to put forward.

A. Ellis (Water Authorities' Association)

Our group felt that there were benefits to public agencies in that the enthusiasm of volunteers was infectious compared to the rather staid approach of public employees. We agreed with your point that the local community which becomes involved in a project would then respect it.

J. Mackay (Countryside Commission for Scotland)

Again, on motivation, that people take part who want to change things and exert influence - almost a political heading.

A. Ellis

There's a measure of idealism as well. Also there is the possibility of working out your ego - egotism. For example, if someone wanted to get access to a restricted nature reserve the best way to do it would be to become a voluntary warden! Another selfish reason for volunteering would be to gain work experience, helpful in getting a paid job in conservation at some later stage.

C. Speakman (Yorkshire Dales Society)

Slightly wickedly, probably one or two people come along because of their boyfriend/girlfriend.

Barbara Mostyn

Group pressure?

C. Speakman

Group pressure, yes!

M. Masterman

Can we bring Terry in now, who is going to look at the motivations from the public organisation end.

T. Robinson (Countryside Commission)

It is useful to identify the reasons why public or corporate bodies use volunteers, because if you don't understand your own motives and the other party's motives, then you're off on the wrong footing to start with. Because I haven't done any research I'll ask Duncan Campbell to run through the institutional reasons for using volunteers and then see if anyone else sees any gaps.

D. Campbell (Forestry Commission)

Our group was fairly heavily loaded with local government members. There were one or two agencies of an advisory nature, and just one central government development agency. There seemed to be a

consensus on two main thrusts: one was how to plug the gaps that were being caused by cutbacks in both cash and staff resources, so that the motive for using voluntary labour was economic. By contrast, the second was a sense of idealism in the need to involve the public through the voluntary sector to do good works for the community over a whole range of subjects, be it conservation or recreation.

T. Robinson

I'd like suggestions as to other reasons why people might be using volunteers.

M. Evans (Bracknell DC)

One thing that came out from our group was fostering community responsibility. Certainly one authority was using an 'adopt a path' scheme which made people responsible for inspecting and reporting back to the local authority and that seemed to us a very good idea.

Barbara Mostyn

The spreading of responsibility?

M. Evans

Yes, a spreading of responsibility.

J. Mackay

In addition to the 'poundstretching' point already made, the involvement of the voluntary sector could enable a public body to do what wouldn't otherwise be done. Using volunteers might also be a way of making a bid for resources; i.e. using the voluntary sector as a stimulus or starting point.

Some voluntary groups might have special expertise that the public authority might not have. There is a linkage between a motivation that starts with 'poundstretching' but then moves on as experience of working with the voluntary sector is gained, to appreciate the scope and skills that they have to offer and then to begin to appreciate that there is a very good payback in goodwill and commitment.

M. Evans

Our group also mentioned that they had used voluntary groups as a 'sounding board' to find out what the issues were in the community and to gain public support.

J. Worth (Countryside Commission)

In the context of motivations we have been talking very much in terms of what volunteers get out of practical conservation work whereas I think we can see voluntary organisations being useful toward public bodies also in terms of representation and taking soundings, which implies a rather different set of motivations. The attraction is of being in the know and exercising power, which is different than team spirit and developing skills.

P. Millmore (East Sussex County Council)

Another reason for using volunteers from the local authority point of view is that it can be great fun to work with them, and this is not to be underrated.

T. Robinson

I would certainly say that there is a satisfaction to some public servants in working with enthusiastic volunteers. One motivation which I thought some people would mention is that volunteering is a means of conservation and environmental education - it gets people involved in very educative ways. The other branch of it is learning by doing. Some people claim that once you've got someone to learn to lay a hedge that is a skill which resides in the community and it is a way of keeping alive those sorts of skills.

One other 'marketing' motivation for public bodies to get involved with volunteering is the simple fact that opportunities for voluntary activity are much in demand from the public!

M. Collins (The Sports Council)

I think on the recreation and consumer side of the equation it is not just a matter of responding to demand. In recreation, the public sector actually uses voluntary bodies, not necessarily individual volunteers, as management agents because it is more acceptable. The other reason is that it actually releases resources, not just stretching the public purse but we reckon that every time The Sports Council puts money into a voluntary sports organisation it releases £3 for every £1 put in.

T. Robinson

I think we've already got the first object lesson of the exercise, which is that the motivations of the volunteer seem to be very personal and the motives of the public agencies using them, seem to me to be on a totally different level, entirely separate. This confronts us with the enormity of the human relations task that lies ahead of anyone who wants to work and relate to a voluntary group.

M. Masterman

At this point we want to look at whether and how the two sectors can be made to work in tandem. How can we match the objectives of the organisations with the objectives of the individuals? In particular, the questions posed to group B and group E are relevant here. So can we ask for some comment on the relationship from the rapporteurs, Nicholas and Mike.

N. Mays (CRRAG)

We looked at the question we were set, which was to provide guidelines to identify the type of work which was appropriate and suited to volunteers, and we quickly decided that we weren't going to produce guidelines for voluntary work unless we also had reciprocal guidelines as to what public bodies could do to support and encourage

voluntary groups and that it was impossible to provide useful guidelines which only looked at it from the perspective of, "What kind of work do we in the public sector think is suitable for volunteers?" Then we had a lengthy discussion and concluded that there was no such thing as voluntary work which was intrinsically suitable for the voluntary sector: if the conditions under which voluntary groups were operating were suitable and well framed, voluntary organisations could take on any of the tasks that professionals had hitherto done or not fulfilled.

The guidelines we evolved were more about how the public agency could create the environment within which a diverse range of voluntary organisations could be enabled to do a variety of tasks. The kind of tasks that were suitable depended very much on discovering what kind of voluntary resources were available in a particular locality at a particular time and the nature of the volunteers. It is important to look first at the resources in terms of volunteers.

We came up with some very general concerns which we felt should be borne in mind by anybody trying to put forward a programme of work for whatever kind of voluntary group. The first main point in this area was that concern should be given to continuity of work: one shouldn't be providing voluntary groups with tasks that didn't relate to a broader picture and add up to something worthwhile. That related to a second point, that the work should be such that an individual group would be able to identify with whatever task was undertaken. The third aspect was that the task should be achievable within whatever time span had been mutually agreed by the voluntary group and the public agency or local authority, so there had to be a sense of achievement. The fourth point was that attention had to be given to a reciprocal arrangement, that there were incentives that had to be allocated for both parties: it wasn't sufficient to assume that, if you provided work which volunteers were capable of doing, they would necessarily take on some of the dirty tasks or some of the less intrinsically satisfying tasks without some kind of incentive in return.

Next, volunteers are very heterogeneous and that we couldn't make generalisations which for instance would encapsulate the situation of a de-industrialised urban area of high unemployment where the voluntary labour available might well be heavily MSC-based, with the kind of voluntary groups that would be making demands on local authorities and on National Park Authorities in some of our better known beauty spots.

We then listed one or two things which are more or less accepted professional wisdom: adequate supervision; the political issue, which I think most people in the group agreed with was that the work should wherever possible not be simply replacing paid manual labour, that as far as possible, the work should build on the interests and motivations of volunteers; and that the work, wherever possible, should involve local people in their own locality.

M. Masterman

That's a formidable list and it does in fact bring us on to the questions set to group E about the relationship with the Manpower Services Commission; do you want to say anything about that Mike?

M. Collins

We also picked up many of the points Nick has mentioned, because we were asked the specific question "How do MSC based voluntary schemes compare with 'pure' voluntary schemes?". We thought this was a bit of a non-question, because the prime distinction between the two is that people involved in the 'pure' voluntary schemes are volunteers, they are not pressed men. There is an element of conscription built into the MSC system and the way people are recruited. That is the first distinction. The second distinction is that people on MSC schemes are hired and can be fired. The next distinction is of time. We had examples of both local and national volunteering where people came, for instance, to National Trust properties, to do work for a few weeks on holiday schemes, and for a break in the country. Volunteers are often working in the short term for short spells of time and it cannot be guaranteed that the same workforce will turn up to do repetitive work. On the other hand, with Manpower Services schemes you can guarantee unlimited staff in six, nine or twelve months periods with continuity. That does mean that different sorts of work are sometimes appropriate. However, even MSC workforces need the incentive of a new task completed, not some repetitive task or mechanical task which shows no tangible benefit weeks later.

There is a difference in terms of management. It is often easier, people claim, to manage an MSC workforce compared with a workforce of volunteers, for the very reason that one can often have a say in their selection, particularly in the critical job of supervision, whereas you often have to work with whoever turns up in volunteer groups.

I come to the question of the recruiting market available for voluntary work. Particularly in voluntary conservation and some forms of sports leadership you can draw on a national market for volunteers. With MSC you have to take what's in the local job market, and the job market varies greatly from employment area to employment area in terms of the quality of labour on offer.

Finally, we come back to the nature of the task. Someone used a phrase to encapsulate the worst view of the volunteer, as a cheap source of unreliable labour to aid the public sector. We come back to, what are people good at and what do they want to do? Essentially volunteers offer the skills they want to offer and which they're good at and tend not to offer the converse.

In sport, for example, compared with conservation, maintenance and reconstruction work, it is very difficult to use MSC people as sports leaders, because just as you've built up a network of relationships the leaders have to move on. I think that is a basic problem with any MSC schemes. You do not get training for the job through this sort of scheme.

M. Masterman

Does anybody want to develop any points?

I. St. John (S. Yorkshire County Council)

The more I listen to this the more I worry that we are being encouraged to assume that voluntary work is always excellent and must

be encouraged. I'm concerned about the MSC being a source of cheap labour. I'm concerned that I'm a teacher and I'm educating kids for what? For damn all at the moment! There is a real danger, if you start promoting the idea of voluntary work beyond the level that it has already reached (there are always going to be things for volunteers to do), that you are going to make the job market shrink even more. So when I sit with other Councillors in judgement on whether a voluntary scheme should go ahead, I tend to decide on the basis of whether it could be done by somebody paid the rate for the job (and that will come from the public purse). If it's just a question of having a job done cheaply, even if we're priming the pump so to speak, I'm going to have serious doubts about it.

G. Lord (Carnegie United Kingdom Trust)

On another point, I want to remind you that whilst the MSC is mainly responsible for paid work and for creating employment MSC does operate a programme known as the Voluntary Projects Programme, which works quite substantially in the countryside giving the unemployed an opportunity to do voluntary work. The work is repaid by a voluntary subsistence allowance. So it is a very distinctive scheme separate from the normal range of MSC work. There is a counterpart in the social service area of work and community education which is called Opportunities of Volunteering. Most of the difficulties with these schemes relate to the need to avoid undercutting paid labour.

M. Masterman

I do think we have to be very careful not to imagine that MSC is a voluntary exercise. It is not. The relationship of MSC to the voluntary sector lies simply in the possibility of the voluntary sector gaining certain advantages from MSC support.

M. Collins

Can I just say that we did not discuss the VPP because it was something of a 'halfway house' in terms of the contrasts we were asked to draw.

M. Masterman

Can I bring the two speakers back in then on the question of the frustrations of the volunteers and the frustrations of the organisations.

T. Robinson

I don't think we ought to leave this part of the discussion without registering the conclusion of the group which had this topic as its main task when it said, "Volunteers can do anything if it's presented to them right, though it is best to avoid too much heavy manual work". Yet, by contrast, the vast majority of volunteers in the countryside hitherto have been restricted to heavy manual work of a labour intensive nature!

Barbara Mostyn

We've talked about the motivations and benefits. I want to make a few points concerning the frustrations that a volunteer can feel. These

are most easily discerned by determining what factors cause them to leave a particular voluntary activity. From my research, one is poor leadership; the second is poor organisation; and the third and most important is lack of recognition. It is this last one I'd like to mention first. If you work in a paid job you can convince yourself (and you may have to do it every day) to keep that dull and unappreciated task just for the financial security. We do voluntary work for psychological rewards, of which the most essential is appreciation.

It is amazing that so many team leaders, supervisors and managers find it very difficult to say 'thankyou', or to find out if someone feels happy about what they're doing or secure about what they're doing, or even to do something very basic like offering to pay some expenses, which volunteers have told me they would never accept, but would like to feel that they had been asked. In other words, they want to feel appreciated. In the Nature Conservancy study and the Volunteer Centre study that I did, the biggest complaints were of not feeling appreciated, needed or necessary.

I was particularly struck by the devotion of many volunteers who made personal sacrifices of time and money to buy their own wet gear, were often very tired and they did things where they could injure themselves, because the leader of their particular group – whether it was a BTCV supervisor, the local vicar or the conservator of an area – knew how to lead mainly by giving positive feedback. For instance, they had the sense to realise that the local newspaper can give a lot of very positive publicity and that doesn't hurt in making people feel that their efforts are being recognised.

Leaders can create awards as goals. A simple award scheme in Mexborough for the best conservation project of the year, sponsored by the local newspaper, at the suggestion from a conservator in that area, did an awful lot to the morale of people. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme of course also does a lot to motivate people to get involved. But just understanding how to manage people can do a lot to make them feel appreciated and recognised. Don't forget that people who do voluntary work feel they are responsible for the country's and the community's heritage and the community sometimes has to show that it has some interest in what's going on on its behalf. As well as good displays in schools, libraries and other public places, the media can be very helpful in showing people what's going on so.

My second point was poor leadership. Many volunteers feel that decisions are made for them. Some of the best projects I saw were where volunteers and organisers got together to make a management plan. It's no secret that people are more committed and more motivated if they feel they have some say in the decision-making process.

The last point is poor organisation. I once turned up as a volunteer to plant trees. Unfortunately the van arrived with axes and saws, but not a spade was to be had! This was soon rectified. But if you are volunteering to give your time, your time becomes very important to you. If bad supervision and lack of organisation ensues you don't feel terribly motivated.

So those are the three problems which really do frustrate people and often make them give up.That is a great loss: you have lost an asset if you lose a volunteer who becomes disgruntled.

P. Millmore

I think a very common fault with the bodies using volunteers is not to explain to volunteers at the start of the task why they are doing it.

C. Bonsey

Could I make the comment that this is simple man management? What you are really saying is that you won't be forgiven anything but very good management if you are dealing with volunteers, whereas you might think you'll get away with not explaining to your paid staff and thanking them. There is nothing very different about managing volunteers.

R. Hall (BTCV)

I think there is one area which Barbara has ignored, which is the social exclusivity of the group.

Barbara Mostyn

I'd like to take up Bob's point because one of the voluntary groups I was involved in seemed to regard anybody over 30 as a granny and I must admit that I stopped going because I did feel I wasn't quite a granny yet!

T. Robinson

Group D was the Group that was going to be looking at all the hang-ups involved in working with volunteers. We've heard about thwarted expectations on both sides. If you want to look at the institutional expectations, just look at what public authorities are good at: planning and writing strategies. By contrast, do you know of any voluntary group that doesn't take opportunities as soon as they are offered and chase the hare which is nearest and which they are going to catch most easily? There seems to be a dichotomy between the staid, management-by-objectives, office-bound lot and the volunteers out 'doing things', who think that as long as you're doing something it doesn't matter what.

Look at work practices in corporations and the ponderousness with which they change, if they change at all, and it is difficult to imagine some of the people who have made their life in such public service actually changing their working practices so as to accommodate outsiders.

It has become clear in this discussion that working with volunteers is a man management and a human relations task; yet who in forestry or local government department is going to be selected primarily for his human relations or man management skills. Perhaps they are taken on as a good forester and suddenly they encounter an enormous management task of working with volunteers.

J. Mackay

Perhaps I might take up one or two points from what Group E said on that. Certainly, it was felt, there was a need for people to change

their methods of working and their assumptions - perhaps there were different skills to be learned, especially very good skills in communicating, persuading and seeing things from the volunteer's perspective.

D. Campbell

Our group had a number of concerns about the need for good organisation and leadership. Those in the group from the public sector were concerned that training should be available for volunteers who weren't strongly motivated and didn't have a particular interest to follow. But did the public sector have adequate resources to organise and train such less committed volunteers? On the other hand, the more committed volunteers - the recreation society or the conservation society - were much more easy to handle.

Other points were that despite there being 'volunteer entrepreneurs' in both some of the public agencies trying to match volunteers with projects, as well as professionals working within the voluntary organisations doing the same thing, there was a pretty strong recommendation that there should be more information as to how the public sector could help people volunteer. One theme was to ask, what particular socio-economic group were we trying to aim for? There was a suggestion that maybe all volunteers were socio-economic groups 1 to 3 and again there was concern to match the opportunities for volunteering with the expectations of different socio-economic groups. Then lastly, there was some concern about public accountability when resources were being handed over to the voluntary sector.

T. Robinson

That last one does seem to tax the minds of some of the staunchest bureaucrats around.

Our discussion has shown two lots of people who are supposed to be working together, yet with very different motivations, very different expectations, and very different patterns and methods of getting things done. They are not communicating terribly well and the only way to make the relationship work is through a series of trade-offs. If there are benefits to be achieved from people with a voluntary orientation and people with a paid professional orientation collaborating, then both parties will have to change their ways to gather these benefits.

The relationship can be made to work, but there are problems: the first is that in many instances, where a public agency collaborates with a voluntary agency, it is almost by chance that there is a senior member of staff who is concerned enough about voluntary activity to take a close interest in it. Most people who work closely with volunteers are comparatively junior. Thus, you can find that collaboration is not reflected in any sort of attitudinal or policy change in the public agency as a whole. So the first thing that would seem to be required is a commitment expressed in terms of policies, to the use of and collaboration with volunteers. This should lead to a set of instructions and patterns of working for everyone who works in that agency as to how they are to conduct their affairs with people who want to give of their services in a voluntary capacity. It has to permeate the whole organisation, and it has got to be done in a strategic way.

The second thing, which I hope will raise some discussion, is that although we've made progress to the extent that many of the public sector staff who use volunteers now acknowledge the need to evaluate voluntary tasks carried out, we've now to evaluate, study and scrutinise our own judgements as to what constitutes work well done. It is all very well for professionals to say, "I could use volunteers I suppose, but they're not going to work as well as professionally trained people". I think we've got to go some way further than that, and recognise that there is probably some need to be worried about professional standards anyway, because there seems to be growing evidence that professionals are best at turning out standards of work that please other professionals.

Perhaps we need to become more conscious of the fact that we're serving people other than just fellow professionals and so to widen the definitions and become more flexible about what is acceptable and good is going to be something that we have to adopt. Perhaps a stark example was adventure playgrounds, where the local authority versions seemed to look attractive, but if not well supervised got vandalised, and were often not very well used. They looked very tidy and very safe. On the other hand, the ones which really got used were the ones which looked appalling and tatty but were actually doing the job which adventure playgrounds were supposed to do! So those are the first two trade-offs I would offer, and I wonder if anyone else has anything they want to say?

D. Fletcher (Pennine Heritage)

I think that many public agencies and public authorities get the volunteers that they deserve. I am very concerned when I hear worries and rather negative expressions from people in the public sector wondering whether volunteers can cope. I am reminded of the statement we had earlier today about the geographer: the geographer is the person who does geography. The volunteer is the person who volunteers and gets out there and does something. I would appeal for a much more positive approach to volunteers.

I take Terry's point that it is often a matter of person-to-person relationships; that the leading lights, ringleaders, organisers, call them what you will in the voluntary sector, find somebody in the public authority that they can relate to (and this is often someone who is not at the senior officer level). These two can come together and can hatch some sort of plan. This probably sounds terribly irregular to many people and that's because it is! There's no other way that it could exist if it weren't.

I think that when the public sector enters into this, they've got to enter into it in a spirit of 'you win some and you lose some'. There are a lot of gains to be had and some losses will occur. But they are the minority: the majority will have very great commitment, enthusiasm and reliability and they will be determined to succeed. Therefore that demands on the part of the public authority a positive and enthusiastic response.

I belong to a voluntary group which mixes volunteers, full-time paid staff and MSC sponsored people on the Community Programme, many

of whom I would call volunteers, because they are actually working for about 4p a week more than they would be getting on the dole. But they have the commitment and they are pleased to work. So please try to approach voluntarism in a more positive, outgoing way, because that will encourage the volunteers and 90% of the time you'll get jolly good value for money.

M. Masterman

Thank you David. David operates in the way that he's told you within the County of West Yorkshire where I am one of the Assistant County Planning Officers. Our relationship goes back to the beginning of my Authority and there have been many trials and tribulations. I can only say that our relationship is still going on: we do still talk to one another, we've never quite reached breaking point! In fact, we both agree that our working relationship has benefitted from the friction and the sharp edges between us.

APPENDIX A

ADVANTAGES AND PROBLEMS OF THE VOLUNTARY/PUBLIC SECTOR RELATIONSHIP: DISCUSSION GROUPS

THEMES

The six group discussions were structured to contribute to the plenary session which followed by the allocation of an agenda of questions and themes to each.

Questions 1(a) and 1(b), 8 and 9 were to be tackled by all groups, the remaining topics were allocated to individual groups as indicated below and in the summaries of their discussions.

ALL GROUPS 1 (a) (For delegates from the public sector)

For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using or having liaison with voluntary groups, voluntary organisations or volunteers?

(b) (For delegates from the voluntary sector)

For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using or having liaison with local authorities, public agencies, quangos, etc.?

GROUP A 2. Give your sketch of the characteristics, background and motivations of typical voluntary workers and volunteers in the countryside.

GROUP B 3. Provide a set of guidelines to help identify the type of work which is appropriate to and suits volunteers.

GROUP C 4. Which of the following, in order of priority, do you see as the main benefits of a well developed public sector/voluntary sector relationship in this field (some of these you may feel are wrong or not benefits at all; if so, say so):-

Work in voluntary groups or as a volunteer:

i) helps stimulate community integration and individuals' identification with their local community;

ii) is a potent form of education and helps in acquiring a variety of practical, social and personal skills;

iii) gives people the opportunity not only to occupy their time, but also to do useful work;

iv) stimulates greater environmental awareness and strongly consolidates the individual's stake in the environment, thereby contributing to reduced vandalism and less careless use of the countryside;

v) involves the community in things which affect how it lives, and gives people a say in environmental affairs;

vi) is a sought-after and enjoyable form of recreation and social activity in itself;

vii) saves money both for the public sector and for voluntary groups themselves;

viii) ensures that diversity, innovation and experiment take place and keeps the public sector on its toes;

ix) gives people the chance to grasp commercial, marketing and fundraising opportunities which are either not open to or have not been developed by the public sector.

GROUP D 5. Which of the following, in order of priority, do you see as the main costs or problems of a well developed public sector/voluntary sector relationship in this field (some you may regard as either wrong or not problems at all):

Working closely with volunteers and voluntary groups requires:

i) public sector staff to change their traditional outlook, assumptions and methods of working;

ii) a different set of skills than those usually found amongst professionals;

iii) public organisations to make available necessary resources to organise, manage and supervise voluntary work where this is appropriate;

iv) public organisations to make available necessary finance to support and develop voluntary organisations;

v) public organisations to make available resources for training their own staff working with the voluntary sector, paid staff working with volunteers in the voluntary sector and volunteers themselves in necessary skills;

vi) on occasions public or voluntary sector professional staff to collaborate in work of standards of efficiency and job quality which they would be reluctant to accept normally;

vii) time and co-operation may not always be the quickest way forward for either party;

viii) tolerance over problems of continuity as voluntary organisations and memberships grow, decline, disappear and alter;

ix) requires one to allow that public organisations will cut paid jobs and thus fuel unemployment.

GROUP E 6. How and why do MSC-based voluntary schemes differ from 'pure' voluntary schemes?

GROUP F 7. Is there such a thing as a purely voluntary body and does it make a difference if a voluntary body receives external funds and from whom (e.g. industry, local authority, MSC, charity, etc)?

ALL GROUPS 8. Assuming you were in Government and ornithological conservation was one of your priorities, would you prefer to invest an extra £1 million for this purpose in a specialist, Government 'quango' or in voluntary ornithological conservation bodies, and why?

ALL GROUPS 9. What would you regard as the best way forward for the development of the voluntary sector in the countryside in the future? Where does the potential for growth lie and where should changes be made to ensure development?

DISCUSSION GROUP A

Chairman: Philip Daniell, Environment Bromley

Reporter: Tony Ellis, Water Authorities' Association

1(a) (For delegates from the public sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with voluntary groups, voluntary organisations or volunteers?

Various reasons were given:

(i) To gain 'participation' – to involve the local community, to encourage them to respect the project and through infectious enthusiasm to encourage other members of the public to join in.

(ii) To have jobs done cost effectively and on a flexible basis.

1(b) (For delegates from the voluntary sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using or having liaison with local authorities, public agencies, quangos, etc.?

(i) To co-operate with the owners of the resources and the providers of services and facilities with which voluntary agencies are concerned.

(ii) To encourage public sector staff to take a more positive view of certain activities, and to modify the behaviour of the authority.

To obtain advice and assistance ranging from training to the provision of grants, tools and other equipment.

2. Give your sketch of the characteristics, background and motivations of typical voluntary workers and volunteers in the countryside.

(i) 'Characteristics'. Volunteers are filled with enthusiasm, have a 'belief' in the project concerned, introduce a measure of humanity and are often fairly young, between 19 and 25.

(ii) 'Background'. Volunteers are often middle class (and often students).

(iii) 'Motivations'. The motivations of volunteers range from idealism and social responsibility to a desire for power and the display of egotism. Voluntary projects are often seen as a primer to work experience. Involvement with the public sector also introduces volunteers to areas not normally available to the general public.

8. Would you prefer to invest an extra £1 million of public money for conservation in a specialist, Government 'quango' or in a specialist national voluntary organisation?

There is no clear cut line between these choices. In the short term the advantage depends to a great degree upon the nature of the respective organisations, and whether they have schemes available on which the money can be spent during the financial year.

9. What would you regard as the best way forward for the development of the voluntary sector in the countryside in the future? Where does the potential lie and where should changes be made to ensure development?

(i) The development of the voluntary sector in the countryside depends upon improved training (for both the volunteer and the full-time employee involved with volunteers), improved communication and awareness of the potential of both parties, and encouragement of the public sector to use volunteers. A reduction in the red tape applied by the public sector would also be of benefit.

(ii) The greatest potential for growth would appear to lie in the urban fringe.

GROUP A MEMBERS

1. Jeff Bishop, SAUS, University of Bristol
2. Rob Wightman, YHA
3. P.M. Stokes, Buckinghamshire CC
4. W.R. Foster, North West Water Authority
5. D. Smith, Nottinghamshire CC
6. D.E. Johnson, Surrey Voluntary Service Council
7. Paul Millmore, East Sussex CC
8. David Cameron, Countryside Commission for Scotland

9. James Milligan, Northumberland National Park Voluntary Warden Service
10. J. Dillon, Councillor, Monklands DC
11. David Potts, Cheshire CC
12. P.H. Wright, Yorkshire Dales National Park
13. Mrs. S. Tivey, South Yorkshire CC
14. J. Cheesmond, Dunfermline College of Physical Education, Edinburgh
15. Peter Thompson, BTCV
16. C.J. Ashdown, Kent CC
17. R. Graves, Hereford and Worcester CC
18. C. Speakman, Yorkshire Dales Society
19. Bryan Boult, Hampshire CC
20. P. Gresswell, Countryside Commission (Midland Region)

DISCUSSION GROUP B

Chairman: Dennis Gray, General Secretary, British Mountaineering Council

Reporter: Nicholas Mays, CRRAG Secretary

1(a) (For delegates from the public sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with voluntary organisations or volunteers?

The main reasons given (not in order of priority) were as follows:

i) To capitalise on the flexibility and the relative speed of response of voluntary bodies.

ii) To keep costs to a minimum in response to cuts or cash limits, in the belief that working through the voluntary sector was generally cheaper than direct labour by the public sector.

iii) To gain access to expertise and skills which were not available in the public sector or which the public sector could not afford to pay for.

iv) To respond to the demand from voluntary organisations for work (e.g. scouts, schools, etc.) and for involvement in activities over which the public sector had responsibility.

v) To provide the voluntary sector with necessary professional training, education and support so that groups would act effectively and responsibly.

vi) To involve the community more fully in the activities of public authorities and to gain its support for policies.

vii) As part of the public relations concern of a public body to diffuse criticism of policies and as a means of consulting public opinion on initiatives.

viii) To enable voluntary bodies to gain access to resources owned or controlled by the public sector (e.g. land).

1(b) (For delegates from the voluntary sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with local authorities, public agencies, quangos, etc.?

i) To obtain grants of money and equipment.

ii) To obtain manpower (e.g. MSC labour and schoolchildren).

iii) To gain access to work sites on public land.

iv) To gain information so that activities complement those of other groups and agencies locally and regionally.

v) To obtain professional advice from specialist staff.

vi) To obtain the kudos and respectability of receiving approval from a public, preferably statutory, agency.

vii) To foster good relations with influential public authorities.

3. Provide a set of guidelines to help identify the type of work which is appropriate to and suits volunteers.

The group's view was that it was misleading to think in terms of work which was intrinsically suitable for volunteers and other work which was suitable only for public sector or professional staff. The nature of the tasks for volunteers depended on creating favourable conditions for voluntary action. The major responsibility for this lay with the public sector if it was genuinely interested in fostering voluntarism. Thus, there was no rigid limit to the work voluntary groups could execute in the right circumstances.

Accordingly, the group formulated general guidelines which not only covered ways of identifying characteristics of work which would be attractive to volunteers, but also included guidelines on what public bodies could do to create the right conditions for volunteers, as follows:

i) Before doing anything else, any public body wishing to stimulate and use volunteers in a locality should assess the nature and scope of the existing and likely potential volunteer effort available.

ii) Secondly, the identification of suitable tasks should be undertaken. This should explicitly relate to i), so that work matched available skills, but it had to be recognised that the definition of 'appropriate' work could change in time as circumstances changed.

iii) Thirdly, suitable tasks should be formulated into coherent programmes of work with consideration given to the following factors:

1. Tasks should be such that they constitute coherent wholes with which volunteers can identify, not meaningless fragments of grander schemes.

2. Tasks should be achievable in the time allotted and not lead to frustration.

3. Tasks should enable volunteers to gain a sense of direct involvement in, and contact with, their local environment.

4. Tasks should not be allocated to volunteers which could be carried out by local craftsmen and contractors or the agency's own staff from within the existing budget.

5. The question of maintenance and management in the future, of schemes carried out by the voluntary sector should be planned at an early stage.

iv) In managing projects, attention should be given to ensuring that:

1. The work of volunteers is recognised and they are thanked for their contributions.

2. Incentives in the form of such things as opportunities for social activity and a change of scenery are provided in return for boring, routine work.

3. There is adequate training and supervision.

v) Volunteers should not be regarded as a homogeneous group. There is a great difference between the attitudes and motivations of an MSC worker in an urban area of high unemployment and a middle class volunteer working at weekends in a National Park while enjoying a change of scenery.

vi) If work is in the public eye, the public authority must be assured that the standard of volunteer work is to professional levels of competence.

vii) At a time of high unemployment when paid manual work is disappearing rapidly from the economy and when public expenditure is recession-hit, there is a temptation for public sector managers to use volunteers as a cheaper substitute for salaried employees. This temptation should be resisted. Publicly-inspired volunteering should aim to develop the interests, skills and community awareness of people, not just to exploit their labour.

8. Would you prefer to invest an extra £1 million of public money for conservation in a specialist, Government 'quango' or in a specialist, national, voluntary organisation?

Generally, the group believed that it was preferable for the Government to invest extra money in voluntary organisations since this would lead to a pluralist approach to problem-solving. However, Government support was only effective if it was long-term, and if it went to voluntary bodies of sufficient stature and expertise to make good use of taxpayers' money.

A particular advantage of Government grant aid to voluntary bodies was that it often helped attract further money from commerce and industry into those bodies. This was a source of funding not accessible to Government organisations.

9. What would you regard as the best way forward for the development of the voluntary sector in the countryside in the future? Where does the potential lie and where should changes be made to ensure development?

i) In developing more and better voluntary projects in the countryside, it was felt that the best way forward lay through increasing the involvement of local people in caring about their local environment, and in developing community education about community awareness of projects. It was no longer adequate to see the voluntary sector simply as a source of cheap labour. There were many other benefits of volunteer involvement and volunteers had their own needs to fulfil.

ii) Enormous potential lay in persuading the educational establishment to recognise the educational value of participating in conservation and recreation projects. Ecology should become part of the school curriculum.

iii) Long-term investment should be made by the public sector in the training of supervisors and managers in voluntary bodies, without which expansion would be limited.

iv) There was some potential in certain areas of de-industrialisation and decline for voluntary bodies to acquire or get use of land and other important resources (e.g. canalsides and old railway lines) which could be re-developed in alternative ways.

v) There was still considerable scope for better mutual understanding and closer co-operation between public and voluntary bodies. However, a degree of conflict was inevitable and essential to a creative relationship.

GROUP B MEMBERS

1. A. Christie, Renfrew DC
2. Mr. Mellon, Hampshire CC
3. Roger Brake, Devon CC
4. Dr. Marilyn Rawson, Countryside Commission (South East Region)
5. Janet Cornish, Prince of Wales' Committee
6. Bob Hall, BTCV
7. David Haffey, Northumberland CC
8. David Thomas, West Lancashire DC
9. P. Fogg, Councillor, Renfrew DC
10. Geoffrey Lord, Carnegie United Kingdom Trust
11. Ms Heather Macilwaine, Thames Water Authority
12. Jean Tallantire, The Sports Council (Yorkshire and Humberside Region)
13. A. Cooper, Derbyshire CC
14. W.T. Culbert, Craigavon BC, Northern Ireland
15. Andy Parsons, Peak National Park Ranger Service

16. J. Togher, Monklands DC
17. Simon Lapington, National Trust
18. Linda Blogg, BTCV
19. M. Windsor, Nottinghamshire CC

DISCUSSION GROUP C

Chairman: Clive Allen, Chairman, British Orienteering Federation.

Reporter: Duncan Campbell, Forestry Commission.

1(a) (For delegates from the public sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with voluntary organisations or volunteers?

Public sector members of the group were mainly drawn from local government, advisory agencies (Countryside Commission and Sports Council) and a development agency (Forestry Commission).

Local government and development agency responses focussed on:

i) Reductions in cash and staff provided incentives to seek voluntary labour as a means of furthering policies for conservation and recreation. Reservations were expressed about using volunteers for large capital projects, in terms of effectiveness and conflict with paid job opportunities.

ii) A desire to perform good works (conservation and recreation) for the community and to encourage community participation by using volunteers.

iii) Encouragement of environmental awareness and self-help through the use of volunteers.

Most of those from advisory agencies focussed on:

iv) Providing advice and organisational help for volunteers to pursue their particular interest.

v) Providing financial aid both to volunteer groups and to local authorities to facilitate interest groups.

vi) Using voluntary groups and interests where possible to assist in particular activities (e.g. promotion of holidays for handicapped people, help with educational services, etc.).

1(b) (For delegates from the voluntary sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with local authorities, public agencies, 'quangos', etc.?

Most voluntary sector responses focussed on:

i) Obtaining 'professional' advice and help with organisation either to promote or to defend the aims of the voluntary body.

4. The main benefits of a well developed public/voluntary sector relationship in order of priority (Refer to the list of benefits given for question 4 in the 'Themes' section).

Whilst some priority interest was expressed in benefits in terms of:

i) giving people the opportunity to occupy their time and do useful work;

ii) involving the community in matters affecting how it lives and giving people a voice in environmental affairs;

iii) the fact that volunteering constitutes a valuable recreation and social activity in its own right;

the group did not consider the question of priorities to be meaningful because of the wide range of motives and therefore, of perceived benefits of the voluntary and public sectors.

8. Would you prefer to invest an extra £1 million of public money for conservation in a specialist Government 'quango', or in a specialist national voluntary organisation?

Whilst Government money could be given to a reputable voluntary organisation, on balance it was felt that funds might be more effectively used (and accounted for) if given to a specialist 'quango' with a balanced overview of the subject and a brief which could include grant aid to and co-operation with voluntary organisations.

9. What would you regard as the best way forward for the development of the voluntary sector in the countryside in the future? Where does the potential lie and where should changes be made to ensure development?

The best way to develop the voluntary sector was thought to lie in providing greater publicity and information about the differing objectives and interests of the two sectors, to match their interests and opportunities. This role might be fulfilled by specialist agents.

GROUP C MEMBERS

1. J. Rutherford, Councillor, Renfrew DC
2. I. St. John, Councillor, South Yorkshire CC
3. M. Guy, Hampshire CC
4. Rita Butcher, Middlesbrough BC
5. Graham Barrow, Anderson-Semens-Houston (ASH)
6. J.D. Godfrey, West Sussex CC
7. M.J. Bowdige, Staffordshire CC
8. P.N. Webster, Greater Manchester Council
9. I.W. Davenport, Scottish Sports Council
10. John Iles, BTCV

11. J.M. Sully, Councillor, West Yorkshire CC
12. I.M. Rickson, English Tourist Board
13. P. Marsden, Countryside Commission
14. C. Moon, Leominster Marches Project
15. L. Cole, Land Use Consulants Ltd.
16. Rosie Simpson, Peak National Park Study Centre
17. T.F. Carroll, Northumberland CC
18. Brian Parry, The Sports Council (North West Region)
19. Terry Robinson, Countryside Commission
20. W.L. Saunders, The Sports Council (Northern Region)
21. Thomas Huxley, Countryside Commission for Scotland

DISCUSSION GROUP D

Chairman: R.G. Satterthwaite, General Secretary, National Playing Fields Association

Reporter: John Mackay, Countryside Commission for Scotland.

1(a) (For delegates from the public sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with voluntary organisations or volunteers?

The group gave the following reasons why the public sector seeks to use volunteers:

i) To do work that would not otherwise be done.
ii) To involve people and consult them about issues.
iii) To generate goodwill and commitment to projects.
iv) To keep voluntary bodies going.
v) To respond to requests for work.
vi) To enable pound-stretching.
vii) To support bids for resources for new schemes.
viii) To seek partnership with other bodies.
ix) To tap expertise not available elsewhere.

1(b) (For delegates from the voluntary sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with local authorities, public agencies, 'quangos', etc.?

The group gave the following reasons why the voluntary sector seeks to work with the public sector:

i) To gain public sector commitment to ideas and policies.

ii) To seek resources.

iii) To seek to influence and change public policies.

iv) To offer specialist skills to the public sector and to obtain specialist help in return.

v) To use public agencies as co-ordinators in some circumstances.

vi) To obtain work.

vii) To make resources go further.

5. The main costs or problems of a well developed public sector/-voluntary sector relationship in order of priority. (Refer to the list of costs given for question 5 in the 'Themes' section).

The group thought that while some of the statements might have some validity as applied to volunteers, extending them to the entirety of the voluntary sector was questionable. In addition, it was thought that some of the statements written to be critical of the voluntary sector could equally be applied to the public sector; for example, statement (viii) on problems of continuity as voluntary organisations and memberships grow, decline, disappear and alter. So, no ordering of priority to the statements was made.

However, there was agreement that statements (i) on attitudes, (ii) on skills, (iii) on supervision and (v) on needs for training, all had some validity. That is, that working closely with volunteers and voluntary groups requires:

i) Public sector staff to change their traditional outlook, assumptions and methods of working.

ii) A different set of skills than those usually found amongst public sector professionals.

iii) The availability of resources to organise, manage and supervise voluntary work where this is appropriate.

and

v) Public organisations to make available resources for training of their own staff, paid staff in voluntary organisations and volunteers.

The others were thought not valid or they aroused a range of contrary views amongst contributors, such as for example, (ix), the idea that public bodies will inevitably cut paid jobs if voluntary labour is available.

8. Would you prefer to invest an extra £1 million of public money for conservation in a specialist government 'quango' or in a specialist national voluntary organisation?

In considering this topic, the group was of the view that a third option was preferable; namely that the Government should feed funds to the voluntary sector through the appropriate specialist agency. The reasoning for this compromise was that the public agency would be in a good

position to oversee disbursement of the funds to secure their effective expenditure by the voluntary sector, it being recognised for a number of reasons that the voluntary sector might often be best placed to take advantage of this kind of windfall funding.

9. What would you regard as the best way forward for the development of the voluntary sector in the countryside in the future? Where does the potential lie and where should changes be made to ensure development?

A variety of views was expressed, including expressions of the need for:

i) Agencies to create flexible mechanisms to enable the voluntary sector to emerge and develop naturally.

ii) More initial seed-corn funding and longer term support through technical advice, etc. from the public sector.

iii) More grass-roots effort by public agencies at parish level and including better communication and consultation at community level.

GROUP D MEMBERS

1. P.C. Quest, North York Moors National Park
2. M.H. Gee, Consultant
3. H.W. Wilkinson, Highland Regional Council
4. G. McLearie, Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation
5. Bridget Calvert, The Sports Council
6. Robin Dower, Member, Countryside Commission
7. Ian Dair, Nature Conservancy Council
8. Mrs. A. Sargent, Councillor, South Yorkshire CC
9. Q.L. Sutton, The National Trust
10. M.J. Kirby, Countryside Commission
11. Elaine Walker, MCVP
12. E. Ryan, Durham CC
13. Lindsay Cornish, MAFF (ADAS)
14. Maurice Masterman, West Yorkshire CC
15. Keith Bayley, Cleveland Council for Voluntary Service
16. Elspeth Kyle, The Volunteer Centre
17. Barbara Mostyn
18. David Fletcher, Pennine Heritage

DISCUSSION GROUP E

Chairman: John Trevelyan, Deputy Secretary, The Ramblers' Association

Reporter: Michael Collins, The Sports Council

1(a) (For delegates from the public sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with voluntary organisations or volunteers?

Additional to Barbara Mostyn's list of motives for working with voluntary groups (see account of the plenary session which follows), the group came up with the following reasons for working with and through voluntary organisations:

i) Working with voluntary organisations enabled public investment to be 'geared' very advantageously (e.g. capital grants to sports clubs are reckoned to generate £3 for every £1 of public money injected).

ii) Voluntary groups or clubs could be very useful agents for the management of facilities or people where they were more acceptable to users than public employees.

iii) Voluntary groups could be used to innovate or take risks which public sector professionals might find it difficult to persuade their elected members to do.

1(b) (For delegates from the voluntary sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with local authorities, public agencies, 'quangos', etc.?

The basic reasons for volunteering in both recreation and conservation were:

i) To be able to do something you were good at.

ii) To do something you wanted to do, rather than were pressed to do.

6. How and why do MSC-based voluntary schemes differ from 'pure' voluntary shemes?

In answering the question the group chose to ignore the unpaid VPP scheme for unemployed people wishing to do voluntary work.

The group identified the following characteristics of the two sorts of workers:

MSC	Voluntary Groups
i) MSC workers are in part conscripted	i) Workers come mainly of their own free will, though there is some sense of social obligation.

ii) They come for a substantial period of time and work full-time	ii) They usually come for short periods and not always regularly (the stereotypical, cynical view is that they represent a 'cheap source of unreliable labour')
iii) They are usually recruited locally unless special skills are needed	iii) They can be recruited widely, even nationally, for things like archaeological digs
iv) Their supervision is crucial, but those using MSC labour may be able to influence supervisory appointments	iv) Their supervision is also crucial, but voluntary organisations may have to accept what supervisory help is offered to them
v) There is a problem of continuity, especially in human skills aspects (e.g. in sports leadership), since schemes run for twelve months maximum.	
vi) There is a built-in 'nine month problem' as staff seek subsequent jobs	
vii) They need tasks which contain a training element and with tangible results	v) They have a need for work which shows some benefit, but some volunteers will commit themselves to nasty, repetitive maintenance, etc. for care of sites more readily than MSC labour
viii) Most employers and trade unions now accept that MSC should not be used as a cheaper alternative source of manual labour.	vi) Volunteers are often very good at visitor management tasks, publicity, education and wardening for the same reasons that they tend to be able to identify closely with sites they have previously worked on.

Only one instance of MSC workers doing more harm than good was given. The National Trust for Northumberland reported having some 50 MSC workers at any one time compared with 50 full-time staff, plus bands of volunteers and had found no problems getting the high quality of work their sites demanded, with careful selection and good supervision. Several local authorities had some experience and most had the opportunity to be involved in selection.

As far as volunteers were concerned, it was easy to get large numbers to offer for railway and canal restoration, but footpath clearance and other scrub-bashing tasks were not popular.

The Countryside Commission drew attention to one interesting scheme where a voluntary body, The Avon Wildlife Trust, was employing an MSC workforce to manage woodland on private land.

9. What would you regard as the best way forward for the development of the voluntary sector in the countryside in the future? Where does the potential lie for growth and where should changes be made to ensure development?

In summary, various members of the group put forward the following proposals to help develop the voluntary sector in the future:

i) Public sector professionals should cultivate the voluntary movement wherever it produced good ideas for activities or ways of doing things which would be difficult for public agencies, so as to develop a lobby for adequate resources (Hampshire County Council).

ii) Voluntary groups should be encouraged because they provided 'double value', i.e. community involvement at low public cost (South Yorkshire County Council).

iii) Public bodies should encourage voluntary groups especially at national level to be more professional (as indicated by Hoggett and Bishop in their keynote paper to the Conference)(Countryside Commission).

iv) Public bodies were to bear in mind that voluntary groups were constituted generally to do things which their members wanted them to do. Thus, if, as with sports clubs and increasing participation, they could sometimes help the public sector, the relationship would still need to be negotiated and not imposed and adequate support financially or otherwise would have to be given (Sports Council).

v) It would have to be recognised that the only effective encouragement of growth in the volume of voluntary activity would be at very local (parish) level where links with public agencies and other groups could be fostered, but where they currently, often did not exist (Sports Council Region).

vi) Society would have to change gradually from the attitude that paid work was the only really worthwhile sort of work if a climate in which voluntarism could flourish was to be created (Local Authority).

GROUP E MEMBERS

1. Edward Roe, Strathclyde Regional Council
2. R.L. Mills, Leicestershire CC
3. Paul Stobbs, Cyclist Touring Club
4. Foster Murphy, The Volunteer Centre
5. John Foster, Countryside Commission for Scotland
6. Dr. Susan Glyptis, Loughborough University of Technology
7. H.R.O. Linscer, City of Edinburgh DC
8. John Stevens, The Sports Council (West Midlands Region)
9. R. Mitchell, Councillor, West Yorkshire CC
10. S.M. Terry, London Borough of Hillingdon
11. R. Glover, The National Trust
12. S. Jones, Nottinghamshire CC
13. Roy Hickey, Countryside Commission

14. F.N. Taylor, Northumberland CC
15. Colin Bonsey, Hampshire CC
16. E.M. Black, South West Water Authority
17. C. McLoughlin, Councillor, Craigavon DC, Northern Ireland
18. I. Newman, Countryside Recreation Management Association
19. Laurie Brett, DOE (DRA)

DISCUSSION GROUP F

Chairman: Jan Fladmark, Assistant Director (Research and Development), Countryside Commission for Scotland

Reporter: Michael Evans, Bracknell District Council and the Association of District Councils

1(a) (For delegates from the public sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with voluntary organisations or volunteers?

The public sector used volunteers for the following reasons:

i) To gain public support.

ii) To implement jobs in countryside management.

iii) To support services such as rangers.

iv) To make best use of manpower resources in order to extend services.

v) To involve local people in repairing damage to minimise future vandalism by giving them a stake in the environment.

1(b) (For delegates from the voluntary sector). For what reasons do you find yourself working with, using, or having liaison with local authorities, public agencies, 'quangos' etc.?

The voluntary sector used the local authority primarily to advance its interests in a particular scheme or project. There was a general feeling that there needed to be greater honesty between the voluntary sector and local authorities.

In many cases, local authorities were used as sources of information and all the voluntary groups represented stressed the need to establish good rapport with the officers of the local authority.

The Ramblers' Association used local authorities for the following:

i) Rights of Way - clearing obstructions, grant aid, information.

ii) Countryside amenities.

iii) Access to the countryside.

iv) Supporting role at public enquiries.

Some voluntary groups felt that local authorities were not totally supportive and regarded the organised voluntary group as a threat.

7. Is there such a thing as a purely voluntary body and does it make a difference if a voluntary body receives external funds and from whom (e.g. industry, local authority, MSC, charity, etc.)?

The group accepted that although the voluntary sector was in many cases grant-aided what was more important was that organisations remained independent and should be able to operate without their role and aims being interfered with by pressure from the agency providing funding.

The group also felt that a degree of inter-dependence between the local authorities and the voluntary sector needed to be encouraged in the future.

It was also felt that purely voluntary groups often had no credibility, but that a trained, professional secretary or officer gave bite to the organisation when dealing with local authorities and other public bodies.

GROUP F MEMBERS

1. M. Hazell, Ramblers' Association (Sussex Area)
2. E.C. Hammond, Nature Conservancy Council
3. J.G. Clegg, West Yorkshire CC
4. R.R. Brown, Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland)
5. G.T. Chaloner, Newport BC
6. W. Lomas, Councillor, Greater Manchester Council
7. Max Nicholson, Land Use Consultants Ltd., London
8. Dacre Dunlop, The Sports Council (Northern Region)
9. P. Barnton, South Yorkshire CC
10. Paul Hoggett, SAUS, University of Bristol
11. P.J. Crilly, Councillor, Craigavon BC, Northern Ireland.
12. M.S. Burne, Surrey CC
13. W.A. Robinson, Sussex County Playing Fields Association
14. M. Jack, Scottish Education Department
15. Jeremy Worth, Countryside Commission
16. Unity Kelly, Keep Britain Tidy Group
17. R.J. Monks, Countryside Commission

APPENDIX B

THE INVOLVEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS IN RECREATION AND AMENITY PROJECTS IN THE NORTH WEST WATER AUTHORITY

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

The Trust has been used extensively in the implementation and maintenance of a wide range of projects and general environmental management. In 1977 the Authority entered into a five year programme with the Trust and this has been extended – see table below. The Trust have been granted a lease for the use of Tan Pits Farm, Rivington, Lancashire as a base for accommodation, training and storage of materials and equipment. The Authority has spent £37,623 on the provision of portable buildings to extend this accommodation. The Authority's expenditure includes contributions to BTCV officers' salaries as follows:–

Regional Officer	50%
Rivington Sen. Field Officer	100%
Res. Volunteers Organiser	100%
NE Lancs. Field Officer	100%
Cheshire Field Officer	15%

Year	BTCV Mandays	Cost to NWWA £
77/78	3,200	15,000
78/79	2,644	18,261
79/80	3,548	23,395
80/81	3,610	35,950
81/82	3,853	37,500
82/83	4,501	41,340
83/84	5,700 (estimate)	42,540 (authorisation)

Voluntary Conservation Groups

The Authority has entered into 6 Nature Reserve agreements with County Trusts for Nature Conservation and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. These range in size from a small former railway cutting in West Lancashire to an extensive agreement with the RSPB at Haweswater. A number of further agreements are under negotiation.

Historic Building Conservation

Following the restoration of Bunbury Watermill by Authority volunteers and young people under the Job Creation Programme, the Mill is managed on a self-supporting basis by a Trust which incorporates local historical societies.

Countryside Rangers

The Authority directly employs 5 countryside rangers. Two volunteer ranger services assist the full-time rangers at Rivington/Jumbles (80) and NE Lancashire (30). Joint Ranger Service Agreements utilise National Park staff and volunteers in the Peak and Lake District.

Recreation

The Authority has entered into an agreement with Greater Manchester Youth Association - a registered charity - to manage a water activity centre for young people at the 200 acre Lower Rivington Reservoir. The Association currently employs 3 full-time staff at the reservoir, with funding from the Inner Cities Partnership and is actively recruiting volunteer instructors.

ADP/BB
19.9.83

HOW LOCAL AUTHORITIES, NATIONAL PARKS AND WATER AUTHORITIES WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS

Rosie Simpson

Vice-Principal, Peak National Park Study Centre, Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire.

INTRODUCTION

I'm very pleased to be able to talk about my survey on how the public sector is working with volunteers. I think that what I have to say follows on from what we were talking about yesterday. We discussed the broad view of volunteers and voluntary bodies and what I now hope to do is to focus on how the public sector is working with volunteers for countryside work. I stress 'countryside work': I'm not just going to talk about conservation volunteers, although a lot of the work is in the area of conservation, but also other ways in which the public sector is involved with volunteers.

The findings are published in my report (1) in four main sections: information about how the survey was carried out; the results of the study; guidelines for people setting up volunteer programmes; and a number of case studies of people who have been working with volunteers in the countryside.

METHOD

To give some background to the survey, in 1981 the Countryside Commission sponsored a course on the Development and Organisation of Volunteer Programmes and asked the Peak National Park Study Centre to organise the training course in conjunction with the British Trust of Conservation Volunteers at Losehill Hall. The fact that the Countryside Commission decided then that this was necessary shows how volunteer work with the public sector in the countryside was growing. They felt there was a real need to train people who were going to be working in this field.

We set up the course with the then training officer of the BTCV, Jo Bergon, who has now moved to the Oxfordshire Ridgeway. We drew on expertise from the BTCV and the Countryside Commission, and used a lot of outside speakers who had previous experience of working with volunteers.

When we advertised the course the people who came forward were mainly from the public sector – local authorities, National Parks – and we found to our surprise that quite a lot of voluntary work was going on, but that very few of the public bodies knew what the others were doing. There was very little contact between them and there was certainly no overall view about what was happening. We felt that in order effectively to organise a course we needed to know more. To fill this gap in knowledge, I decided to conduct a survey to find out as much as possible about the relationship between the public sector and volunteers. I am going to explain the results of the survey, the experiences reported, and give some guidelines which I have drawn up to help people working with volunteers.

First of all, to determine the nature and extent of work with volunteers, a postal questionnaire was sent out to County Councils, Development Corporations, National Parks, Water Authorities, and a sample of City Councils and London Boroughs, in order to try and get the overall picture. Because of lack of time (I was working as a volunteer if you like!), I did not follow up the survey with telephone questionnaires, so some people replied and some did not. I don't know much about the people who didn't reply, except for a number who have approached me subsequently and described their work with volunteers. I did find however that I had a very good response - 63% of the people who were mailed responded, which compares well with other surveys. 146 questionnaires were sent out altogether, so I feel that the results do give a broad picture of what is happening.

RESULTS

Scale of Work

It was interesting to note that 25% of the people who replied were not working with volunteers and they were particularly asked to send information about why they were not working with volunteers. There was no particular reason - it might have been the personalities involved, it might have been that there was no work or that they had MSC schemes or various other reasons.

The other 75% were working with volunteers and of those, the majority (54%) used both Manpower Service Commission and volunteers either side by side or on separate projects. The advent of MSC schemes has therefore not led to the neglect of volunteers, both types of labour are being used.

In order to try to compare the scale of operations, I asked for a 'man day' estimate of the amount of volunteer work taking place. This is an accounting figure whose use as a measure of work can be questioned, but it gives some idea of scale for comparison. The total number of man days equals something like 36,000 a year, at a bare minimum, because a lot of people did not supply data. Also I found out subsequently that many people who were not able to reply to the questionnaire are using much volunteer labour. So a lot of work is being done by the public sector with volunteers - 36,000 man days compared with 79,000 by BTCV in 1981 (of which $\frac{1}{2}$-$\frac{1}{3}$ was for the public sector).

Types of Volunteers

What types of volunteers were being used? Is it just conservation volunteers or are there other types? Table 1 summarises the types of volunteers. The most frequently used are BTCV volunteers, local conservation corps and local schools. By their nature, these groups tend to be organised in groups for countryside and manual conservation work, hence the reason why yesterday we had some confusion over the word 'volunteer' when it was sometimes taken to mean manual conservation workers exclusively.

The second group is the local societies, which are also being extensively used. These vary, from those that are conservation orientated, such as the the Naturalists' Trusts, to those that are recreation orientated, such as the Ramblers' Association, British Horse Society and the anglers. We discussed yesterday the type of work these people like

to be involved with. The recreation based ones are much more interested in work which relates immediately to their recreation interest and therefore perhaps aren't going to get involved in the sort of conservation based work that some of the Naturalists Trusts might do. For example, the Ramblers are going to be most interested in work on footpaths and things related to walking, the British Horse Society on bridleways and so on.

There is quite a large group of people whom I have called 'individuals' who are recruited by the public sector to work in various ways. These may be individuals who are actively recruited to form a conservation volunteer force, or they may just be people who have come forward to offer their help spontaneously, not necessarily as conservation volunteers, but in all sorts of other ways. I'll go on to say more about that later.

The last group of 'other' volunteers includes the cubs, scouts and guides - the majority of these 'other' groups are military groups - the RAF, the cadets etc. These appear to be doing quite a large amount of work, again mostly the sort of manual conservation work which the local conservation corps will be doing.

There is also quite a number of people on Duke of Edinburgh Awards, parish councils, and the other groups involved, showing that the type of volunteers you can work with depends on imagination and contacts. It appeared that anybody could be involved, providing there was the contact who could recruit or respond to volunteers and encourage them to come and work.

There is a variety of ways in which the public sector work with volunteers. Some people were content to do a very small amount of work on a specific project that it was felt volunteers were best suited for. Quite often the work would be with one local school, one local conservation corps or perhaps with the BTCV. I think the BTCV is used a great deal because it is a national organisation which is readily identified with volunteers and people have a fairly good idea of what it does. Therefore it often becomes the first point of contact between the public sector and volunteers.

In somewhere like the Isle of Wight, for example, where the Planning Unit only does a very small amount of work with volunteers, they use just the BTCV. In areas like the Tame Valley, by contrast, the attitude is to involve as many people as possible, particularly locals, to get them involved in their own environment.

I did receive a lot of comments about different types of groups. Many of the authorities hadn't really thought about the type of work that the volunteers could do. So, for example, they were quite surprised when they found that schoolchildren weren't suitable for heavy work, and couldn't keep up heavy work for long! But people had learnt lessons from their experience. They had discovered that the BTCV liked good conservation tasks rather than things like litter picking (a seemingly obvious thing since they are called the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers). They felt that litter picking wasn't really getting down to the 'nitty-gritty' of conservation.

Types of Work

The type of work being done (Figure 1) bears out what we were saying yesterday, that a lot of the public sector are working with volunteers as manual conservation volunteers. 96% of the authorities are working with volunteers for countryside conservation, which includes tree planting, scrub clearance and habitat management - mostly manual conservation tasks. 79% are using volunteers for countryside management; again manual tasks, including footpath building, construction of bridges and bird hides and a lot of boundary work - building post and wire fences, putting up walls and hedge laying. Then there is a remarkable drop to 42% of people who are using volunteers for ranger and wardening services; again, their tasks include manual work, as well as patrolling and information duties. So, you find that not very many people seem to use volunteers for anything other than manual work. Yet there must be a great deal of potential for volunteers to be involved in interpretative work, for example. Of course, there are some authorities who are doing this to a greater extent. Take, for example, Mid Glamorgan, where volunteers are an essential part of the guided walks programme. The same is true for other authorities. However, only 37% are working with volunteers in this way and an even smaller number are using them for research and survey work. Yet in Northumberland National Park, where voluntary wardens help with survey work, they have proved that an enormous amount of good work can be done which might be difficult for full time staff to do because they are not available so easily at weekends.

The 'other' type of work is again interesting because some people are using volunteers for technical skills which an authority may not have, for example, writing, design, or manning exhibitions. At Losehill Hall we use volunteers for children's playschemes - Project Squirrel - and Nottinghamshire use them for Project Woodpecker. Some people are using volunteers to liaise in their own areas. If you have mature volunteers who are public figures in your area, it might be a good idea to consider working with them, because you may be able to make contact with a sector that you cannot get to so easily as a local authority. Dorset County Council, for example, work with some of their local people to liaise with the Army and local farmers and to unleash resources that might not be available if the approach came directly from the public authority. Some areas are also using volunteers for publicity purposes.

I don't know why it is that volunteers seem to be used mainly for manual conservation tasks - maybe this is something we can discuss later on. I do wonder whether it is because things have grown up in a very piecemeal way and that if the first contact with volunteers is through manual conservation work, perhaps people's views become narrowed and they tend not to see the wider areas where they could be used.

Organisation

The relationship between the public sector and voluntary organisations varies, because we are talking about some authorities who use volunteers for perhaps 25 man days of work and others using volunteers for over 7,000 man days of work, as in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. The administration to support volunteers also varies from one person in an office who spends a very small part of his or her time organising volunteers, to, at the other extreme, a full time volunteers'

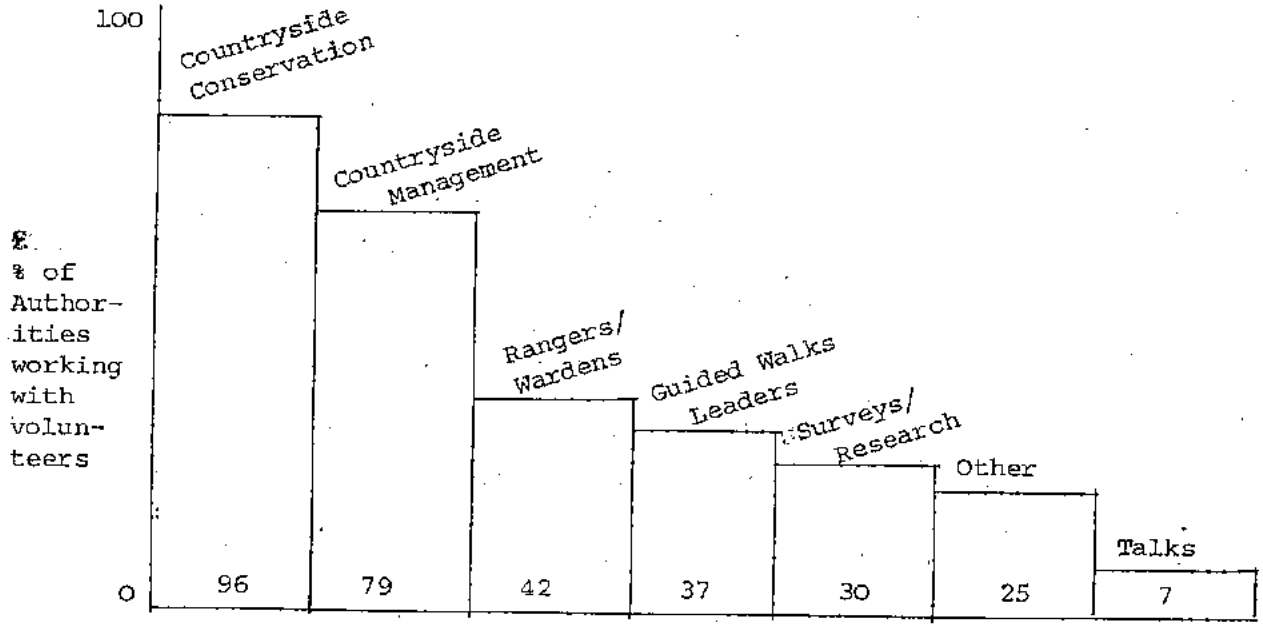

Fig. 1. Types of Work

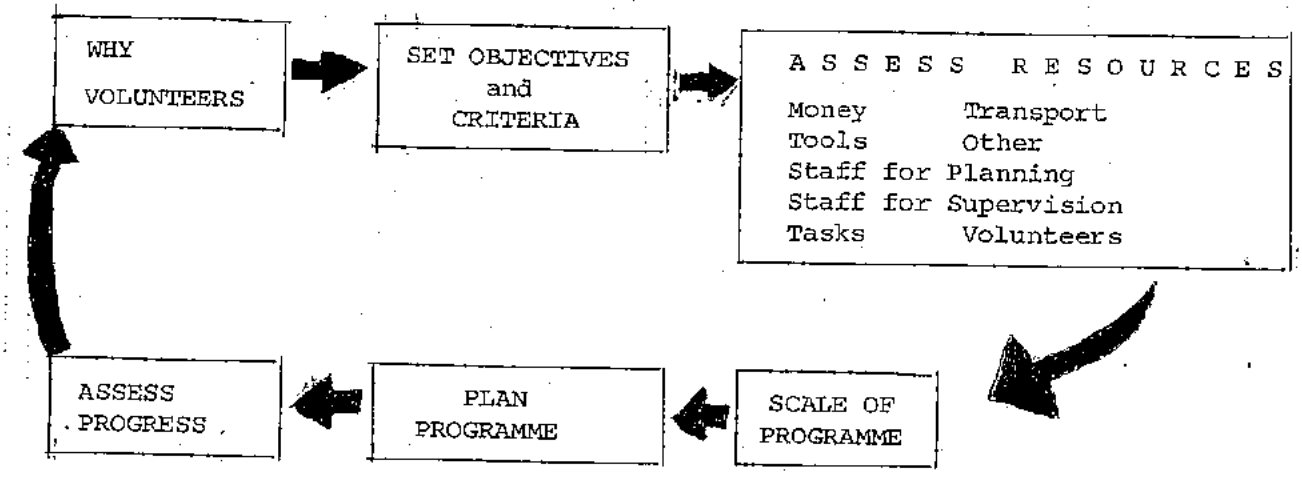

Fig. 2. Working with Volunteers. The 'Thinking'Approach'.

organiser with a large back-up. Some authorities have several departments, each with several officers spending part of their time organising volunteers. However, there seem to be very few places with a full time volunteers' organiser: the exception is the Peak National Park. The Lake District National Park has a joint scheme with the BTCV and there are one or two other places, but it does seem not to be very common at present. The majority of the work being done is organised as part of someone's work and often a very minor part indeed.

Costs

I did try to find out something about the costs of voluntary labour. The opinion of some people in my discussion group yesterday was that voluntary labour was seen very much as free labour. I think this is true. Quite often the people higher up in authorities and the committees tend to see volunteers as free labour. It is often only the people working with the volunteers who can see that there are a lot of other benefits and that to use volunteers as cheap labour is the wrong way to use them. However, it still remains, and will probably do so for some time, that many people regard volunteers as free labour. As a result, the public sector is getting more involved with volunteers. The onus on working with volunteers is tending to come from above and work downwards for the wrong reasons and it is the people who are working with the volunteers on the ground who are adapting those aims and using them in a slightly different way.

Evidence from the report showed that in fact volunteers are certainly not cheap labour. There are a lot of costs involved which may not be immediately obvious. These include staff time in organisation, staff time in supervision, training and various back-ups, e.g. liaison, plus the direct costs, which may be considerable. In some areas volunteers are expected to work without any expenses at all, but in Mid Glamorgan (which may be a good place to be a volunteer), they pay some of their volunteers an honorarium of £50 a year and £5 a day for guided walks. Wiltshire pay volunteer groups £35 a mile for each mile of footpath cleared. The Conservation Corps charge a variety of rates for man days, between £1 and £2 for the Local Conservation Corps, and something like £3 and £3.50 for the National Corps. If you add these up over a week's residential task for 12 volunteers, this can amount to quite a large amount of money.

A number of people have questioned the cost-effectiveness of volunteers because of the man day charges. When you compare them with the other forms of labour that are available, you are comparing volunteers with what the established work force or the MSC people can do. In making this comparison, work rates and work standards do vary. Although volunteers can match the standards in some cases, with good supervision and training, the average is not as high as you would find with the direct work force and with MSC. So if you compare all those things - the costs, the work rates and the standards, you sometimes find that they are not as cost-effective as you might think initially.

A study made in Hertfordshire by Land Use Consultants (2) compared rates of work by volunteers and by full-time staff. This showed that, to coppice hornbeam, for example, four volunteers were needed to do the amount/standard of work that one ranger could do in the same time. You can see that if you multiply this number of volunteers by the amount that you are going to be spending on man day charges, you may be approaching the cost of a full-time member of staff.

Experience

The experiences that people had of working with volunteers (Table 2) bear out some of the things we talked about yesterday in our discussion groups and yesterday evening. The advantages of working with volunteers fall into three main areas: one is work done that otherwise

would not be done; secondly it is involving people in environmental education, public awareness and involving the local community in their areas; and thirdly, the fact that volunteers are in many cases low cost. The problems involved fall into two main areas: first of all, the areas relating to the public body itself, the fact that they need to provide supervisors and they need staff time; and secondly, the problems relating to the volunteers, in that the volunteers are an unpredictable work force - you don't know what sort of skills they are going to have, and they may not be available at the times you want. So to some authorities who had an inflexible approach or very high expectations of volunteers, they weren't a very satisfactory work force.

I think it is quite interesting that the public sector should have such a high expectation of people who are giving their time freely and voluntarily and that they should expect them to be able to match the standards of work and attendance of full-time labour. One of the things that came out from the study was that we really need to accept the limitations of volunteers because by their nature, volunteers are going to be very varied, they are going to be unavailable sometimes and they are going to be unpredictable. But when they do come they can be harnessed, if they are well managed, to produce good work. The staff involved from the public sector need to think harder about their work with volunteers. They need to organise and manage the volunteers better and train both the staff, the supervisers and the volunteers to get good results.

Looking at the organisational framework for working with volunteers, there is an enormous amount of work being done annually, but it seems that it is being done with very little thought about exactly how volunteers fit in to the work of the public sector. There is a lack of appreciation of the time and skills required in organising volunteers and the public sector do have high expectations. So I feel that if we are going to benefit from the time and skills that volunteers are offering us, we need to be better organised in order to be able to respond well. I think what is needed is a flexible approach. It is no good being very bureaucratic when you are talking to volunteers: they want to talk to people, they want to get involved with particular projects and to feel wanted - they don't just want to be a number in a book.

GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

What is required is a flexible organised approach - I have called it the 'thinking approach' (Figure 2). Everyone working with volunteers needs to think before they start. This may seem a very obvious point, but few people actually put it into practice. We need to ask "Why are we working with volunteers: is it because they are cheap labour? Is it because we're short of resources and volunteers are the only way of doing the work? Or is there another reason?"

Having considered your reasons for working with volunteers, you can then go ahead and formulate some objectives. If you are going to assess and evaluate how effective your work is with volunteers, objectives will be needed as a measure. Are the objectives going to be: public relations, or cheap labour, or environmental education, or to involve as many people as possible? The programme that results may well differ markedly as a result of different objectives.

What sort of criteria are you going to use to assess standards? Do you want the work to be as good as the rangers could produce or as good as somebody who has been trained for several years could produce? Or are you prepared to accept less in order to involve people?

The next stage is to assess the resources, because again this is going to affect the sort of programme that you operate. Are you an organisation that has a lot of ready money? Are you an organisation that has no ready money and needs cheap labour? Do you have plenty of staff time and expertise to get people involved? Do you have supervisors? Are the staff enthusiastic or do they not want to know about volunteers? All these are resources which need to be assessed to work out how to operate a programme. From that you can then plan the sort of programme that you are going to be operating. For example, if you've got money, but no staff time or a small amount of staff time, then perhaps an organisation like the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers might be the organisation for you, because they can provide transport, tools, some expertise and the labour. If you've got no money, but you've got supervisors and organisers, perhaps you should get involved with local schools and societies. Maybe you can go out and recruit volunteers on a low cost programme. If you have no money, but have office staff to train and manage volunteers, maybe you should be thinking about using individual volunteers, mature people who need less direct supervision, who can be given a job to do, go away and do it and then report back to you. There are all sorts of possible different programmes. You plan your programme accordingly, carry it out, (which in itself is going to need a lot of detailed organisation) and then you should review progress, and see whether your resources and circumstances have changed. You can then go back round the circle again and rethink why you are working with volunteers, what your objectives are and what your resources are. It is not a process that occurs only once. It should be a circular process, continually thinking of your work force in as many ways as you would with your paid work force.

CONCLUSIONS

I would draw four main conclusions: first of all, that the amount of work done for the public sector by volunteers is very extensive, but the type of work being done appears to be very limited. There is an enormous amount of scope for imaginative development and expansion of the areas where volunteers can do positive work.

Secondly, the report has thrown up some problems encountered by the public sector: namely, a lack of staff time to organise volunteers and a lack of suitable supervisors. If we are going to develop work with volunteers we must ensure that there is enough time to organise them. They are not going to be very enamoured with conservation work or with whatever work they have decided to do if things are not properly organised. There need to be sufficient trained supervisors on the ground to guide them, to train them, to enthuse them and to make them want to come again. Training is an essential aspect of working with volunteers for both public sector staff (for whom we organise the 'Working with Volunteers' course at Losehill Hall) and organisers of local groups themselves (The British Trust of Conservation Volunteers organise a training course for local group organisers). There are also in-house training sessions run by various organisations. If you know of an authority locally which uses volunteers you might be able to run a joint training programme if you are not large enough to organise your

own. The training of staff and volunteers is an essential part of successful work.

Thirdly, I think to benefit fully from the relationship with volunteers, they have to be well managed. Good management will enable you to link the public sector resources of professional staff and the back-up facilities - such as volunteer centres, office staff, administration, (the sort of resources that might not be available to individual volunteers or voluntary groups) - with the skills and resources that the volunteers can offer, and make a very successful project.

I would stress that I am not recommending that people should be more bureaucratic in their direct approach to volunteers, merely that they should be organised in their thoughts and the way that the background organisation takes place. It is essential that we retain flexible organisation when working with volunteers and maintain personal contact, otherwise that link will be lost.

Fourthly, the results of a thoughtful look at volunteer work may require the objectives of local authorities working with volunteers to change. At present it does seem that many people think of them as cheap labour, but as the work progresses they realise that maybe they are not as cheap as expected and also that there are a lot of benefits not anticipated before - such as public relations, local involvement, and environmental education. I feel, possibly because I work in environmental education, that the objectives of environmental education and public involvement should be given a lot more emphasis. People are learning by doing something practical - an experience that they will probably remember all their lives.

So these are just four ways in which the relationship between the voluntary sector and public authorities could be improved. As Ralf Dahrendorf has observed, "While societies may be running out of jobs, they are certainly not running out of work" (3), particularly in the environmental field. Yesterday Foster Murphy outlined the future increased roles of volunteers. The public sector seems likely to continue to increase its contact with the voluntary sector and this relationship could be developed to be of greater mutual benefit.

I would like to leave you with a question, "Is the public sector prepared to review and positively develop its relationship with volunteers?" For to progress, I believe such a review is essential.

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APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

TABLE 1

TYPES OF VOLUNTEERS - SUMMARY

	BTCV Volunteers	Local Conservation Corps	Local Societies	Local Schools	Individuals	Other
Percentage of those working with volunteers	65%	67%	56%	64%	58%	46%

TABLE 2

EXPERIENCES OF WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

ADVANTAGES	Number of Times Reported
Work done which otherwise would not be	30
Public relations/Environmental Education/ Conservation Awareness	30
Involve Local People	21
Low Cost/Cost-Effective	15
Enthusiastic/Motivated Work Force	11
Small scale work suited to volunteers	9
Efficient work force	4
High standard of work	3

Other: develop contacts (2) draw together local community (2) flexible organisation (2) exchange of ideas (1).

PROBLEMS	
Supervision of work parties	18
No/Few Problems	15
Staff time to organise	15
Unpredictable number of volunteers	11
Volunteers lack of skills/stamina/application	12
Limited availability (weekends/evenings)	6
Safety/Insurance	4
Low work rate/standard	4
Unreliable in tight work programme	4
Problems with established work force/trade union	3
Jobs left unfinished	3

Other: Finding suitable tasks (2), Transport (2), Getting required job done (2), Accommodation (2), Maintaining concentration of young volunteers (1), Training is time consuming (1), small number of dedicated volunteers do work (1)

WORKING WITH AND THROUGH THE MANPOWER SERVICES COMMISSION

Tony Potter

Manpower Services Commission, Employment Services Division,
Special Employment Branch, Sheffield.

I would like to outline the basics of the Community Programme, and also try and cut through some of the confusion which I suspect exists in all of your minds - and which at times certainly still exists in my mind - as to just what we're talking about in MSC, with our love of acronyms and with a constant succession of different programmes, one replacing the other.

We hope that the position is now actually starting to clarify a little bit. We have two mainstream programmes: the Youth Training Scheme, which is a training scheme for young people and the Community Programme, which is a programme of temporary work for unemployed people. It is the Community Programme which I would like to run through very briefly and I'll try and point out some of its strengths and weaknesses.

Basically the Community Programme is a programme of temporary work. It is quite a large programme. We have an objective of catering at any one time for 130,000 people. We are still in the build-up stage, but at present we have 90,000 people actually on projects with a lot more projects in the pipeline. We are more than confident - in fact we're apprehensive - that we are going to break our budgets and we're going to have a programme that is bigger than the Government has allowed us. The work done on the Community Programme must be performed by longterm unemployed adults and must be work which is of benefit to the community. There are one or two other rules, but those are the major two and that is the framework within which we work.

The reason why we have a Community Programme is pretty obvious: unemployment has risen very markedly since 1980. More importantly (or perhaps more depressingly), the long-term unemployed - people who have been continuously unemployed for more than 12 months - has risen at a greater rate than unemployment generally. Even when unemployment eventually starts to fall, we'll still find that the share of long term unemployed people will continue to rise for some time.

So there is a very large group of people who have been out of work for quite a long time; many of them through no fault of their own. We have tried to recognise too that there are two major age bulges. There are a very large number of young people under the age of 25 who have only had very short periods of work - maybe no work at all. They might have been on a Government training scheme but their experience of actually doing paid work is extremely limited. We have tried to recognise that by giving them some preference in entry to the Programme. Instead of insisting that they have had to be unemployed for 12 months in the past 15, they can qualify for the programme if they have been unemployed for 6 months in the past 9. That is something of rough justice because there is also a very large block of people above 50 who have been unemployed for a very long time, but we

still insist that they should have been unemployed for 12 months in the last 15 before they can enter the Programme.

The Programme itself, although very limited in terms of its objective - which is to provide temporary work - does in fact give a range of benefits to individuals. The one thing that keeps all of us who work on the Programme going is meeting the people on the job. Their morale is very much lifted because of the opportunity to do useful work. Often it might not be very fancy work, but it is work which suits them and from which they can get some satisfaction. They can get satisfaction too from working in a group, which is quite a strong plus factor for a lot of people.

They also get recent work experience and even in a very depressed labour market recent work experience is of tremendous value when you are going for job interviews. People who have been on the Community Programme find that their chances of getting a job are doubled. (That still doesn't mean they are very dramatically improved: in many places double next to nothing is still next to nothing. In other places where job market conditions are better, the very fact that people have recent work experience is very significant in applying for jobs.) That is coupled with the fact that they will have a current reference, which again is of significance to a lot of employers.

Clearly, for many people the big plus of the Community Programme is the opportunity to earn a wage and get some premium over State benefits. It is very easy to forget just how near the bone are the finances of people who have been unemployed for a very long time and it is easy for me to get annoyed when other people knock the Programme and ask what is the point of a person working for £10 a week? But, in fact, that £10 a week extra might be the difference between having a pair of shoes and not. So the fact that people can earn a premium over their benefits is significant and what should be increasingly significant is to get more training into the Community Programme to provide additional benefits over and above simply recent work experience.

So that is the framework and within that framework MSC will bear most of the employer's costs. In fact, some have so ordered their affairs that MSC bears all of the costs. Primarily we will pay the full wages or salaries of supervisors and managers, including their National Insurance contributions. It is the same with other workers and we'll make a contribution towards the operating costs of schemes on which individuals are employed. That payment, which isn't a particularly princely sum, is up to £440 for each individual other worker. The wages are the rate for the job which exists in the locality, subject to a ceiling, which is set at £98 a week, which is fairly realistic in most occupations, but causes some problems with skilled men, particularly skilled construction and civil engineering craftsmen. For managers and supervisors we pay an additional premium which relates to the size of the scheme and local authority salary scales for broadly similar work.

The sting in the tail is that, despite the fact that we will pay up to £98 for other workers, we want the total wage bill for other workers to average out at £60. That is because we have a limited amount of money and a very large demand - we have got over 1½ million long term unemployed people and we're trying to create as big a Programme as we can to meet their needs. We have managed to stretch the Programme to 130,000 by this device of keeping the average wage at £60. But that

certainly causes administrative headaches for the people who are running the schemes and in the early days of the Programme attracted an awful lot of flak from people who saw the Community Programme as another pressure to depress wages in the economy.

Clearly an average wage of £60 a week can only be achieved if some people work part-time rather than full-time. So the hours worked on projects very much depend on the wages calculation. Basically, almost every project is a mixture of part-time and full-time work, although there are some part-time only projects, where everybody, even supervisors, is on a part-time basis. Again, we're fairly easy about that. We stipulate a minimum of two days a week which must be worked, but people can and do work on schemes anything between two and five days a week.

Coming on to training: we do want to create opportunities for training. Clearly if people are in part-time work there are opportunities for them to go to college, or take adult and continuing further education outside the schemes themselves. In addition to that, we have taken a fairly broad view as to what sort of training is possible. We have tried not to hedge it around with bureaucracy. We have said that those on schemes can receive training which is appropriate to the needs of the project. Clearly that relates back to some of the points Rosie made - it makes no sense at all to take unskilled labourers on and give them no training at all relating to a project. Equally we can, and in some projects do, give training to people to help them to improve their job prospects. Some sponsors of projects are trying to encourage people to go into self-employment or into co-operatives. That sort of training can be funded from the operating costs. But although we say there is no great bureaucracy surrounding what can and cannot be done, the thing which actually constrains the amount of training is the cash available and the actual resources in terms of supervisors and training officers on many schemes.

In terms of the work which can be done on projects, the first and perhaps most significant point is that the work offered must be appropriate to the needs and the skills of local unemployed people. This is where we get some problems, when people want a lot of unemployed, fully skilled stone masons to do a particularly fancy piece of work: the reality is that in some parts of the country they'll do very well to get unemployed builders' labourers. So in each of our local office areas we have to try and balance out the sort of projects and work that is offered with the skills and aptitudes of local people.

The work itself must be of benefit to the community. It is easier to say than to define just what is of benefit to the community and there is a whole range of different benefits. Benefits don't have to be very tangible; something which is of aesthetic or cultural benefit is equally legitimate. Crucially, it must be work which wouldn't otherwise have been done and work which will not put jobs in normal employment at risk. That sounds very obvious, but it is very tempting for an organisation to identify a particular project which has been on the stocks for quite a while and which a local builder was going to do and to decide that it would be lovely to get all these unemployed fellows to do it. We try and get round that in a number of ways. First of all, in actually talking to people, we do try and establish whether in fact the work was scheduled to have been done and whether people are simply exploiting

the CP. We also require that there is the support of local employers' associations and trade unions for any projects which are undertaken.

The work itself falls into three main categories, some of which are more relevant to this conference than others. There are environmental improvements; there is the provision of social amenities; and there is the general area of social and cultural work. Clearly it is the first category which strikes the most immediate chord. Some of the projects include the construction of footpaths, removal of debris and rubbish from country parks, clearance of canals, stabilisation of sand dunes and coast-lines, replacement of dead elms, reclamation of land in inner cities and conversion into parks etc.

Some of the social amenity schemes are of less immediate relevance here, but I think the creation of riding schemes for the disabled - and we're doing a lot of work with MENCAP in that area - is one which certainly has some relevance to this conference. Others include construction of adventure playgrounds which do not have to be in inner cities although they do tend to be, and construction of new allotments which might well be something which some of you find of interest.

On the social and cultural side, the projects which come to mind are farm museums and industrial museums and restoration of exhibits as well as actual construction work upon sites. There is a lot of work going on in this respect, some of it not far from here on quite big industrial museums.

There is also quite a lot of work which is partly social, partly environmental, which relates to making sure that existing facilities are accessible to the disabled. Things that might come to mind are fishing stands that disabled people can get their wheelchairs onto and constructing ways round stiles on footpaths, so that people in wheelchairs can gain access. So there is a whole mass of different projects and MSC's role is to encourage a variety of different organisations and people to come forward with ideas.

The answer to the question, "What sort of organisations can run a project?", could really be paraphrased as, "Anybody". Almost every type of organisation you can think of is actually sponsoring projects somewhere under the Community Programme. Of course, the drawback in getting involved with an organisation like MSC is that there is an irreducible level of form filling and bureaucracy and a lot of people find that a real turn-off. They've got a project they want to do, they can identify work of community benefit, but the very thought of actually becoming a sponsor is simply too much.

We have tried to anticipate that problem by setting up a bureaucratic device called Community Programme Agents. These are bodies (and we've got one or two individuals from these bodies in the audience today) which contract with MSC to provide an agreed number of places on projects which are run by a variety of individual sponsors. They act as 'middle men' and take over the day-to-day management and control, working with the sponsor. They do a lot of the administration which I think is the thing which most people get very anxious about. Also they do bring a number of additional benefits which I'll run on to in a minute. Almost anybody who has the competence to take on the job of being a Community Programme Agent; that is having the necessary resources and crucially the expertise to do the job, can take on this role.

CP Agents bring considerable advantages to the individual sponsor. The first thing they can do is to balance out wage costs within the £60 average across all the projects which they are responsible for managing on behalf of the MSC. Clearly there are some projects which will employ a large number of part-timers working a few hours a day where average wage costs will be very low, but there are others on which it will be essential to have a very high proportion of full-time people, many of whom are earning somewhere around the maximum wage of £98. Thus they enable there to be some flexibility in balancing the different performance of different sponsors. Although an individual sponsor might actually be exceeding his budget of £60, across the Agency as a whole the magical equation might still work out. It sounds horribly complicated, but so far people are making it work and it is a big advantage to the individual sponsor.

CP Agents do also allow some pooling of operating costs. There are some projects which are capital intensive and need considerable inputs of cash. There are some which, apart from buying pencils, biros and paper, need very little in terms of resources. Again the Agent has the freedom to pool some of the operating costs and that is a great help.

Basically what the Community Programme Agent provides is expertise; expertise in management support, particularly in terms of payment systems; (having a wages manager is of great significance, I think); and management support in training. If Community Programme Agents can find sufficient flexibility within our not very generous funding arrangements, they can appoint a training officer. It is possible therefore to have some sort of coherent training throughout a series of individual small projects, which would be unlikely to develop within individual projects, where simply completing the task tends to be the orientation. In addition, CP Agents also generate a little bit more money - £100 per filled place per year.

So, basically, the Community Programme is very simple in concept and not too complicated in its administration, despite some of the apparently frightening points I've been touching upon. Certainly, we try and make it as simple as we can through the appointment of Community Programme Agents who are responsible for over 75% of all the places available within the Community Programme. Agents are being used and, by-and-large, they are living with the bureaucracy. They open the door for sponsors who have got projects: they open the door most significantly for MSC of course, in terms of the number of jobs they are making available to the unemployed.

On the other hand, although the Community Programme should be seen as a tremendous resource, as a tremendous input into any particular task which needs to be done, it is one which has very real limitations and I think it would be foolish of me not to outline these. The greatest danger is that people see the Community Programme as some sort of final solution to the unemployment problem. Clearly that's a nonsense - it's very limited and it will need additional input. Particularly in the first year, it might actually need some additional financial inputs, but the things that the Community Programme really needs from participants and sponsors, are inputs of technical and planning expertise, otherwise there is a terrible danger that projects may go off at half-cock and people actually do things which in environmental terms might be less of an improvement and more of a disaster. So there is a

great need for technical and planning inputs. They don't of course have to come from paid employees.

I think this links up with the points Rosie was making - there is a lot of scope for taking advantage of technical and planning expertise. We've already started tentatively on an experimental basis in Wales to develop volunteer boards, with people like estimators and planners and civil engineers involved, who will advise sponsors and our own people and the Area Manpower Board, on actually running the Programme locally and on the viability of projects. But clearly there are numerous large organisations (and BTCV is among them) that have been extremely good in improving the technical quality of proposals put to them, of vetting proposals and making sure the things that happen are actually of benefit and not just 'make work' schemes.

Certainly on the training side, organisations can give additional input. There are also all sorts of other people who can make inputs on training that are not always taken advantage of. There is an awful lot of job specific training which suppliers of equipment are willing to give and that is a resource which isn't always used. Local authorities, through their further education and community education system, can provide additional training. There are the additional funds and additional management expertise which a lot of large commercial organisations - banks, insurance companies, the larger retail stores - are willing to give and are putting into schemes, because they see community benefit as a good thing to be associated with. But they also see that the Community Programme offers opportunities for their own managerial development. Putting people into a different environment is very good for bringing them on and developing them.

So there is a need for additional resource; but there is also a need always to remember the type of labour which is going to be available. It is going to be predominantly unskilled; it is going to need good supervision; and it is going to need tasks which are actually appropriate to available skills and abilities.

Finally, and crucially, there is also the danger of dependence and it's a danger which perhaps you'll come back to me on. I do see a lot of schemes which have been so intimately tied up with MSC funding under some guise or other for the last few years that their whole structure is absolutely dependent upon MSC and if we pulled the rug away from them they would collapse. It's a problem we are going to have to address ourselves to - we've already started tentatively thinking about how we're going to do it, but we've got to wean away from dependence some organisations which maybe have got themselves over-stretched - they opened too many miles of track which now they can't maintain without having MSC paid labour or unless of course they can get a lot of volunteers and I think volunteers are going to be at a premium soon. Thus there is a danger of becoming over-dependent. So, although I think organisations that do consider a link with MSC shouldn't be put off because of the danger of dependence, they should certainly recognise the danger of dependence and be aware of it from the outset, because forewarned is forearmed.

DISCUSSION

C. Bonsey (Session Chairman, Member of CRRAG and Recreation Officer, Hampshire County Council)

Thank you Rosemary for a stimulating review of some schemes and Tony for leading us through a very complex area with admirable simplicity. There are many points which I think people would want to raise and some of them really are quite deep, such as the point you mentioned right at the end, of the danger of becoming completely hooked and dependent upon MSC's life saving aids.

J. Sully (West Yorks Metropolitan County Council)

I am on the Water Space Amenity Commission, which is abolished next week. I am on the Yorkshire Water Authority, which abolishes my local authority place next week. I am with the West Yorkshire County Council, which is to be abolished in two years time. All the bodies I represent are very much involved both with the voluntary sector and with MSC.

I would first take up a point from Rosie Simpson's paper: mention was made of the Tame Valley scheme and the work with volunteers in Greater Manchester. Greater Manchester puts £100,000 a year revenue into Tame Valley alone; it puts a similar sum of money into river schemes in Greater Manchester. I am very envious, as a West Yorkshire County councillor, of what Greater Manchester does. But, in two years time, the Government is abolishing Greater Manchester County Council. All that work will finish and there will be no work for the volunteers to do. The Districts will not pick up the cost. The point Rosie made very strongly was that you can't have volunteers without local authorities spending money. Greater Manchester does that in a tremendous way, but once the Government pulls the rug from under Greater Manchester then the voluntary activity will cease.

I'll now turn to West Yorkshire. You mentioned BTCV. In West Yorkshire the County Council funds all its salary costs. Once again, the Government pulls the rug out from West Yorkshire County Council and that source of funding ceases. We've got rate capping on local authorities, and the Districts will not pick up that tab.

We have within West Yorkshire volunteer rangers. These came about because my Countryside Officer and I had both been volunteer wardens in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, saw how that operated and wanted to do a service in West Yorkshire. We accept entirely the fact that we have to fund posts within West Yorkshire to cope with our volunteer rangers. It does cost us, we accept that and think it's worthwhile. We get many things out of our voluntary rangers that we couldn't as an authority do. So once West Yorkshire goes, in two years time, support goes from that. Our ranger service will cease, and the work we're doing within the countryside of West Yorkshire will cease for, I guess, 10 years. This is going to happen,and it is a dilemma that has to be faced.

I don't think the difficulties local authorities are in have really come across at this conference. Even in non-metropolitan counties, rate capping is there: resources are being pulled back. They're charging for guided walks; they're trying to do everything on the cheap - and it's

an impossible task. You need the resources from the local authorities and it is a message that needs to get across to somebody.

If I could turn to Tony Potter and the MSC: he pointed out in his talk a scheme in West Yorkshire that we're very pleased about and that is the scheme on the Rochdale Canal. In a year we've managed to get a 3½ mile section of the canal restored and have rebuilt 12 locks. As far as we can see it's been a tremendous scheme. One of the things it enables us to do - and again we accept it - is to draw in extra funds from within the County Council - for example, £50,000 to alter a bridge so that we can take boats under it. Eventually somebody is going to try and pick up a bill for £1 million which will be contract work, not MSC work, to make the whole canal navigable to connect it with the main canal system. We accept most of the points you said and we understand that the MSC is giving us considerable help. But again, the question is, when the rug is pulled out from under the County Councils, will the MSC find difficulty with the smaller units? If you look at the major work on canal restoration, it is being done through the Metropolitan County Councils.

Finally, I think CRRAG ought to consider disseminating information about what Shire Counties and Metropolitan County Councils are doing with volunteers. Everybody is doing work differently and everybody has their own experience.

C. Bonsey

I wonder whether Rosie and Tony have any views and helpful remarks to make about what happens to projects when - and if - the underpinning is removed.

Rosie Simpson (Peak District National Park)

I'll take the point that local authorities shouldn't feel that they can organise volunteers without it costing them something, either in staff time or money or both. If a local authority is abolished, then obviously there's going to be a void, but I wouldn't like to think only local authorities can organise volunteers. The voluntary sector is equally active through organisations like the Naturalists' Trusts, the volunteers organised for other authorities like the Nature Conservancy Council, and local conservation volunteers who organise themselves to do conservation work. So I don't think we should think that local authorities are the only organisations which can mobilise volunteers.

T. Potter (Manpower Services Commission)

I too see that there would be a void if the Metropolitan Counties go, as appears likely. Yet over half the schemes on the Community Programme are sponsored by people in the voluntary sector. I think the point is well made that they tend to be the smaller schemes - although there are some very large and ambitious schemes, they are the exception rather than the rule We would have to use the MSC device of 'managing agent' to build up a consortium making very little demand on the local authority, reinforced perhaps from the private sector and certainly from the voluntary sector, to take on the job of management control.

D. Johnson (Surrey Voluntary Service Council)

I run a countryside conservation youth training scheme funded by MSC and working on site throughout Surrey.

I would like to make a number of points: firstly, I regard young MSC trainees as quality volunteers. The fact that they receive a training allowance of £25 a week merely gives them a chance to volunteer. To refute three points that Group E put forward yesterday evening, trainees are not conscripts, they volunteer to join the scheme. They don't have a contract, they are free to leave at any time, and because we are continually training in countryside skills, their standard of work is very high.

Secondly, my trainees have all the motivations that Barbara Mostyn described yesterday. I would suggest that they have even greater motivation than some other volunteers because they volunteer ultimately to seek a professional job in the countryside.

Thirdly, having heard the gentleman from the BTCV yesterday saying that MSC schemes were violating the environment, I was pleased to hear Rosie's opinion about volunteer standards. The standard of our work has been commended by the NCC, the local Naturalists' Trust and the National Trust.

Finally, I would like to see regular meetings where voluntary organisations and public bodies may discuss points which were making us bitter and which accordingly were raised at this conference.

Rosie Simpson

I would like to reinforce what you mentioned about standards. From the survey I've conducted it seems that the standard of volunteer work is high, providing that the organisation and supervision is good. There will always be exceptions and it is unfortunate if an exception should turn people away from working with volunteers.

T. Potter

It is very encouraging to hear what you say. I confined my presentation to a discussion of the Community Programme, for that reason, I did not refer to a very small but significant scheme called the Voluntary Projects Programme. In the scheme, MSC is trying to see if there are ways in which it can encourage unemployed people to take on voluntary activity. We can provide a limited amount of funding to help people set up a project. The budget is very small - £8 million in the coming year and the scheme is still experimental.

Regarding the question of what is a volunteer and what is a pressed man, in the end labels don't really matter. Motivation, proper control and training are more important and determine the results.

M. Nicholson (Land Use Consultants)

My question arises from Rosie's analysis of volunteers doing manual tasks on the countryside.

I am rather inclined to question whether her data may be incomplete in that the bodies controlling manual volunteers are very explicitly volunteer bodies, like the BTCV, whereas I think quite a bit of other volunteering is organised differently. For example, more than 50 years ago we turned out more than a thousand volunteers on the Great Crested Grebe census, and since then there has been an enormous volunteer input to bird censuses. They all involved hundreds and sometimes thousands of people who, it seems to me, are doing voluntary conservation work but on a survey basis. I question whether that aspect has been adequtely covered.

Rosie Simpson

Yes I take your point. You are quite right that there is an enormous amount of other non-physical work going on. But for the purpose of my survey I wasn't concerned with organisations such as, for example, RSPB or naturalists' trusts who are doing an enormous amount of work. I think there is scope for more research to discover how extensive such work is its nature, because it extends from ornithological work to botanical work and archaeological work as well.

R. Hall (BTCV)

I would like to draw Tony Potter out a bit more on the Volunteer Projects Programme, as this does seem to me to be a very exciting opportunity for voluntary organisations, as it gives them a chance to get involved with people who would not otherwise be drawn to volunteering. I wonder whether you could say how far it has been taken up, how successful you think it has been and where you see it developing?

T. Potter

As I don't run the programme, I don't know it very well at all. But I do know that it has not been the success we had hoped, perhaps because the message hasn't got round, and we've chopped some of its very small budget. In the coming year we are going to devolve it to our local offices to see if we can get some impetus into it. At the moment, because it is a pilot, we've run it from head office. Perhaps that isn't the best way of doing it.

The funding of VPP is simpler than the funding of the Community Programme: it is a block grant type arrangement. So potentially there should be a lot of scope within the VPP programme. The contact is Jacob Franklin at MSC HQ, Moorfoot, Sheffield.

A. Ellis (Water Authorities Association)

Another aspect of how public authorities work with volunteers is the involvement of the water authorities in industrial archaeology. We have got a huge heritage of pumping stations and various other structures and far from just waiting for volunteers to come to the industry, many local managers have found ways of stimulating volunteer groups to preserve the heritage of the industry. This has proved a very good way of ensuring that some of our classical engines etc. are actually maintained. This isn't nature conservation - it's more industrial and heritage conservation, but it is still nevertheless a legitimate voluntary activity.

T. Huxley (Chairman of CRRAG)

Two questions to Tony Potter please. First of all, I wonder if we could get on record the number of people employed by Manpower Services Commission to achieve the 130,000 temporary CP jobs you mentioned earlier on.

Secondly, we've heard a great deal about training unemployed people, but I would like to know to what extent staff within MSC are trained to take the very positive and very sincere approach that Tony Potter has expressed in relation to these programmes, throughout the whole of the country. It is one of the facts of life which I hear frequently and have direct experience of, that the actual way in which MSC policies are interpreted varies quite a lot from place to place. Perhaps that's just a characteristic of people, that they should interpret programmes in different ways. On a number of occasions, which I won't detail now, I have not found that the positive way of working with MSC, which Tony Potter has described, actually has taken place.

T. Potter

There are only 710 people employed by MSC on Community Programme work. MSC, in all its activities, not just the Community Programme but also in the Youth Training Scheme, works almost exclusively through agents, through intermediaries. It is the only way that we can manage or attempt to manage programmes. Our staffing resources are very tight. Our staffing resource too is, in the main, very young, very inexperienced in the Programme which it's running - the CP is less than 12 months old, so we are still learning.

The people on the Community Programme tend not to be drawn from the Youth Training Programme, but from our Jobcentre network. So they suddenly find themselves in an environment where there aren't as many rules as they've been used to and where they meet different sorts of people. All of those are alibis to explain why you might have had a bad experience with one or two people.

The reality of the way in which we operate is that we are almost exclusively a decentralised service offering a product locally, through local management, controlled not just by our own local officials but through a network of 55 Area Manpower Boards which are drawn up on the usual MSC tripartite model of trade unionists, employers and local authority and education service representatives. They actually manage the Programme. What we've tried to do is to have sufficiently broadly couched rules to enable people to marry up local needs, local projects and their local Area Manpower Board. Certainly there are inconsistencies between areas - inconsistencies of interpretation. We do what we can to try and iron that out. However, there is a balance to be struck between going for a responsive, decentralised structure which risks doing its own thing from time to time and having a structure with the dead hand of bureaucracy on it and a code of instructions 6 inches thick! At the moment I think MSC falls awkwardly between the two models - the code of instructions hasn't yet been written. So there are genuine difficulties and it is disappointing if you come up against them. If we know about them, then we are determined to overcome them.

D. Fletcher (Pennine Heritage)

I would like to follow up this question of MSC labour on the Community Programme. My experience as Chairman of a voluntary organisation which is a Community Programme Agency, has been quite different from Tom Huxley's. I have established a very good relationship with our Area Office.

My worry about the CP scheme goes back to this business of rug pulling. We've got some very good projects and some really first class people carrying them out and many of them, particularly the part-timers, are definitely volunteers. What we pay them on a part-time basis because of the £60 average means that they are earning only £40-£45 a week, which is no more than they were getting previously in terms of benefits. So they really are volunteering but they're enjoying it and they're doing very good work.

However, I would like to see the work that they're doing become permanent rather than temporary. I believe that our voluntary organisation has the capacity to do this if we can bend the rules a little bit further. We have had funding from a variety of sources, the Countryside Commission, the Carnegie Trust, the English Tourist Board and our track record to date has been to use a period of funding to establish something which then becomes self-financing; to use the free-wheeling period to launch ourselves. That is not easy with the Community Programme because we can't start charging; we can't generate revenue; we can't set up anything which will make a profit in the CP-funded year to carry over into subsequent years. I wonder if there is any way in which these rules could be re-negotiated, because the work that's being done is useful; the people we've got want a full-time job, there's no question about that. Couldn't we perhaps use this money a little more effectively in the long term?

C. Bonsey

I'm afraid Mr. Fletcher we've run out of time; perhaps you'd like to pursue your question with Tony.

THE BRITISH SUB-AQUA CLUB AND ACCESS TO WATER

David Shaw

Chairman, British Sub-Aqua Club, Access and Sites Committee.

First of all I would like to describe the British Sub Aqua Club, its history and its organisation for the benefit of those amongst you who know little about it. The BSAC is the largest diving club in the world, having been established in 1953 by a few enthusiasts in the London area. Members now number some 28,000 in this country and all over the globe, organised in well over 1,000 branches and special branches. Prince Philip is our past President and Prince Charles our present one. The Club employs only three full-time officials plus ancillary/secretarial staff and is run by elected Officers and National Council who are voted for annually by the membership. The Club has a National Chairman, Diving Officer, Treasurer and Secretary together with the nine elected members of Council and this organisation is mirrored in the branches of the Club which are autonomous bodies organising their training and diving according to nationally laid down standards. The aim of the BSAC is to promote underwater exploration in a safe and controlled manner and we have many experts in the various fields of underwater activity, photography, biology and archaeology. A person joining the local branch of the BSAC becomes automatically a member of the parent organisation, the benefits of which include a diving manual, a monthly magazine 'Diver' and third party insurance up to £250,000 liability.

The problems of access did not exist when numbers were few and when a party of divers created great interest among the public. With the tremendous growth of the sport in the 1960s and 70s, together with the growth of other water sports, we have become victims of our own success and most of our problems are to do with numbers. Much equipment is carried by a typical diving inflatable with 4 divers and if one multiplies this by 20, a number not uncommon in popular dive spots during the summer, you can see where problems could arise. Most sea diving requires tidal slack water which means that quite often everyone wants to launch from the same overcrowded slipway at the same time. Blockage of slipways by trailers and equipment is one of the most common complaints against the diving population and one which gives great cause for concern.

Another common factor in the access problem is the shellfish issue, especially the taking of lobsters by divers. It is well known among biologists that the coast of the British Isles is overfished for lobster, commercially, but that fishermen invariably blame divers when catches are low. Accusations of pot-robbing are frequent in some areas and such stories are not helped when divers who take shellfish for their own consumption, blatantly display their catch when they return to the beach or harbour. It must be said that the diver/fishermen conflict is restricted to only a few locations but that it was a key issue in the Seahouses diving ban which I will refer to later.

The third area of complaint is indiscreet changing in popular locations, an issue made much of by the press.

During the 1970's the BSAC recognised the problems the success of the sport was creating and recognised the need to secure diving sites and access both inland and on the coast. There are a few main sites where the BSAC has acted to secure access or has had to take action to lift bans on divers or potential bans.

The 1970's saw the birth of a BSAC policy, the 'Ring of Blue Water' where there was a need to provide easily accessible sites of suitable depth and clarity within easy reach of the urban areas, where most of the divers live. Obvious targets were the flooded quarries and reservoirs which surround our towns and cities. If I can quote from a list, which is by no means exhaustive, you can see the progress made. Dosthill Quarry, near Tamworth, Staffs., was bought by the BSAC from a private landowner and provides sheltered water of up to 25 m depth. The lease also included land for car-parking facilities. Bookings to dive are made through the local BSAC Coach for the West Midlands to avoid congestion in what is a limited sized site. Northam Pit, near Peterborough, is another BSAC acquisition on an annual licence from the London Brick Company and has changing/clubroom facilities. The cost of this licence is approximately £2,000, partly offset by the charging of a small entrance fee for each diver. Guildenberg Pit, also near Peterborough, is administered by the Peterborough branch of the BSAC as another inland site used on a regional basis.

One of the major breakthroughs in providing inland dive sites came with the enlightened approach of the Water Authorities with regard to reservoir use and leisure activities, as opposed to their policies of barbed wire and keep out notices earlier this century. In the London area several of the reservoirs supplying the capital are available for use and the BSAC pays £500 for an annual licence to dive the King George V Reservoir in the Lee Valley. The Derbyshire Association of Sub Aqua Clubs, a federation within the BSAC, successfully negotiated to gain access to the Ladybower Reservoir near Sheffield on a permit basis. The Club is currently negotiating with the North West Water Authority to begin diving activities in the Haweswater/Thirlmere complex in the Lake District. I could name other inland dive sites where either local, regional or national representatives of the BSAC have successfully negotiated access, the above being the main examples in the 'Ring of Blue Water' policy.

In certain areas the BSAC has acted to overcome or prevent bans on launching boats, the largest single threat to coastal access. We enjoy the freedom of the seas, problems arising when restrictions are placed in the harbours/slipways/beaches where we launch our boats. The most serious of these access disputes occurred in 1979 in Seahouses, Northumberland, when the North Sunderland Harbour Commissioners erected a notice on the public slipway in Seahouses Harbour. The ban was discriminative against 'skindivers' and not other leisure water users. Incidentally, whenever divers are painted as villains in the press we are known as 'skindivers' but when performing virtuous tasks are known as 'frogmen'. As a newly elected BSAC National Council member from the North of England I had a vested interest in what is undoubtedly one of the finest diving areas in the UK, the Farne Islands, and entered the 'fray' on behalf of the BSAC and all amateur divers. The Harbour Commissioners were very unforthcoming with reasons for the ban, not replying to initial letters, but it is a well known fact that a small group of vociferous fishermen tend to control things at Commissioners' meetings and that indiscreet changing by divers, careless

trailer disposal and the familiar lobster issue were the reasons for their action.

One of the advantages of belonging to a large organisation like the BSAC is that you have access to people with a wide range of skill and expertise who usually offer their services free. For many years the Club has had the services of an honorary solicitor, Ernie Crook, and between us we began to examine the legality of the ban and quickly secured a copy of the harbour bye laws. Upon their examination it became apparent that there was no bye law which allowed for such a discriminative ban and that the Commissioners' action was ultra vires as they were exceeding their powers. The Commissioners eventually agreed to meet me, as a representative of the BSAC, on the advice of their solicitor, where I hoped things could be resolved without litigation. Following the meeting a decision was taken to allow up to 6 boats/ 30 divers on any day providing the divers were BSAC members only. This was completely unacceptable to us as this was too restrictive and we have the responsibility of looking after the interests of all amateur divers whether they are BSAC members or not. The result was that the club began a High Court action, challenging the legality of the ban. This involved getting the Attorney General's permission to take action on the part of a mass of people, i.e. the BSAC, as opposed to taking out an action by named individuals. This unique court action highlighted the fact that many harbour bye laws date back to a time when pleasure craft were not even considered to be a problem being so few and far between and that in the Seahouses case were not covered by existing bye laws. The result of the action was that the Commissioners, on legal advice, backed down, paid the BSAC legal costs and lifted the ban pending the formation of new bye laws to govern boat launching for recreational purposes. Our action has been suspended pending the publication of the new bye laws and the interesting thing is that the Commissioners asked for our help in the drafting of the above and have consulted us at every stage. We consider that Seahouses was a test case and during the proceedings we built quite a file and expertise in the area of the legal powers of harbour authorities.

There are a few other places on the coast where the BSAC has acted to prevent sanctions without having to go to the lengths described in the Seahouses saga. Aberdaron in North Wales was an interesting one, with trailers on the beach and lobster theft being the reasons for a threatened ban on boat launching. A meeting was held to sort out the problem between all local interested parties and the BSAC with the local MP as mediator. As it was rumoured the proceedings would be held in the Welsh language, we had to ensure several Welsh-speaking divers were present. The outcome was satisfactory with a suggested voluntary conservation policy suggested by the divers and the appointment by the local council of a trailer 'marshal' on the beach at Aberdaron.

At Hope Cove in Devon a problem of overcrowding was sorted out when the BSAC presented the South Hams District Council with a cheque for £250 to offset the cost of refurbishing an alternative slipway for boat launching. In the popular South West the BSAC acquired access to a diver's beach at Porthkerris in Cornwall as an alternative to another local beach where access was threatened.

At Gardenstown in Scotland, a Sunday ban on divers in the harbour was lifted after local BSAC members made representations to the local authority.

At Porthfafarch in Anglesey, a concrete post was placed by the council on a popular access point used by divers and anglers. This kept disappearing until eventually the council agreed that it was unreasonable to stop launching in a site that had been used for years without trouble.

The defensive role of the BSAC in preventing access disputes is a high priority; the price of freedom being eternal vigilance. As part of the education of divers we have adopted the mnemonic STEPS: Seeing Trouble Early Prevents Sanctions. This is the phrase we ask all to adopt as well as to report any potential trouble to the Regional Diving Coach, BSAC HQ or myself as early as possible.

Finally, I should mention that I believe that BSAC policy for the 1980's will be to 'buy in' to secure alternative access points at popular spots around our coastline. This may take the form of helping riparian owners of land adjacent to the sea construct new slipways, combining with other watersports to finance our own and contributing money to local councils, as at Hope Cove, to enable the local authority to provide alternative boat launching facilities. There is no doubt that the BSAC Officers and Council and the general membership (there was a motion at the last AGM to make access our number one priority) view the securing of access as one of our main priorities and problems for the future.

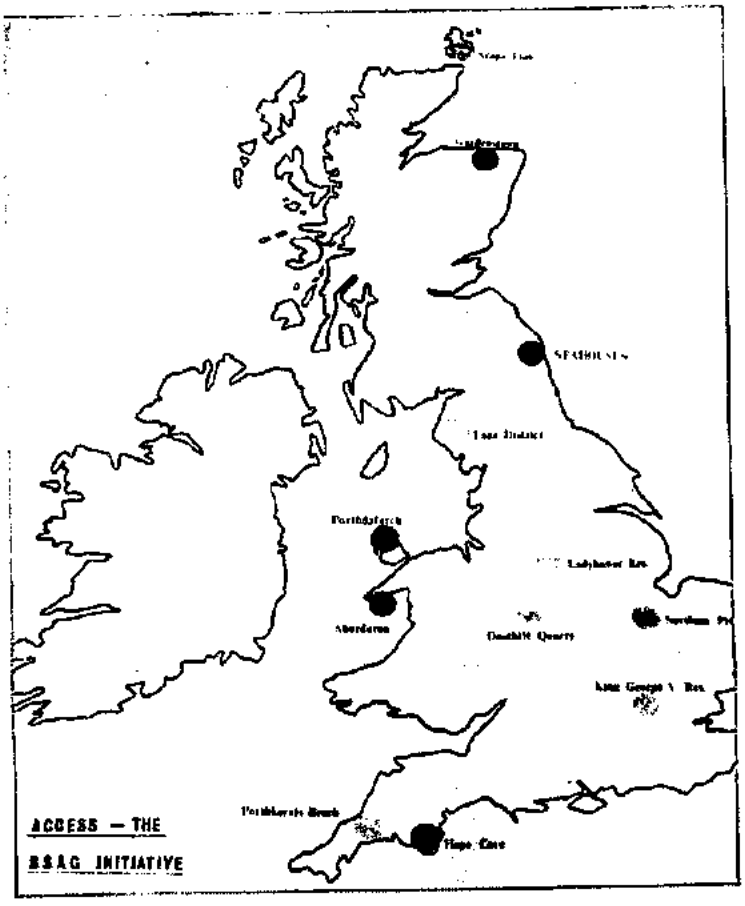

Fig. 1. Access: sites where BSAC have taken initiatives.

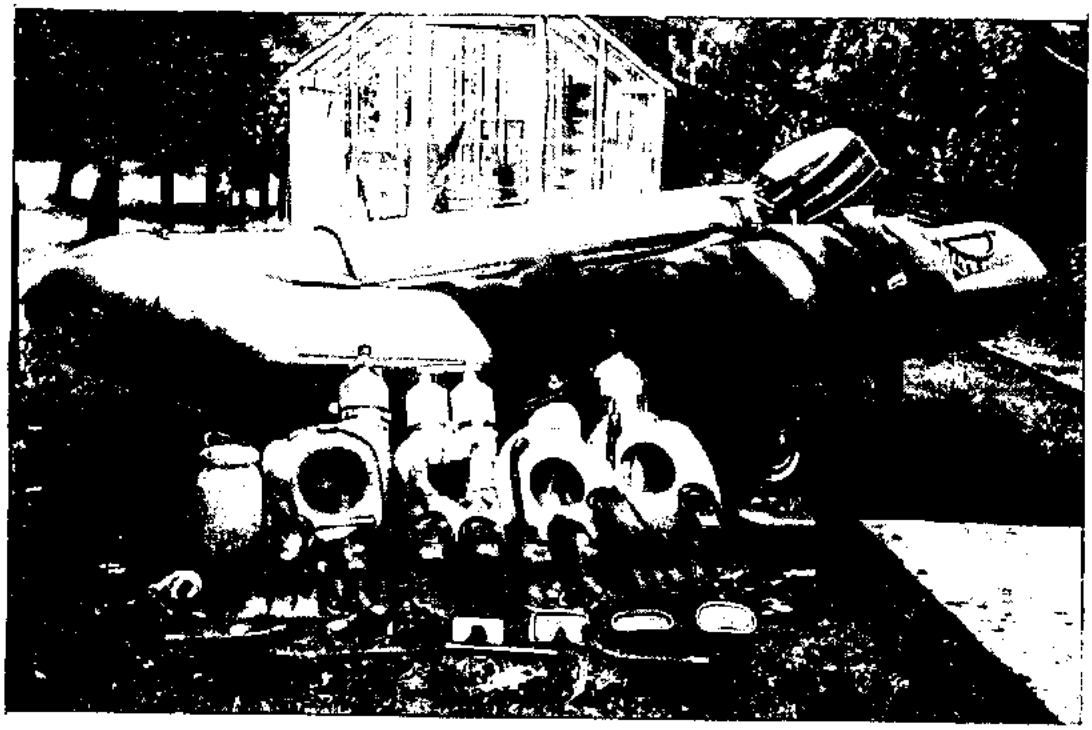

Fig. 2. Equipment needed by a 4 man diving team.

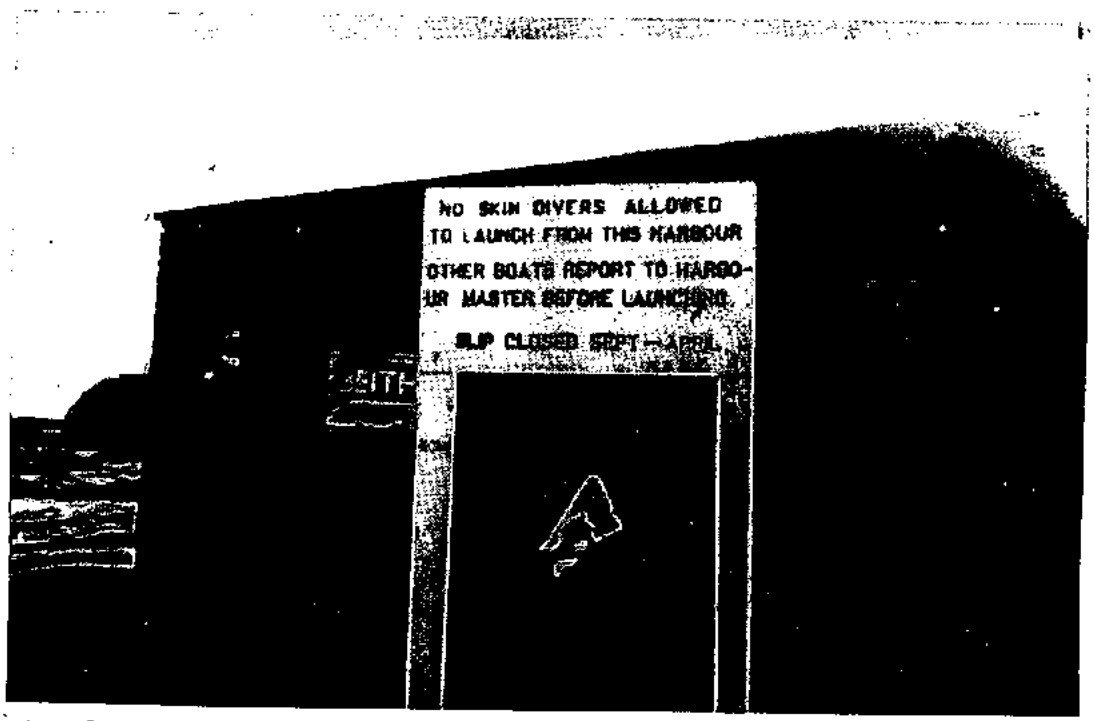

Fig. 3. Harbour Authority notice at Seahouses.

PENNINE HERITAGE AND THE REGENERATION OF THE PENNINES

David Fletcher

Chairman, Pennine Heritage and
Head of Department of Environmental and Geographical Studies,
Manchester Polytechnic.

In this brief paper I wish to present to you an outline of Pennine Heritage under ten headings, namely, its origins; structure; concerns; aims; activities; management; funding; relationship with the public sector; wider relevance; and future development.

Origins

Pennine Heritage was formally launched in 1979 but its real origin was long before that, beginning with the rise of the amenity society movement in the middle 1960s. One of the first and most active groups, Calder Civic Trust, was established in the Hebden Bridge area of West Yorkshire in 1965. It was composed entirely of local people and quickly developed a vigorous programme of voluntary environmental improvement work.

The relationship between environmental degradation and social and economic problems soon became apparent. The area was locked into a classic spiral of decline with the collapse of its traditional industrial base resulting in depopulation, abandonment of buildings, loss of services, growing dereliction and the demoralisation of that population which remained. Clearly, the only way to lasting environmental improvement was to halt the downward slide - and equally obviously, environmental improvement had to be a part of that process. A new four point strategy was put forward:

- Improvement of the environment
- Promotion of the area
- Encouragement to visitors to become full-time residents
- Encouragement to the new and retained population to establish new commercial and industrial enterprises in the town.

Thus the aim was to exploit the area's indigenous resources of character, heritage and recreational potential (in the way that local resources of wool and soft water had helped create previous prosperity) as a means to an end - not as an end in itself. It was also recognised that this process must come from within; that it must stem from the area's long tradition of self-help. Hence the ideas and the original push came from the 'Voluntary Sector', which then sought and eventually developed, a productive partnership with the public sector.

Significant progress was made and substantial dividends received. Recent research (1) has shown that depopulation has been halted and reversed; imbalance in the age structure more than rectified; substantial investment in property improvements made; renewed business confidence and significant job creation in new enterprises effected; and a generally increased satisfaction of the population with the local environment has

come into being. The town has achieved a new image and the downward spiral has been reversed.

Naturally the ideas spread and many neighbouring communities formed similar voluntary groups to work and campaign. Common problems and common opportunities to employ recreational and tourism promotion as an image booster and key to economic revival led to the ideas being placed in a wider context with publication in 1972 of "The Case For A Pennine Park" (2). Formation in 1974 of a federation of voluntary bodies, the Pennine Park Association, to promote the above ideas was unfortunately timed, coinciding with the upheavals of local government reorganisation and cutting across the sensitivities of some newly formed authorities which formed the Standing Conference of South Pennines Authorities (SCOSPA) initially as a reactive body which resisted all overtures from the voluntary sector. Cautious encouragement by the Countryside Commission eventually led SCOSPA to co-opt representatives of the voluntary organisations in 1979 and to commence preparation of guidelines for future collaboration, published in 1982 as the "South Pennines Management Framework" (3).

However well intentioned this document, there is as yet little consensus on mode of implementation and despite the positive efforts of West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council as lead authority, SCOSPA still suffers from the tensions and strains of competing local authorities.

Voluntary sector frustration, plus the realisation that in a world inhabited by the larger, more powerful post-1974 local authorities, voluntary bodies too must change, led to the formation in 1979 of Pennine Heritage Ltd. by a small group of concerned individuals from within the area.

Some detail of this long lead time is given, because it is felt this process is not widely understood and often overlooked by those who examine voluntary organisations from the outside rather than within. No doubt it could have been substantially reduced had the ideas, information, advice and modest funding been more readily to hand – but it could not have been omitted. A quite lengthy incubation period is essential to permit the sharpening of real concerns and the emergence of key individuals, vital to growth and development of any such organisation.

Structure of the Organisation

Pennine Heritage is now formally constituted as a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is one of the new breed of entrepreneurial charities or voluntary enterprise trusts which are developing, often along quite different lines, in various parts of the country. Policy decisions are the responsibility of an elected Council of Management of 15 members, although much day-to-day management is delegated to the Chairman and a smaller Executive Group of members, which meets much more frequently. In addition to members there is an Associate membership scheme for those who wish to offer support and be kept informed.

As activity has expanded so the employed staff has increased from one part-time secretary in 1979 to fourteen full-time permanent employees and over 100 temporary staff employed through the Manpower Services

Commission, Community Programme. The project budget has risen accordingly.

Concerns

Those responsible for initiating the Trust were concerned with the gritstone Pennines of Yorkshire and Lancashire, extending between two National Parks, the Peak and the Dales and bounded east and west by the conurbations of West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester. The thrifty and independent communities which inhabited these hills created for themselves a modest prosperity out of harsh necessity by the domestic manufacture of cloth and in so doing laid the foundations for what has become known as the Industrial Revolution. Of worldwide significance, nowhere are the effects of this revolution more evident than in the Pennine valleys.

This unique and irreplaceable heritage is becoming increasingly recognised and appreciated at the very time when it is under unprecedented threat of destruction. Yet the enormous investment of energy and spirit by the people of the past can become the basis of a more confident future. By conserving, adapting and re-using what is best from the past, the Pennine communities can remain as independent and lively as ever without losing their character.

The current social, economic and environmental difficulties seem further exacerbated by the inability of the public sector to develop any cohesive response. Fragmented among many districts in four counties and two regions there are many obstacles to obtaining a unified viewpoint of what is still a coherent area with a common set of problems and opportunities.

Aims

Thus the Trust aims to reinforce the local tradition of self-help and is determined to see problems as opportunities for future action.

Its stated aims are:

- to strengthen the Pennine identity and so build upon local pride;
- to create a better understanding of the area through the provision of information and interpretation, for through understanding comes concern and care;
- to assist the economic life of the area through the provision of workspace by the re-use of redundant historic buildings, gaining the twin benefits of physical conservation and economic regeneration.

Activities

It follows from the aims that Pennine Heritage is a many sided organisation.

The Birchcliffe Centre – which provides the Trust's base has been created by conversion of a redundant Baptist Chapel in Hebden Bridge. In addition to ourselves, various other voluntary organisations are

housed at the Centre, supported by the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust. The former chapel balcony area provides conference facilities for up to four hundred people and as a later phase the previous Sunday School has become a residential wing, with accommodation for up to 62 people in bedrooms with private shower and toilet facilities.

Pennine Magazine - a bimonthly publication was launched at the same time as the Trust. Written and produced entirely by volunteers it has achieved a high standard and reputation. Printed and distributed commercially it is gaining an increasing circulation and advertising revenue.

Pennine Heritage Network - is one of the first regional interpretive projects to be completed in this country. Funded initially by the Countryside Commission and the Carnegie UK Trust, it is now self-financing from sales of publications, courses, conferences and consultancy services. Heritage courses such as 'Walking with History' weekends are popular and experience is being gained with interpretive community theatre. Training courses are provided for other voluntary groups and seminars held on topics of current importance, such as 'What Future for the Uplands' and 'The Future of Trans-Pennine Rail Routes'.

In addition events such as the annual 'Heritage Swap-Shop' allow all interested local groups to come together to exchange ideas and hear two or three relevant national speakers.

The Community Liaison Team - extend these contacts, taking the 'Pennine message' to a wide variety of local groups, statutory as well as voluntary, and including schools.

Research and data collection are building an archive as a resource base for such groups and study facilities are provided.

Nutclough Mill, Queen Street Mill and other potential projects are giving the Heritage network a physical presence on the surface of the land.

Nutclough Mill, Hebden Bridge abandoned for 17 years, is a grade II listed building having historic links with the producer-cooperative movement and the Worker's Educational Association. Purchased by West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council and transferred to Pennine Heritage for a nominal £1, this building is now undergoing renovation and conversion to provide up to 85 workshop spaces. Built by the community, the building will now once again serve the community as a nursery for new and existing small businesses. A range of support services will also be provided to aid new business starts.

Financial support has been provided by the County and District Councils, Department of the Environment, Historic Buildings Council, Development Commission and Pilgrim Trust.

Queen Street Mill, Harle Syke near Burnley, operated until relatively recently as a century old relic of Burnley's former predominance in the weaving industry. About half of the 40,000 sq.ft weaving shed is being converted to industrial units to let, whilst over 200 nineteenth century looms are to be retained in the remainder, powered by the original 500 h.p. steam engine, as a fully authentic heritage weaving

company, producing and (hopefully) selling cloth, but also providing visitor facilities and attracting visitor revenue.

The mill has been purchased by Burnley Borough Council with the aid of grants from the Department of the Environment and Science Museum. Pennine Heritage has been appointed managing agents for the whole project. Staff appointed are supported by the management fee and further external funding is being sought. The aims are to reduce the Council's input as the scheme moves to become self-supporting and to recreate 95 jobs to replace those lost when the firm closed.

Pennine Taskforce - is responsible for countryside maintenance and management. As stated previously, promotion of the area is seen to be an important part of the strategy for recovery. Therefore clearance of footpaths and bridleways, rebuilding of stone walls, tree planting - the actual presence of taskforce members and their liaison with both the farming community and the general public, are all vital parts of this effort. Work is carried out to assist both voluntary bodies and statutory agencies. Six teams, each of seven or eight members are currently active with three vehicles for support.

Funding is almost entirely from Manpower Services Commission sources although sponsorship from both private and public sectors must now be sought.

Community Programme Agency - established by Pennine Heritage, supervises our own teams, but also enables other voluntary groups in the area, not having their own administrative capacity, to sponsor Manpower Services Commission schemes.

Research - students are received on placement from several Higher Education establishments in the North of England. These bring a variety of skills from graphic arts to hotel management and environmental sciences.

In addition, the close relationship with the Department of Environmental and Geographical Studies at Manchester Polytechnic has produced much detailed collaborative research, such as an evaluation of the strategy for recovery mentioned above; woodland management and moorland management techniques; and an upland agriculture study.

Management

Despite the large number of paid staff, Pennine Heritage is still based firmly in the voluntary sector and intends to remain so. Each project outlined above is the responsibility of a voluntary working group, steering group or advisory committee according to its nature and origin. New projects may be brought to the Council of Management or Executive for approval and will be judged according to their relationship to the aims and philosophy of Pennine Heritage, the credibility of the idea and the ability of the proposers to initiate necessary fund raising and project management.

Pennine Heritage is an umbrella charity - a facilitating organisation which links all projects to a single coherent programme and provides experience, expertise and advice to aid their implementation. It is therefore, very importantly, a network of people and ideas, as well as information and facilities.

Funding

As a voluntary organisation, Pennine Heritage can be very cost-effective and give good value for money. But to borrow from current slogans of the day - although it may be good at 'poundstretching' it is not in the business of 'money printing'. Before a pound can be stretched it must first be obtained! Thus some form of grant aid is sought to launch each project - or rather more often, several sources of grant aid. For one valuable function that the Trust is able to perform is coordination at the local level of financial and other inputs to any scheme. This is very valuable, for rarely is one source of support sufficient. It is usually necessary to negotiate widely and assemble a package of support which is very time consuming, but effective. The most difficult pound to get is the first. Public agencies may care to note that. After this is achieved, funding begins to create its own momentum as credibility increases.

This does not overcome the problem of core funding to support the organisation during this often lengthy and difficult initiation period. Projects themselves may eventually attract funds - the essential central administration rarely does.

Equally, and quite properly, projects never receive indefinite funding. Grants and donations almost always have strings and are for specific purposes within a predetermined time-scale. Far too many aided projects collapse when funds cease, because they have not made adequate provision for future operation.

All this points to the need to view any grant aid as a catalytic input or a pump-priming exercise and to plan the use of this period as a short-term transition to a revenue-generating, self-financing state - much easier for some projects than others. But further than this, if the central core of the organisation is to survive, to initiate new ideas and serve its original aims, projects must make a profit to sustain the parent body. Too many voluntary bodies seem afraid of profit, as if it was not their purpose to become involved in some ugly commercial world. There is nothing inherently wrong with profit - it is the way in which it is used which is important.

Equally, too many funding agencies seem to have a fear that their aid may be used to generate profit - when surely, if this helps sustain the organisation or project which they found worthy in the first place, they should be better satisfied. There are wide variations here among the grant making bodies and I would appeal for more unorthodoxy, less rigidity. Give the project careful scrutiny, subject the organisation to thorough investigation - but if all the omens are good, give it the money and let it get on with the job! After all, every registered charity and company limited by guarantee must produce accounts, open to public scrutiny. Safeguards exist. Accountability is there.

If a project is to survive the end of a period of external funding, it must construct a launching pad - something which is not easy to do, for example with Manpower Services Commission funding. One day it is there and the next it is gone. There is no opportunity to use the Community Programme team to build up an income, retained as a float, to carry it over the inevitable transitional period between subsidised funding and fully earned income.

Relationship with the Public Sector

Pennine Heritage actively seeks to establish a productive partnership with local authorities and other statutory agencies. The response has been mixed. Obviously, from remarks above, there has been very successful cooperation with West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council and with Burnley Borough Council. This is equally true of others, but reaction has varied elsewhere from wariness to downright hostility.

However, four years is not long and as our purpose and our potential are more clearly demonstrated there is growing support. We do not see ourselves as a pressure group, but an action group. Our purpose is not to put pressure on others, but to offer a service and to do the job ourselves wherever the opportunity arises. Cooperation is the aim. To act as a facilitator, the purpose, whilst maintaining a totally independent stance as a voluntary trust. Cooperating bodies are often invited to appoint representatives to working groups, steering boards or advisory committees for the particular projects in which they have an interest, but there is no co-option to the Council of Management. The Trust must remain independent of all sponsoring bodies, financial interests and political groupings.

Wider Relevance and Future of Voluntary Trusts

Many requests for information are being received from this country and overseas as interest grows in the voluntary trust approach. Many British and foreign visitors are received at the Birchcliffe Centre and seminars are now being arranged to explain our work, methods and philosophy in greater detail. In a comparatively gloomy world, the future potential for this approach seems encouraging - if only because the need continues to grow and outstrip other possible solutions. However, this does not mean that the rigorous approach adopted in the past four years can in any way be relaxed.

Credibility is the currency of the voluntary movement. It will be judged on its 'track record'. High standards must be maintained - indeed it is often necessary to be more professional than the professionals - for there are always those ever-ready to point the finger of scorn. They must not have their chance.

Trusts born of commitment from within a local constituency have demonstrated their credibility. The gestation period is long, but natural birth generally leads to healthy growth and development of an active purpose, carried forward with passion and fire. It remains to be seen how the 'induced' variety get on, brought to birth more speedily, having to conform to pre-set patterns, hedged with restrictions and in some instances being subject to much greater continuing parental control. I feel it necessary to retain an open mind, for although they have my best wishes, it must be said that they have yet to prove themselves.

However, by whatever method, the movement seems destined to grow. More and more people wish to participate in local affairs, more frequently and more directly than merely through local electoral opportunities. Many have skills of professional or practical expertise to contribute and are well prepared to earn their involvement the hard way. This is no threat to democracy and local democratic institutions, but should only serve to strengthen them.

My advice is to welcome them, to encourage and assist them. Foster but do not force this new growth.

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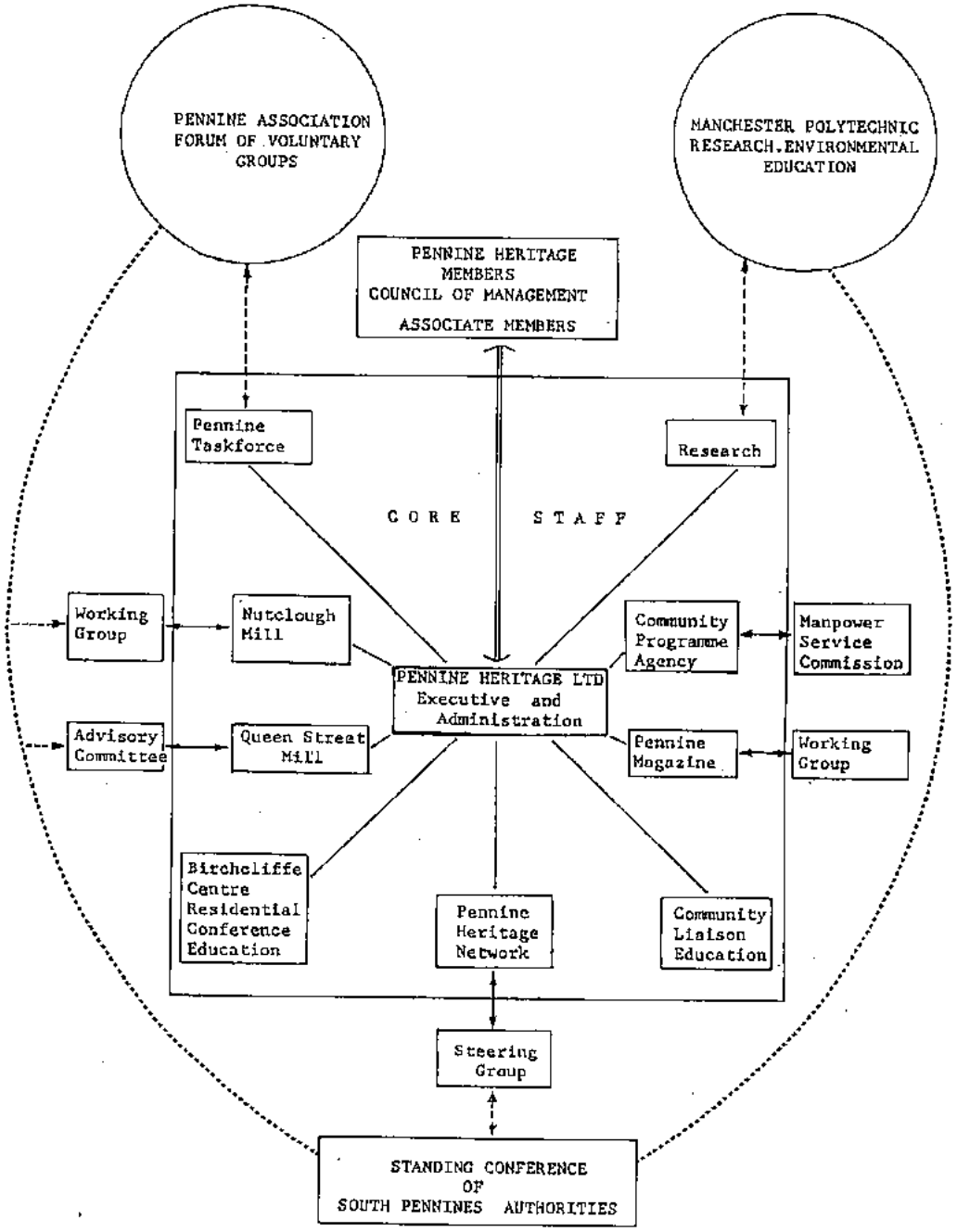

Fig. 1. Structure and Relationships of Pennine Heritage

THE WORK OF THE YORKSHIRE DALES SOCIETY

Colin Speakman

Secretary, The Yorkshire Dales Society

A great deal of what I'm going to say follows on naturally from what David Fletcher has been telling us. In many respects we are one of the 'natural birth' children of the ideas that have been spinning off from Pennine Heritage over the last few years.

The value of the case study I want to present to you lies in the fact that it shows the interesting interface between voluntary body and statutory body. It is something which I have more than a little experience of: maybe I am the classic 'poacher/gamekeeper' that we've heard about over the past couple of days! Indeed, – and it may be for our psychologists here with us to discover why – it seems that inside every bureaucrat there is a volunteer trying to get out. I suspect that in this room there are quite a lot of 'moles' for voluntary causes disguised behind prestigious public sector job titles. Long may they 'mole' away, say I. It's a kind of Jekyll and Hyde life sometimes that we try and pursue. One moment we're representing one point of view, but quietly our heart is with another.

My own career profile reflects this kind of ambiguity. I was initially a schoolmaster and a lecturer, but spent a great deal of time with the Ramblers' Association (as somebody once expressed it, the most effective non-political political party in the UK: the body which is so very effective in getting changes in countryside legislation including of course, the great National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949). I was then fortunate, because of my Ramblers' experience, to shift careers and my hobby became my full-time job in working for a National Park. When I left the National Park to work on a recreational project with the Countryside Commission, I was once again crossing that interesting divide between voluntary and professional insofar as I then became involved in the Yorkshire Dales in a voluntary capacity once again.

I confess to leaving the National Park with a sense of frustration. As somebody who had worked for the Authority for a number of years, I had felt an increasingly strong credibility gap between the performance we were able to achieve and the promises of the great National Park Act – a gap between promise and performance. But the thing that struck me more forcibly than anything else and I think it is relevant to today's discussion, was the gap in the National Park, between the local community and the Park Authority.

Working for a National Park at times is a bit like working for the British army in Northern Ireland – you can almost feel yourself a representative of a kind of occupying force. It's a tragic gap really, between an indigenous rural population with its own customs, feelings, history and way of life, and the very urban concept of National Parks, which are essentially urban in their perception of problems. This new layer of bureaucracy was imposed upon a largely misunderstanding and puzzled local community.

It seems to me that one of the great failures was one of communication; somehow we weren't getting the message across. With that failure in communication came a polarisation of views, so that people began to take up extreme positions, rather than trying to soften these positions. So pressure groups of various kinds - farmers, landowners or businessmen - tended to express views ever more shrilly and in ever more extreme terms. At the same time it was obvious that there were very deep and profound problems in the community that nobody was really effectively facing. The population of the area was declining, the population was ageing, there was a lack of schools and transport - the familiar vicious spiral of an area running down. Yet at the same time, and this to me seemed to be the great paradox, if you actually talked to people, the Dales farmers in particular, there was a tremendous pride and concern for that area - something that was very profound and very deep.

This brings to mind a small anecdote: near Sedbegh, a few years ago, I met a very elderly farmer - a typical Dales character with a flat hat and wellies, the kind of fellow who will survive whatever happens to Western Industrial Civilisation. He was talking about local government changes. Now in that area they've got problems: they not only have the ordinary situation of a District Council and then a County Council, but they've got a National Park from a different authority, North Yorkshire County Council, imposed on top of Cumbria County Council. They can't make head or tail of it and as this old farmer expressed it, "Daft buggers, call it Cumbria: it's never bloody Cumbria. It's Yorkshire and I'm a Yorkshireman". You can understand his feelings. It was his area, it was his land and it was his identity. It does suggest a tremendous pride and sensitivity if you scrape away the belligerence.

Out of this deep sense of frustration, a group of people within the Dales felt they had to do something to try and bridge this gap. This was not a process we could hurry, we had to do it gradually and gently and we had to make sure that the birth was within the area. If we simply tried to start something going, as was suggested at one time, outside the area, then that would be a disaster. We had the famous case in the Dales, which some of you will recall, a place called South House Moor on Ingleborough, where there was a tremendous national row over a forestry scheme. Finally the Minister intervened and the possible desecration of that magnificent hillside was prevented. A lot of people felt then that what we needed in the Dales was a kind of 'Friends of the Yorkshire Dales National Park'. But we felt that as soon as we did that, it would immediately create tremendous hostility amongst the Dales farmers. They would turn round and say, "Those bloody outsiders interfering again" and through the sheer cussedness of human nature there would yet again be polarisation and we would simply be creating another extremist body having to shout as loud as it could against other interests.

So we trod a difficult course and grouped ourselves together - local people, solicitors, farmers, academics, people running small businesses (inevitably a bias to the professional classes). We felt very strongly that we had to bring an organisation into life gradually. In particular, we had to get a dialogue going with the most important people in the Dales, the hill farmers. Unless we got the farmers working with us the new Society was doomed.

Our very first meeting was highly symbolic; it was held on a Dales hill farm with a hill farmer who had been a notorious critic of conservation and National Parks. But after a couple of hours, he made us realise that his awareness of the problems of his own farming and of conservation and of the need to keep young people in the hills was very profound.

Our Society then got itself established and we decided to look very carefully at what was going on a few miles further south in Pennine Heritage. It seemed to us a charitable company was an excellent idea. We realised that this company we had begun to create would have tremendous appeal to people throughout the UK. If we could create it within the area, it would be identifiable by people in the area as their Society and at the same time bring in all those many people and organisations with a common interest in, and love of, the Yorkshire Dales. If we could combine the traditional National Park society objectives of protection and enhancement of the physical and social heritage, with the interpretative function of understanding the Dales and in addition, the crucial concern for the social and economic needs of the area, then we would have something very worthwhile. Several people have said and continue to say that it is impossible to establish a Society to preserve the heritage and at the same time to do something about the economic and social problems. But again, we saw what was happening in Pennine Heritage and it seemed to us to be tremendously important.

So, the Society was launched and the tremendous moment of growth came when the Countryside Commission offered to assist us under its scheme of grant aid for voluntary bodies. It is a very demanding form of grant aid because it is initially quite generous, but it is on a tapering scale. So in effect, without going into detail, it meant that we had to begin to function quickly and effectively, so that we could aim towards self-reliance when the grant runs out. The membership is growing currently, the newsletter is being published and the activities are being organised, so we can make it grow.

We accepted the challenge and got ourselves moving quickly and got into action. We started off by organising a number of seminars on small businesses, rural transport and the future of the uplands, keying in very closely with our social and economic objectives. We have launched our Yorkshire Dales Review with articles about the local dialect poet, natural history, archaeology etc. We have a diary of events for people joining. There are lectures and farm walks. One of our most useful innovations was the bringing together of nine separate museum societies in the Dales, all interpreting the Dales in various ways. We have brought them together with a common marketing poster and with professionals to improve their performance in various ways. Recently Yorkshire Television chose one of the local museums for a programme on community museums in the series, "Making the most of.."

Now we are establishing our credibility, getting our members, getting our organisation going and getting a small part-time office functioning. We are in a position to begin to influence the local authorities and to encourage, help and stiffen the backbone of the National Park Authority and others, so that they can feel they have support from people who care about the area - local support, which National Park Authorities badly need as well as support from outside.

Fundamental to our existence is the question of breaking new ground. We see ourselves as fundamentally an educative body: opinion changers. People who will create a greater awareness of the great heritage of the Dales through publications, activities, meetings and local action. We'll look at social and economic problems; we'll try and do something about the terrifying fragmentation of agencies - the Tourist Boards, National Parks, the County Council Planning Departments, District Councils, etc. - all saying different things. If we could use the voluntary sector to break down barriers, to bring people together, to organise gatherings of various kinds, we could do a great deal of good.

We are seeing ourselves as a prod, a 'ginger group'. Already one third of the members of the National Park Committee are paying members of the Yorkshire Dales Society! We're going to have the odd row with Authority. I think the Park Authority initially were alarmed at this new body, but we now find increasingly that the relationship is there, and they can seek us out. There's no reason why they shouldn't in turn use us, so that if they want to get ideas and support for their policies (if we approve of them), here we are as a kind of 'rent-a-crowd'!

For the future, obviously we work towards greater professionalism. We're reaching a crisis point where we've got to decide if we're going to have full-time professional staff to cope with the membership. Hopefully we're going to be a sensitive, small bureaucracy so that members can respond and modify our behaviour. I see the Society, going back to David's point, as a kind of harnesser of energy; harnessing physical energy through volunteer work of various kinds; but perhaps more fundamentally, harnessing creative energy, getting ideas going, stimulating the kind of imagination that created much of the legislation which set up the National Parks and the local authority resources we now have. In that way, we will get away from the rather fossilised structure that we've inherited and really break the mould.

DISCUSSION

C. Bonsey (Hampshire County Council - Chairman)

Thank you all three speakers for illuminating and most entertaining talks; if you take the three contributions together they show the different aspects of the voluntary movement.

P. Millmore (East Sussex Project Officer)

Could I ask David Fletcher and Colin Speakman, whether they feel that opportunities for 'mould-breaking', that is, the establishment of new and profitable trusts, are more likely to be successful in an area where there has been serious economic decline than in an area where there is no economic decline, no rural depopulation and no collapse of local industry?

D. Fletcher (Pennine Heritage)

I think every area has its problems. We have selected as one of our mottoes, "We're the people who turn problems into opportunities" and there are opportunities everywhere. If an area is prosperous and successful this means that development is taking place and probably in ways that are not to everybody's liking. There will be sectors of local opinion that want to make themselves felt through voluntary action. I think that Pennine Heritage came into being partly because of the 1974 local government reorganisation. Local government got bigger and more remote and more and more people felt that they wanted to put their own oar in and they began to organise themselves to do it. This is a national thing, I don't see why any part of the country should be exempt. I am convinced there are lots of people lurking, ready to take up this challenge. What you need to do - if in fact you want it and not all local authorities would - is to try to identify those people and then put some seed corn in and let them get on with it. I think that's the most successful way.

C. Speakman (Yorkshire Dales Society)

I endorse entirely what David has said. I would add though, that you can get quite different kinds of problems in different areas. For example, the South Pennines' problems are totally different from those of the North and Central Pennines, i.e. The Dales is a relatively prosperous - and in some respects superficially prosperous - kind of society. There are far more cars around in Wharfedale than there are in the Conder Valley. But, underneath the prosperity the real pattern is that the people moving into the area tend to be 60/65/70 and the young people are moving out. So, for example, when we moved to Grassington there were 120 children at the local school: in 1983 it is down to 80. You can see what that means in terms of social change. The reason is that people can no longer afford to move into the area. House prices are so high that the people who can afford them are those selling houses in Surrey.

So look at your area and you'll find that there will be problems, stimulating local action - they may not be the classic problems of economic decline, but they may be equally serious.

G. Barrow (Anderson Semens Houston)

David Fletcher stressed, quite rightly, the importance of getting each arm of his organisation self-financing in the long term. I was particularly interested in how he would achieve this with respect to his Countryside Task Force?

D. Fletcher

The only way we can tackle that is by getting sponsorship. We are seeking commercial sponsorship at the moment, although in a sense we already have public sponsorship. We've sponsorship from Manpower Service Commission and hopefully that will run for some time. We've demonstrated through that, that there are tasks needing to be done. What we need now is sponsorship from other sources because we can't live on MSC for ever. I think that should be partly public and partly private. We shall go out for company sponsorship, but we're in an area that doesn't have many companies left so we're going to have to go to nationals and multi-nationals and that's not easy. Oil companies put a lot of money out, but usually into communities that are near oil refineries. We don't have anything like that.

G. Barrow

You'd agree it's a slightly more difficult area than some of your other activities?

D. Fletcher

Yes. We shall go to local authorities in the area and see if they would like to take out some sort of maintenance contract with our Taskforce. Inevitably, we shall be at the door of the Countryside Commission seeing if they wish to support us. This is one of the timeconsuming activities. There are funds available but there's a bit from here, a bit from there and a bit from somewhere else and a whole range of agencies needing to be co-ordinated in relation to a particular project. That's very time-consuming and can only be done by people on the spot and that perhaps is one of the valuable facilitating functions that we can undertake.

J. Foster (Countryside Commission for Scotland)

I wonder if David Fletcher could say a little bit more about what he called the business aspect of Pennine Heritage. He talked about using two, MSC funded, project officers for a three year period as an opportunity to build up something that would be self-supporting thenceforward, if not profit making. He mentioned publications and consultancy as sources of income, and I wonder if he could say a little about them, both in terms of what kind of consultancy, what kind of clients and the size of income.

D. Fletcher

We put together a heritage interpretation plan for the Pennine area, interpretation being a way of involving, capturing the interest and inducing a greater concern for the future of the area in local people. One aspect of this comprised publications. They are one of the best ways of getting economic returns. We published a matrix of

pamphlets and posters to go with them. In the process we established a publishing capacity, in-house, at the Birchcliffe Centre, the converted chapel where we have our offices. The grant from the Countryside Commission and the Carnegie Trust was very useful and it helped to finance many of these booklets, in print runs of 10,000 at a commercial mark-up. That then has created something which I'm sure the bodies who have grant aided would welcome and that is a venture which can continue to live. Initially the grant aid was two years. We then got a further year of grant aid and said, "Do we give these people another one year contract?" We decided not and gave them full-time contracts. The publications are still funding their continuing salaries.

In addition people have now started to come to us to learn how to put a book together. The Huddersfield Canal Society wanted a towpath guide. You can't make a professional consultancy out of that but you can cover costs and a little bit more besides and help to keep the thing going. The Standing Conference of South Pennine Authorities came to us for a poster leaflet. We are producing both for the voluntary sector and the public sector. One or two private people have come to us: bed and breakfast places, self-catering cottages and so on and we help them with publicity leaflets. We have work from the new 'Groundwork Initiatives in the North West Region. The Rossendale Borough are launching their scheme in October and we're doing all the back-up work and organising the launch for a fee. We're doing the work at cost, but that cost is keeping our people in jobs and maintaining the capacity. So this is how we're developing the expertise, and professionalism, in the organisation and being able to continue funding it.

J. Foster

So if we may be quite clear on that, the consultancy is associated with the publications side of things?

D. Fletcher

At the moment publications and design, the organisation of events and the operation of courses and conferences all raise revenue. We have 62 beds in a residential centre which is available on hire to any organisation choosing to use it. We're running leisure courses, heritage holidays in association with Countrywide Holidays and providing training courses. We run a very popular course on how to put publications together - a lot of members of voluntary groups are coming to these training courses.

We're also running regional debates. My position in the Polytechnic at Manchester is useful: it's no accident that a fair amount of the research and survey work done in my Department just happens to concern matters of importance to the South Pennines. Again, we have Manpower Service Commission funded project assistance in the Polytechnic carrying out survey work, the results of which are being fed to the local authorities. The local authorities are assisting with some of the expenses on these surveys. It's an 'environment business'.

D. Cameron (Countryside Commission for Scotland)

I would like to follow up the point you made about providing the ability to publish leaflets and documents. Have you had any feedback from local printers and design consultants who you will be in

competition with and probably having some of your own costs hidden? It does seem that where you are providing opportunities for people to enter into employment, you are actually conflicting with existing firms.

D. Fletcher

I could anticipate this happening, but it hasn't happened as yet. We're not competing with printers: we have no printing capacity so we put out the printing. We prepare the artwork and it goes to the printer camera-ready. So the printers like us because we're generating business. As for the design work, we don't seem to be in competition with any existing outfit. I suspect that even if there were a professional design studio down the road, they would regard what we're doing as rather fiddly and awkward, not the sort of job they would be seeking. They'd be looking for a mail order catalogue or some prestigious publication. What we're doing is often fairly time-consuming: it involves lengthy meetings with voluntary organisations. You have to talk to them very carefully, because people are very jealous of words that they've written and reluctant to have something edited and put into a realistic form. I don't think they are the sort of jobs that would be entirely commercial and therefore we're creating a new facility rather than poaching from established firms.

M. Gee (Planning Consultant)

Can I ask the organisations we've been hearing about what would their volunteers be doing had the organisations not been set up? In other words, would the volunteers be living lives of hedonism or would they be dying of boredom or possibly are other charitable organisations in the area suffering?

D. Fletcher

Well I would probably be making my wife a good deal happier. At the moment she thinks so. If she had me round the house more she might change her mind. I don't watch television. I've had to stop reading a morning newspaper. I'm trying to give up sleep. I think one just fits these things in. It comes out of what is called 'leisure time'.

C. Speakman

I think it's equally true in our own case. In fact the biggest problem we have now is that all those on our management committee are people who are themselves over-committed, so it is very difficult to find time to get things going. I think our next stage forward will be when we harness the energies of newly-retired people or younger people who are not yet burdened with too many other activities.

On the other hand, we seem to be getting an absolute avalanche of letters and enquiries from people - not just in this country but from the States, Australia and New Zealand - who desperately want to join the Society, to get involved and come along when they can. But inevitably these are people who will offer commitment in an emotional way rather than a practical way. I think the future of our Society is going to depend on whether or not we can get practical commitment from people near to the area.

C. Bonsey

David Shaw, I wondered if you have any views on this business of a limited number of willing horses always having to carry the burden. It must surely apply in your case as well?

D. Shaw (British Sub-Aqua Club)

David Fletcher's remark about his wife applies to me too. The problems we have had are obviously specialised to our hobby, but our National Council has changed very little in recent years. There was only one new face this year. It seems to be that once a person works at national level he gets stuck there. We certainly don't see a lot of new faces, although one or two creep in.

C. Bonsey

So you share the view that there is a problem of trying to get new people brought in?

D. Shaw

Yes, very much so. The diver at branch level moans about the problems over a beer in the pub afterwards. At national level we have got to try to do something about it. When it is as serious as a harbour ban, we have obviously got to act as a national body and not as individuals. If people turn up at a harbour, having driven 100 miles, and see a notice that wasn't there last week, the reaction isn't always friendly. We need to disseminate information beforehand and try and take the heat out of the situation as a national governing body, through communication links.

M. Collins (The Sports Council)

I would like to ask David Shaw whether his members are purely interested in 'bare-faced hedonism' or whether they have at local branch level, any involvement with public agencies other than as good tenants. In other words, is there any relationship with local authorities or local education authorities in terms of bringing youngsters into diving? Is there any interest in conservation, apart from not taking lobsters from their pots?

D. Shaw

Yes. There is a spin-off organisation called the Underwater Conservation Society, which was instituted by the BSAC. Public relations are very important.

In terms of youngsters, there is a National Snorkellers Club aimed at getting youngsters involved in the sport.

There are certain areas in the country where the BSAC has been very positive in building up good relationships. At St. Abbs, which is quite near Berwick-on-Tweed, over a period of time the Northern Federation of the BSAC has held regular film shows for the local people. They have gone along with underwater slides of the flora and fauna and shown local people what their interest is and why they go under the sea. When a diver disappears over a boat it's a bit of a mystery

unless you've got TV films. This slide show creates very good public relations and a lot of goodwill. St. Abbs has actually been deemed a voluntary conservation area, and there is a notice up asking people to respect that fact.

J. Fladmark (Countryside Commission for Scotland)

I wonder if I could make an observation, going back to the question of continuity. We've already referred to the problem of the rug being pulled away by sponsors. There is also the problem of continuity in relation to the amount of time volunteers have available to put into an activity.

My experience in the voluntary sector has been with a local conservation society. It has been going for quite a long time and it has a very ambitious programme of activities. It owns properties, which it has maintained and it also owns and runs a folk museum. We do not employ permanent staff. The museum, for example, is run entirely by voluntary staff. The continuity can only be secured by having people who can give a substantial amount of time on a regular basis every week, perhaps every day. We are finding that the most useful people to us are people who have reached retirement age and in fact the society is really run and supported by a group of people who belong to that age group. That then presents us with a problem of continuity and of bringing in younger people. There is a fear, and our experience has shown it, that when young people come in they are not likely to sustain interest for a long period of time. So if we became dependent on younger people for essential activities, we are endangering continuity. This is something one has to keep in mind in becoming too dependent on any particular age group.

C. Speakman

I would agree entirely. One of the problems, which I don't think anyone has mentioned in the last couple of days, is getting rid of the incompetent volunteer or the person who lacks the time to do his task properly. If you're running a society you've got to find a way of by-passing that particular person and this can cause a great deal of embarrassment and becomes a human relations problem.

I think the newly retired are probably the best people to give a lot more commitment and it may be that the social changes we were hearing about yesterday will produce a whole cohort. It's what I call a fortunate age group: these are people in their early fifties who got all the great jobs in the 60s. Then the cutbacks came, they all got early retirement and they're all now on pensions of about £6,000. These people are marvellous, but you will find they're on so many committees after a couple of years that they have very little time for you. So the answer is to catch them as they get their golden handshakes.

D. Fletcher

We've not got any of those: it's obviously a field we should start to exploit. I think the level of organisation has got to match the amount and scale of work that you're doing. When I was involved in small-scale tree planting, clearing footpaths and things like that, it was quite adequate to have an entirely voluntary group. We'd meet if the weather was fit and do the job, and if it wasn't fit, we perhaps

wouldn't meet and wouldn't do the job and it could go along in a more ad hoc way.

When we moved into much larger projects this had to change. If we're taking on a redundant warehouse of 35,000-40,000 square feet that's been derelict for 17 years and we're converting it, with a lot of public money, you've got to have a well worked out scheme, a professional approach and proper commitment. You can't get the money without it: you have a responsibility to do it in a proper way. You daren't not do it in a responsible way: you'd never get any more grant aid and that would be the end of the organisation. So it's at that point that we made the transition and started to take on permanent staff. You can't run a residential centre without having some permanent staff. You run big projects without having people working normal working hours. We had to make that leap and we had to get the finance to be able to make that leap.

B. Boult (Hampshire County Council)

I would like to ask a question of David Shaw. It's to do with the way in which you see your organisation developing over the next few years. You talked about the fact that in the 80s you're probably going to have to buy your way into new waters. My question is, to what extent will your organisation be able to cope with this firstly financially, because it involves you probably in greater outlay than your annual income and secondly, in terms of management. There are undoubtedly opportunities in terms of water available with the sort of depth you're looking for but it may be that that water is a result of an industrial operation such as gravel extraction or mineral extraction or the aftermath of a works and the local authority or private landowners may not have the resources to restore the site, to make it safe for public access or even for limited club access. You're going to find yourself in a position where the water acquisition cost is relatively small, but that a large amount of work needs to be done to turn that site into one which you are going to be able to use. You did mention somewhere about people driving 100 miles to dive: I wonder how many of your members would drive 100 miles to spend a weekend helping to restore a site for their own use? It is something we've been talking about elsewhere, the use of recreational volunteers to do conservation type work. That seems to me to be as great a challenge for your organisation as the financial one. I wonder if you are going to explore that?

D. Shaw

It's a whole new ball game facing up to our responsibilities. Finance is going to be a problem. We're not a rich organisation. We rely to a large extent on a Sports Council grant to survive.

It is a very valid point, getting people to do the work. There has been limited BSAC involvement on the sites we've got already. If you plotted on a map each branch of the BSAC you'd find that most of the country was covered reasonably. However, getting volunteers to do the work is a problem that hasn't been thought through thoroughly. Multi-use sites with diving and other water sports is an area that we will have to look at. It is something that we've not got a lot of experience of at the moment, but something which is seen as a priority in the 80s.

J. Iles (BTCV)

I would be very interested to hear from David and Colin how they see the setting up of new trusts by the Secretary of State in the North West, the 'Groundwork' trusts; how they are going to affect the existing voluntary groups in the areas; and indeed, whether such initiatives can succeed without being formed on the basis of local need spontaneously expressed by local people.

D. Fletcher

I've got an open mind on what will happen to them. There is a local need, of that there is no doubt. They're not cutting across any existing trusts. There is plenty of work for everybody to do, but they do come into the category of 'induced' trusts. They have to prove themselves. It will be very interesting to see how they go. There are half-a-dozen of the 'Groundwork' initiatives now in the North West and I hope that they will all branch out in different directions so that we might learn something about the type of activity that is more likely to succeed in a certain locality. I can't answer your question fully because it is such early days. They're building on the experience of self-made organisations and the tree that plants itself often grows better than the one that's been planted by someone else. But that's not to say that the one that's been planted doesn't grow at all and that it isn't desirable. So let's keep an open mind and help where we can.

C. Speakman

If these new trusts cannot win the local people's enthusiasm and commitment, they'll fail. I'm convinced of this. It would certainly be true in my own area, that unless they could get the support of ordinary people then they would have a short life.

M. Evans (Association of District Councils)

I think it's pertinent that we have some comment from a representative of the Association of District Councils at this stage because so much mention has been made of the role of local authorities. David Fletcher has indicated that there have to be strong ties and partnership between local authorities and voluntary organisations in this field. I would like to place on record that local authorities greatly appreciate the valuable help given by the voluntary sector in conservation and environmental problems.

But I should also draw to your attention the considerable pressure that local authorities are under to fund all kinds of other voluntary groups and to promote self-help on a limited budget. I see voluntary conservation groups as yet another aspect of the total of recreation provision in a particular district.

C. Bonsey

I think what we've heard this morning from the two Davids and from Colin has given us very exciting pointers on how we might unlock new monies and new energies through the voluntary sector. I hope David you'll give us more information about how to develop the 'Alchemist's Stone', because we certainly all need it.

VOLUNTEERING: A LOOK AT PRESENT AND FUTURE ROLES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

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SUMMARY

This paper has been prepared as a background to Max Nicholson's paper and divides into two parts. The first part briefly examines the type of work undertaken by voluntary groups and volunteers in the countryside and the second part focusses on the need to develop community involvement and volunteering at the local or parish level.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research into volunteering is limited and the research which has been carried out has tended to concentrate on the social/community welfare aspects of volunteering rather than on the voluntary sector as it relates to the countryside and countryside recreation.

1.2 A general stereotype of the volunteer involved in community welfare is "an individual who aspires to better the community, has spare time and can afford to work without pay; in other words, a middle class, middle-aged woman whose children are off her hands" (Mostyn, 1983). Talk of volunteers in the countryside and the typical image is of middle class, gumboot clad, men and women in their early twenties wielding spades and up to their eyes in mud. But both these stereotypes are blinkered and belie the increasing diversity of the voluntary movement.

2. THE WORK OF VOLUNTEERS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND COUNTRYSIDE RECREATION

2.1 The scope of present voluntary activity in the countryside (relating to countryside recreation and amenity) is in part reflected by the range of voluntary groups active in this area. Such voluntary bodies include:

i) Those concerned to influence national policy. For example, the Friends of the Earth (FoE) and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) see as one of their major objectives the lobbying of Central Government about national issues and government policies relating to the countryside. To add weight to their arguments local affiliated groups will frequently undertake detailed local surveys to demonstrate the repercussions of government policies and funding.

ii) Those concerned for a particular area of countryside. Many local amenity societies have come into existence because of a threat to a particular locality. Threats include airport development, motorways, gravel extraction or an obvious decline in the general quality of the locality. Some groups disperse once the threat has been diverted (or indeed in the case of development, once the threat is realised on the ground). However, others, having gained momentum, assume guardianship of the area in question. Such

groups range in size from the Friends of the Lake District or the Chiltern Society (covering 500 sq. miles and with a membership of 3,000 individuals and 200 corporate bodies) to much more local groups such as the Dickens Country Protection Society originally constituted to fight the threat of oil refineries on the Hoo Peninsula, Kent and the Shoreham Society which was first instituted to fight against gravel extraction in the Darenth Valley, Kent (many such groups are affiliated to the CPRE). Having assumed guardianship, individuals or subgroups within the Society will take on responsibility for a whole range of activities from waymarking and clearance of footpaths to the creation and running of a heritage centre. This guardianship of a locality merges with the role of elected Parish Councils which are established by law.

iii) Interest Groups. These range from national organisations with affiliated local groups such as The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), The Waterways Recovery Group and the Garden History Society (with its local ad hoc groups), through county organisations such as the County Trusts for Nature Conservation, to more local groups such as local natural history societies, canal trusts and trusts established to conserve a particular building or site, such as the Painshill Trust established to restore the designed historic landscape at Painshill, Surrey. The role of these groups varies. Some such as the Garden History Society and local natural history societies, are primarily concerned with survey and monitoring, while others, such as the RSPB and County Trusts for Nature Conservation, are primarily concerned with the safeguard and management of sites but also undertake survey and monitoring. None act primarily as pressure groups but all are likely to make representation should their area of interest be threatened.

iv) Activity Groups concerned to promote a particular recreation pursuit. There are a myriad of groups representing different recreation activities, from national bodies with affiliated county or local groups (such as The British Horse Society, the Byways and Bridleways Trust, the Caravan Club of Great Britain and the Auto-cycle Union) to an enormous number of local groups such as fishing and sailing clubs. In the main these groups are primarily concerned with improving facilities for their own members. In other words they are mutual aid or self-help groups rather than groups primarily seeking to better the lot of others or seeking to improve or conserve the environment.

v) Those with a general concern for the countryside and a wish to undertake practical work to aid conservation objectives. There are a growing number of voluntary groups, epitomised by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), which aim to provide practical skills and a labour force able to undertake specific tasks. Some of these groups function at a regional level, while others are attached to a specific area or district. For example, the Peak District National Park has its own corps of volunteers and voluntary ranger services have developed as back up to countryside management schemes, such as those in the Tame and Colne Valleys. Most of these groups are affiliated to the BTCV. Other groups which fall into this general task force category include such diverse organisations as the Young Farmers Clubs and military groups such as University OTCs.

vi) Those wishing to improve environmental education. Increasingly voluntary groups are seeking to encourage an understanding of the

environment through direct observation and practical involvement. Such groups include WATCH, (the junior arm of the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC)), the Young Ornithologists Club run by the RSPB and the BTCV who, following their pioneer work in association with the County Council in South Yorkshire, are increasingly encouraging school and youth groups to undertake practical conservation tasks in their locality.

vii) Those helping the disadvantaged. This is the 'traditional' role of the voluntary movement but it is less readily associated with countryside recreation. However, many voluntary groups play an active part and include such diverse organisations as Riding for the Disabled; Country Wings (run by Inter Action) which is concerned with giving inner city children a holiday in the countryside; a number of community transport schemes such as the Islington Bus Company and Camden Community Transport which organise country trips for deprived inner city dwellers; and organisations such as the Horncastle Bus Club concerned with re-instituting cut rural transport services.

2.2 In reality these divisions between different voluntary groups are not so clear-cut. Some groups such as the Womens Institutes cross nearly all the boundaries. Many amenity societies and interest groups include members who are primarily concerned with getting things done on the ground, i.e. acting as a task force. While certain recreation groups, such as the Ramblers Association, while trying to improve facilities for their own members, are equally concerned with improving the environment and providing better facilities for the wider public.

2.3 These voluntary groups call on a wide range of voluntary skills and back-up which can be summarised as follows:

- professionals offering professional skills on a voluntary basis e.g. planners, journalists, artists and accountants
- enthusiastic amateurs offering a wealth of knowledge acquired through personal study, e.g. amateur ornithologists and natural historians
- back-up administrators, fund raisers and 'envelope-lickers'
- the work-force i.e. those prepared to undertake practical work or help in monitoring, negotiation etc.
- the supporters i.e. those who are members of a voluntary group and who pay their subscriptions and talk about the work of the group but do not get involved in the day-to-day activities of the group although they will always attend meetings and will be available to lend a hand for particular events.

2.4 Combining these skills, voluntary groups and volunteers have come to play a vital role in extending the work of the public sector in maintaining the countryside, monitoring change, improving public accessibility and disseminating information. The full range of work undertaken by volunteers and voluntary groups in the countryside is enormous, as reflected by the range of voluntary groups listed in para. 2.1, and includes:

i) Campaigning.

ii) Guardianship and management of particular areas of land, for example, the reserves of the RSPB and the County Trusts for Nature Conservation and guardianship, restoration and management of particular artefacts and facilities, for example, the maintenance of village buildings by local amenity societies.

iii) Provision of facilities for particular recreation pursuits, for example, the ownership or adoption and management of sites by clubs as diverse as fishing and sailing clubs, and moto-cross and shooting clubs.

iv) Negotiation to improve public access to land and water.

v) Provision of transport for the less advantaged.

vi) Provision of labour able to undertake both specialist and general countryside conservation work, from the work of individual members of canal restoration groups to the wide ranging work of members of the BTCV.

vii) Collection and monitoring of data ranging from national and local transport studies, through the monitoring of bird populations by the RSPB, to the collection and interpretation of archaeological and historical data including archaeological digs, studies of historic buildings and landscapes and studies of local history.

viii) Enforcing codes of conduct for particular activities from the work of local riding groups to the supervision of noisy sports by individual clubs.

ix) Community intelligence and policing.

x) Dissemination of information, including the establishment and running of museums and heritage centres, the organisation and supervision of guided walks, workshops, lectures and evening meetings and the teaching of conservation skills through practical involvement.

xi) Raising funds to cover not only the running costs of the voluntary groups but also to cover the capital cost of specific groups.

xii) Creation of local employment opportunities through the establishment of craft centres and workshops and through the employment of permanent staff by voluntary groups.

3. PARISH CONCERN

3.1 Combined, the work of voluntary groups and individual volunteers has done much to maintain the countryside and countryside facilities in the face of a declining rural population. However all is not well at the local level.

3.2 Since the last war government policies for countryside recreation and conservation have perforce been concentrated at the strategic level on National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Long Distance Footpaths, Heritage Coastlines and country parks, amongst others. These designations and policies have and will continue to be vital to countryside recreation. However, over the last ten years there has been

an increasing realisation that a concentration of effort at the strategic level has created a vacuum at a more parochial level.

3.3 At the same time, as noted in the paper by Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett, to meet this strategic and planning-orientated approach to countryside conservation and recreation, many larger voluntary groups have, through the processes of 'professionalisation, colonialisation and reductionism', increasingly adopted a strategic and generalist approach and have frequently subsumed the roles of local amenity and specialist interest groups. This again has encouraged a gap at the parochial level.

3.4 Perhaps this gap at the parochial level does not matter. However, as graphically described by Richard Mabey in his book The Common Ground, our countryside is indelibly ingrained with local decisions and personal involvements. Yet it is these local landmarks which are now rapidly disappearing in the face of changing agricultural practices. These local features cannot be 'conserved' at a national or regional level – they are not sufficiently important. But if all that is common and local in the countryside is reduced to a rarity, then the relationship between the layman and the countryside will all but be lost. It is essential that what is common now remains common.

3.5 Personal motivations are also important. As shown by the researches of Barbara Mostyn, the motivations of individual volunteers are rarely concerned with global issues – they relate to personal emotions, personal issues and personal interests. In the same way, most individuals are primarily concerned with their local environment – the place where they live. This concern for the locality is frequently expressed as complaint and dissatisfaction. Yet as proved by the results of certain highly successful community schemes, such as the work in the Lower Swansea Valley (Lavender, 1981), these energies, under careful guidance, can easily be converted into community involvement and participation aimed at improving local conditions – charity begins at home.

What Environmental Work Remains Undone at the Parish Level?

3.6 The degree to which environmental and other work still needs to be tackled at the local level is revealed by, for example, a research study undertaken by Land Use Consultants for the Countryside Commission in 1981 (The Evolution of Countryside Management). This study aimed to quantify the amount of work which needed to be done to maintain the status quo over 125 sq.km. of mid-Hertfordshire countryside. (The methods used in this study are summarised in Appendix I). An extrapolation from the results of this study indicates that in a typical lowland English parish of 30 sq.km., in the region of 1,300-1,700 volunteer man-days per year would be required to maintain the most important local rights-of-way, woodlands and ponds; to undertake necessary small-scale environmental improvements e.g. tree planting; and to provide much needed local amentities such as local picnic and car parking areas.

3.7 It should be stressed that this assessment only includes work not actively being undertaken by others i.e. areas actively managed by the local authority, the Parish Council, voluntary groups or landowners are excluded from the assessment of outstanding works. On the other hand, the figure of 1,300-1,700 volunteer man-days per year does not include the volunteer time required to:

- survey and appraise local problems and identify necessary tasks
- administer, organise and fund these local activities
- undertake other more specific areas of work ranging from refurbishing a local barn to providing local guide books and organising evening lectures
- provide and run facilities for specific local activities such as fishing.

3.8 These figures of required volunteer input per parish may seem very high and obviously would not apply to every parish. However, the study area was not atypical and did not suffer from any acute problems. It was an area of outer London Green Belt with a mixed arable and pastoral economy and with a number of medium-sized towns and villages within it. The major 'special' feature of the area was that it formed a Countryside Management Project Area (see para 3.9).

Filling the Parish Gap

3.9 In a number of areas this gap at parochial level is now partially being filled, or at least being prevented from expanding further, by a range of local government and voluntary initiatives including:

i) Countryside Management Projects funded by the Countryside Commission and local authorities where a project officer is put in post at a sub-County or District level to orchestrate countryside works, as for example, in the Tame Valley, Manchester, the Colne Valley, GLC and the Herts./Barnet scheme, (see Countryside Management in the Urban Fringe. The Countryside Commission (1981), CCP 136).

ii) New Agricultural Landscape Project areas (NAL) sponsored by the Countryside Commission and other government agencies, again relying on the project officer approach and established in Hereford and Worcester, Suffolk, Leicestershire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

iii) Rural tree planting schemes on private land co-ordinated at the county level but frequently utilising grants available for small-scale planting from the Countryside Commission and the Forestry Commission; for example, as undertaken by Norfolk and Essex County Councils.

iv) MSC Countryside Task Forces sponsored by a wide diversity of organisations including County Councils (e.g. the Avon County MSC Woodland Management Scheme) District Councils, Parish Councils and voluntary groups including, for example, the nearly 4,000 strong MSC Task Force sponsored by Community Task Force (CTF Annual Report and Accounts 1981/82).

v) Work co-ordinated by the Parish Council and often inspired and/or aided by the County or District Council or the Rural Community Council (RCC). Environmental work co-ordinated by Parish Councils includes local footpath and pond clearance (often using local residents and local school and scout groups), the management of small open spaces in parish control, community tree planting and the creation and management of local recreation facilities. County Council aid to Parish Councils may include free tree schemes. Stimulus for Parish activity may frequently come from the RCC. The

RCC Countryside Officers or Countryside Initiative Officers are available to offer advice to individual Parishes and the RCCs may set up competitions aimed at encouraging village self-help and environmental improvements, such as the annual 'Village Venture' competitions.

vi) The work of many local amenity societies and interest groups. The range of work undertaken by these groups is enormous and extends from the creation, preservation and maintenance of local bridleways by interest groups such as the Bromley Bridleways Action Group, through the stimulation of local environmental improvements and the publication of leaflets on local features and opportunities by such groups as Environment Bromley, to the conversion of the local railway station (on an active commuter line) into a village heritage centre, as proposed by the Shoreham Society, Kent.

3.10 In Table 1, as a resume, a list of basic countryside tasks which require action at the local level is given and against each task the parties which may at present make a management contribution are listed. This list is by no means exhaustive and many other areas of work including building refurbishment and local interpretation could be added. However, it does indicate that despite the involvement of a wide range of parties, gaps often still remain at the Parish level.

Parish Involvement and Outside Help

3.11 Returning to the figure of 1,300-1,700 volunteer man-days required annually to complete some of the basic physical tasks at the Parish level, it could be argued that if every adult parishioner gave up one day per year to local voluntary work the bulk of this could be tackled. This assumes an adult parish population of some 2,000 people. In reality this level of commitment would be difficult to stimulate or maintain.

3.12 As indicated earlier, certain Parish Council, amenity societies and RCC's have sought to stimulate Parish level involvement. However, leadership and stimulation of community activity is a full-time job and, therefore, it is suggested that if Parish level involvement is to succeed in the long-term a full-time Parish 'enabler' or 'animator' (a Parish Partner or Friend) should be appointed, preferably funded under a specific Central Government scheme. The role of this 'animator' would be to make the local community more aware of their local environment, stimulate and co-ordinate local community activity and aid the community with negotiation and fund raising. This 'animator' would need to develop close working relationships the Parish Council and the RCC and with existing local amenity, interest and community groups including such organisations as the WI.

3.13 To increase local awareness and to ensure smooth running and the establishment of priority tasks the first concern of the animator would be to orchestrate a Parish survey or appraisal. An excellent example of how a Parish appraisal might be undertaken is given in the Bedfordshire County Council's publication Parish Appraisal Package: Landscape and Wildlife. Such an appraisal should consider not only landscape conservation and improvements but also the requirements of local recreation groups and of those visiting the area. Such an appraisal could build on, or stimulate, surveys of local community needs. One example of this latter activity comes from Dorset where under Parish Council organisations "fifty volunteers distributed a questionnaire to householders, helped analyse the 1,100 answers and produced a report to influence

TABLE I: PARISH TASKS AND AN INDICATION OF THE PARTIES WHICH TACKLE THESE TASKS AT THE PRESENT TIME

Work	Frequency + at which work should be carried out	Degree to which work is being achieved at present o	PARTIES INVOLVED			
			Farmer/Landowner	Local Authority *	Parish Council	Voluntary Groups
MONITORING OF NATURAL FEATURES eg. Condition of woodlands, hedgerows and ponds	◐	□		Rarely at local level	Occasionally, although individual parishoners frequently inform council of loss of hedgerows, woodlands and ponds	County Trusts for Nature Conservation, Local Natural History Societies and Amenity Societies and Interest Groups where it effects their particular concern
WOODLANDS eg. Management of ancient & secondary amenity woodland inc. coppicing, tree planting, scrub clearance & boundary treatment	○	□	Only if shooting interest or local market. Fencing or hedging only likely if required to prevent damage to stock or commercial forestry return	On publicly owned land and occasionally on private land	-	BTCV or equivalent if called in by local authority or land owner. County Trust for Nature Conservation if a natural interest
HEDGEROWS eg. Maintenance of existing hedgerows & hedgerow, field & riverside trees	●	Depends on agricultural economy of area ◧	Sometimes	On publicly owned land. May aid private landowner in felling of dead elm	-	BTCV or equivalent if called upon by local authority or land owner.
PONDS, WATER AREAS AND CANALS eg. General Clearance Work	○	◧	Occasionally if used for stock	Occasionally on publicly owned land	Occasionally in liaison with LA, voluntary groups & stat. authorities	BTCV or equivalent. User & Interest Groups, Amenity Societies, etc.
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY Monitoring of Footpath Condition	●	▨	Occasionally	County or District footpath officer if in post	Parish footpath officer if appointed	User & Interest Groups, Amenity Societies, W.I.s
Surface Treatment, Drainage & Veg. Clearance	●	▨	Occasional veg. clearance if maintaining hedgerows	Occasionally.	Sometimes in liaison with LA or voluntary groups & local residents	BTCV, User & Interest Groups, Amenity Societies, etc.
Signing, Way - marking furniture, eg. styles	●	▨		Undertake off road signing but waymarking & furniture repair highly dependent on local authority funding and priorities	Sometimes in liaison with LA or voluntary groups & local residents	User and Interest Groups. Amenity Societies, W.I.s etc. emphasis usually on way marking
OCAL LANDSCAPE IMPROVEENTS eg. Screen planting, field corner lanting, etc. & follow p maintenance	◐	▨	Influenced by LA & Countryside grants, FWAG policies. May be undertaken as part of planning condition	On publicly owned land & occasionally on private land. Persuaded by Government Grants	Sometimes in liaison with LA/ &/or voluntary groups and local residents	BTCV, Amenity Societies and Interest Groups - especially on land in their control
OCAL RECREATION ACILITIES eg. creation f small scale picnic ites & parking areas follow up maintenance	◐	□	Very occasionally although more frequently undertaken in association with pick-your-own, etc.	On publicly owned land & occasionally on private land. Persuaded by Government Grants.	Sometimes in liaison with &/or voluntary groups and local residents	BTCV, Amenity Societies and Interest Groups - especially on land in their control
TTER CLEARANCE footpaths, etc)	●	▨	-	On public land	Sometimes in liaison with voluntary groups & local residents	Amenity Societies (User & Interest Groups where it effects their interests)

\+ Frequency: ● = at least every year ◐ = once every 2-5 years ○ = over 5 years

o Degree to which work is being carried out: ■ frequently ◧ sometimes □ rarely

* Local Authority Input: In all cases local authority input especially on private land, will be far more likely if there is a Countryside Management Project Officer or a sponsored MSC countryside task force

TABLE II: CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH VOLUNTARY GROUPS COULD MAKE AT THE PARISH LEVEL

WORK	VOLUNTARY GROUPS					MSC TASK FORCE
	Amenity Societies	Recreation Activity Groups	Interest Groups	Voluntary Task Force e.g. BTCV and Young Farmers Groups	Local Youth School & Scout Groups	
WOODLANDS						
- monitoring of condition	*		eg. County Trusts *			
- general management			" *	*		*
HEDGEROWS						
- monitoring of condition	*		*		*	
- tagging of young hedgerow trees	*		*			
- general management				*		*
PONDS WATER AREAS AND CANALS						
- monitoring of condition	*	eg Fishing Clubs *	eg County Trusts & Canal Trusts *		*	
- general maintenance	*	*	*	*	*	
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY						
- monitoring of condition	*	eg Ramblers Assoc *			*	
- general clearance and maintenance	*	*		*	*	*
- signing, waymarking and furniture	*	*		*		*
LOCAL LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS						
- removing of eyesores	*			*		*
- tree planting	*	on land in their control *	on land in their control *	*	*	
LOCAL RECREATION FACILITIES						
- creation of small scale children's play area, picnic sites and parking areas	*	on land in their control *	on land in their control *	*	(play areas) *	*
LITTER CLEARANCE	*	on land in their control *	on land in their control *	*	*	*
LOCAL FUND RAISING	*	*	*		*	

future plans" (Helping Hands, Elizabeth Gundrey, (1981)). The present increasing interest in Parish appraisals is timely, given the recently publicised proposal that as 1986 is the nine hundredth anniversary of the Domesday Book, a fitting occasion has been offered to re-document resources at a Parish level.

3.14 In order to further stimulate Parish level involvement the 'animator' could amongst other things:

- Encourage local pride through Parish festivals and arts and through entry into competitions organised at a County level, e.g. the RCC Village Ventures or the Shell Better Britain Competition. Consideration might also be given to establishing a village landmark or effigy emphasising the particular character of the village, as proposed by the group Common Ground.
- Stimulate the publication of a village newspaper as now happens in a number of Leicestershire villages or use other existing forms of communication, including the Parish magazine and local radio stations, to encourage local activity.
- Encourage research into village history and wildlife by such groups as the WI and existing local amenity societies.
- Encourage community adoption of certain areas for children's play or local produce. For example with the reintroduction of wood-burning stoves local woodlands can be managed for fuel and other products. At Parndon Wood, Harlow, Essex, managed by the New Town Development Corporation, a range of woodland produce is sold including wood ash for pottery glazing; while at Bradfield Wood, managed by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) the sale of wood products (including pea sticks, fencing stakes and thatching broaches and spars), covers the cost of woodland management.
- Set up a Parish task force, which would meet say once a month to carry out specific tasks.
- Set up a Parish-sponsored MSC task force. As indicated above, a number of Parish Councils have already sponsored MSC teams to undertake environmental work; for example, Bramshot and Liphook Parishes in Hampshire, Frodsham Parish in Cheshire and Dawlish Parish in Devon.
- Encourage a Parish or adjoining Parishes to set up a charitable trust charged with the responsibility of encouraging the long-term management of the area; for example as suggested by the Joint Parish Committee of Arnside and Silverdale Parishes, Lancashire.

3.15 At the same time, with the aid of the Rural Community Council, the 'animator' could seek further assistance from voluntary groups with a broader remit than the Parish level. In Table 2 the range of work which different types of voluntary groups might be prepared to undertake is indicated. Admittedly some voluntary groups are finding it difficult to meet their existing commitments. However, some voluntary groups, such as the member groups of the RSPB, have spare capacity and indeed at Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire, the RSPB are now stimulating a local village environmental campaign. In addition, certain organisations such as NACRO have now set up large MSC teams and are seeking tasks for them.

3.16 Following the success of the BTCV in encouraging urban-based community and school groups to join in rural tasks, in certain urban

fringe areas consideration might also be given to twinning urban boroughs and rural Parishes. With the rapid rise in urban community-based city farms, neighbourhood gardens and ecological parks, there is potential for encouraging community groups, active in these areas, to become involved in the activities of a rural Parish. Such twinning of energies might require specific government grants to cover volunteer transport and any additional training, although in the short-term the costs of volunteer transport and training could be covered under the MSC Voluntary Projects Programme.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The development of community involvement and volunteering at the Parish level is certainly not a new idea. Many local initiatives have been taken. However, what has been lacking is a national climate of genuine support. The rapid take-up of MSC labour in the countryside is ready evidence of the need for employed staff in the field of countryside conservation and recreation. Central Government should recognise this need and should now provide a positive stimulus for the employment of full-time staff in, amongst other things, the field of local volunteer encouragement and co-ordination. At the same time Central Government should fully support the co-ordination of local voluntary effort through such existing organisations as the Rural Community Councils.

4.2 As part of a programme for Parish involvement, Central Government should place greater emphasis on volunteer training in rural crafts and skills, following, for example, the excellent training schemes established by the BTCV. It should also encourage schemes which give local volunteers and voluntary groups access to free professional expertise in fields such as planning and landscape design, following the model of established community technical aid centres such as COMTECHSA in Liverpool. If training and professional advice is not available the quality of volunteer work may be poor, or more usually, volunteers will lose interest through a frustrating lack of knowledge.

4.3 In the same vein, a stimulation of community involvement at the Parish level should in no way undermine the work of existing voluntary groups. Rather, the advisory role of existing specialist groups will become increasingly important as local activity expands. At the same time existing voluntary groups will still need to manage specific areas, features and facilities and local recreation groups will still be required to meet the needs of their members. Involvement at the Parish level is not a takeover bid for the work of existing voluntary groups rather it is a means of plugging the gaps which exist at the local level – it offers a means of completing the local volunteer jigsaw.

4.4 There may be a temptation to separate Parish involvement in countryside amenity and recreation from the growing number of community initiatives concerned with overcoming basic rural social problems such as closure of village schools, shops and post offices, loss of local transport and loss of local employment in agriculture. However, programmes of voluntary effort aimed at enhancing the environment in the countryside are likely to stand a greater chance of both success and public acceptance if they are combined with wider action to improve the quality of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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APPENDIX 1

THE EVOLUTION OF COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY IN HERTFORDSHIRE

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to quantify the amount of work which would need to be done to maintain the status quo in 125 km^2 of countryside, namely the Upper Lea Valley Countryside Management Area in mid-Hertfordshire. This study divided into a number of phases as follows:

i) Detailed surveys were undertaken across the total study area to assess the total quantity of work required to

- keep all public rights-of-way open, passable, signed and way-marked
- clear and maintain all ponds and water courses
- manage woodlands which were obviously not being managed by others
- screen local eyesores and undertake small-scale environmental improvements
- provide small-scale amenity and picnic areas
- remove litter and dumping
- remove extensive areas of dead elm.

In this survey, areas which were obviously being managed by others (be they private landowners, public agencies or voluntary groups) were not included unless it was obvious that additional management assistance was required. From these surveys the total quantity of identified management tasks was tabulated.

ii) An assessment was made of the frequency at which subsequent management/maintenance tasks would need to be carried out once the initial tasks of (i) had been completed. This ranged from a twenty-year cycle for coppice woodland to the yearly inspection of waymarkers and six-monthly litter campaigns. It also allowed for long-term management of newly established local amenity areas, and other sites.

iii) The typical work rates of direct labour and volunteers in undertaking those tasks identified in (i) and the subsequent maintenance tasks in (ii) were calculated. The calculation of volunteer work rates was based on a detailed appraisal of the quantity and quality of work actually achieved by BTCV and other volunteer groups.

iv) The total quantities of work identified as part of the surveys were then multiplied by the direct labour and volunteer rates to produce a breakdown of the total number of direct labour and volunteer man-days required to complete all the identified tasks. The conclusion of this calculation was that 81,000 man-days of volunteer labour would be required over a five-year period to undertake and subsequently maintain all the identified work over 125 km^2 of countryside. Breaking this figure down this represents 130 volunteer man-days of work per year for every km^2 of countryside, or put another way, 2.5 volunteers working one day every weekend of the year to complete all the work in 1 km^2 of countryside!

v) As this quantity of labour input would be almost impossible to find, a series of priority tasks were identified against a set of criteria. Taking the priority tasks alone, 56 volunteer man-days would be required per year for every km^2 of countryside, which is roughly equivalent to one volunteer working one day every weekend per year per km^2.

Finally, having established the basic figures, a series of models were set up which indicated the range of work which could be undertaken by a direct labour team, by other sections of the local authority, by private landowners and by volunteers.

THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTARY RECREATION ACTIVITY IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Max Nicholson

Chairman, Land Use Consultants, London

Thank you Mr. Chairman for those kind words. You left out one qualification which is perhaps my best one for speaking here, that I am a Vice President of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, so that I cover at least two of the three fields that are before us. I think anybody who devotes any thought to my career will only do so with a view to conducting their own in a more orderly and less idiotic fashion and not ending up as I do, still very heavily engaged at a time when most of my contemporaries are growing roses.

I will try to reflect on the common understanding and consensus which I believe has been reached here. If I'm wrong about that I will no doubt be corrected in the ensuing discussion. I will then concentrate on where we go from here, which interests me perhaps rather more. To begin with, I must refer as briefly as possible to important inputs which have only become available since I wrote my paper. If my delivery is a bit halting, this is because so much important stuff has come out in the last 24 hours that I've had to re-write quite a lot of things.

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF PLAY

Yesterday afternoon Foster Murphy and then Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett took us over the range and scope of voluntary activity in the countryside and its purposes, styles and orientations. These were just the kind of thought-provoking challenging reviews in depth which we needed in order to reach soundly based conclusions. We are now sadder and wiser in speaking airily of the 'voluntary sector' and the nature of 'countryside recreation'. We begin to understand that different people have very different ideas about who is a volunteer, how he or she is recruited and motivated and about the entire ecology of this largely unexplored wilderness.

A few points which seemed to me especially relevant in Foster Murphy's opening paper were firstly, his putting in perspective this society in which we live, with fewer jobs and more young people looking for them, penalised by failures, even in basic education at a time when higher standards rather than lower are called for; secondly the search for a new point of balance, dictated by expenditure limits, between statutory and non-statutory welfare systems; and thirdly, his picture of his Volunteer Centre as a quasi voluntary organisation, which I interpret as meaning a 'quavo' rather than a 'quango'.

His new proposed Charter for Volunteers with its startling claim that to volunteer should be the right of every citizen, (I just wonder how many citizens we will see demonstrating in favour of this right), guided our thoughts towards a more participatory model of democracy with less bureaucratic and more organic, demand-responsive agencies and a more enabling partnership relationship between professionals and non-professionals. He showed how the problems which we are seeking to solve

have to be viewed in a context which is changing rapidly and on the whole favourably to us. Any success we can achieve will also help to tip the balance in the right way in other contexts.

Paul Hoggett and Jeff Bishop in their amusing and not so imaginary scenarios showed us some of the extraordinary goings on which occur within what we might have been deluded into assuming was a group of kindred or complementary voluntary bodies operating close together in the same neck of the woods. The poor volunteer, whoever he or she may be, is caught up in personal and organisational relationships of all kinds, as voluntary bodies strive for social and other satisfactions, for achievements, recognition and power and to reconcile often irreconcilable goals and functions. It is almost a subject for a counterpart of 'War & Peace'. Their story reeked of authenticity, but having been closely involved in many of these horrors over half a century, I would not be unduly turned off by them. They can be handled and survived and some of them actually go away just at the time when you wish they would.

An important issue discussed last night by Barbara Mostyn and others was what motivates volunteers. In the Gilbert and Sullivan song, we were told that, 'Every little boy and girl who's born into this world alive is either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative'. Some seem to suppose that people today are equally fated to be either volunteers or non-volunteers. As has been shown, however, it isn't as simple as that. Some people will be dedicated volunteers only for a particular cause or subject, while all others leave them cold. Some become hooked through neighbours or friends or even through watching a TV programme. As an ornithologist since the age of 7, I resisted for nearly 40 years becoming involved in conservation, into which I was finally not a volunteer, but conscripted by Julian Huxley.

I know many of you feel that there is a tendency for nature conservationists to upstage recreation and amenity interests. All I can say is that we in that realm have been up to our necks in these problems in a big way for a long time and that we do have another contribution, apart from that subject, to make on general principles and practices. Luckily for us, habitats and the land are a universal point of focus and their photogenic aspects enable us to exert plenty of attraction to the wider public. But we are very much concerned to move in step with recreation and amenity interests. When I was organising for the Duke of Edinburgh the 1963 and 1970 Countryside Conferences, I walked round the gardens of Wallington in Northumberland with Pauline Dower. She was then Deputy Chairman of National Parks, and we were discussing a threefold strategy for the countryside, uniting nature conservation, amenity and recreation interests. This did lead to the transformation of the old National Parks Commission into the Countryside Commission, but otherwise I think that we have had to wait much longer than we perhaps optimistically supposed for progress in bringing these great three interests together in a strategy.

Apart from your illuminating conference papers, of which I have only been able to mention a few, I have come across several other interesting examples just now of what is actually being done. I have here, for instance, the Bedfordshire County Council's Parish Appraisal Package on landscape. Then I have a summary of the report to the Department of Environment published a fortnight ago by Professor Gerald Smart, (formerly County Planning Officer of Hampshire) and Susan Wright. It

deals with the way in which local communities see problems and define issues needing attention and the way government co-ordinates decisions in this field. It urges a strengthening of the role of parish councils and the rural community councils and the evolution of rural development strategies and the reconciliation with these of development of farming under the Ministry of Agriculture. That is now on the Secretary of State for Environment's desk and I hope will have some complementary influence to that which our own thinking is pointing to.

Yet another encouraging example is a project in the village of Little Paxton, between St. Neots and Huntingdon, on the Great Ouse, which has been led by the local representative of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Dr. Roy Matthews, with the aid of the Young Ornithologists Club, the Parent Teachers Association, the Women's Institute, the parish council and other bodies on the spot. By working informally at this very local level, personal contact largely cuts out the need for administration.

These are among quite a number of examples that could be given of what is actually going on. Lyndis Cole, in her paper, has referred to a number of the Countryside Management Projects, funded by the Countryside Commission and local authorities, where project officers are put in post at a sub-county or district level to orchestrate countryside works, for example, in the Tame Valley, Manchester, the Colne Valley, GLC, and the Herts/Barnet area. There is also the New Agricultural Landscape project, again sponsored by the Countryside Commission in England, which has been active in Hereford and Worcester, Suffolk, Leicestershire, Bedfordshire, and Cambridgeshire. Other examples are rural tree-planting schemes, MSC countryside task forces of which we heard this morning and work co-ordinated by parish councils, of which there are many examples, some involved with the 'Village Venture' competitions. There is, again, the work of local amenity societies and interest groups - things like the Bridleways Action Group at Bromley and the visitors' heritage centre now starting up at Shoreham, Kent.

We have to bear in mind that while we talk in generalities, quite a number of people up and down the country are doing something which is often of a pioneering nature and which illustrates the possibilities of taking into action more of the principles and issues which we have been discussing.

We've heard quite a bit on population, which I won't go over again, but a lot of people don't realise how thin the country people are on the ground in many areas compared with a 100 years or more ago. I was very struck by the history of the Lyme Regis landslip at Christmas 1839 when in a pretty remote area, in the middle of the night before Christmas, something like 40 people appeared on the scene within about an hour of this landslip occurring. The country was crawling with inhabitants at that time. A lot of them were able-bodied and in the course of their own activities they did a great deal of countryside care which we are now worrying how to get done in rather artificial ways.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DATA

The trouble is, those who are left in the countryside, have to concentrate to please the accountants on all sorts of tasks which are nothing to do with the care of the countryside and what remaining care

they can attend to has to be done in the most cost-effective but least sensitive way. It's the towns now that have the margin of manpower, the margin of resources. So one of our great problems is to mobilise in a sensitive and acceptable way enough help from the towns to fill this gap which has been created by population and economic trends.

I think we here largely represent upper and middle level bodies and I think we have shown in this meeting that we have now achieved an impressive understanding of what the requirements are and of the difficulties that arise. But when we come to deliver, we are hindered by three great problems: we don't enjoy local confidence, understanding and goodwill at the parish level; we have not enough suitably trained staff available for deployment at the grass roots; and we don't have a capacity for sustained delivery of services adequate in scale and standard. We can do very interesting experiments, which tend to be funded only for short periods, but we don't have any continuing and comprehensive answer to these problems.

Of course, recently matters have been made worse by the great increase in the number of visitors to the countryside. Looking at it from the recreational point of view, we have so many people who are users of the natural resource that sometimes they use the resource up and then we have so relatively few people who are in the position of conserving and maintaining the resource for the coming years.

So what comes out of all this is that we tend to generalise too much, we tend to look at these things perhaps at a slightly higher level of abstraction than is useful and those of us who heard the paper from Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett will realise that what goes on at parish level bears a very thin resemblance to a lot that we talk about in a generalised way.

Prescriptions have got to be flexible and we need a more flexible framework. We need some changes of attitude on all sides in order to assemble instantly the right blend of criteria and to choose the situations to which those criteria are truly applicable.

It is essential also that each potential partner, official or voluntary, is aware of the features of its own sector of activity and of the points at which others impinge on it. I think we are all guilty of taking too much for granted on what we can do without creating some damage to the interests of others, even unwittingly. If there is to be effective division of labour, reciprocal teamwork, there must be more clarity and settled principles over who does what and I believe a very worthwhile advance has been made by this meeting and its preparation in that direction.

I would comment that some voluntary bodies find it extremely difficult to stick to principles, procedures and priorities even when these have been agreed upon and some keen officers of such bodies seem to find it hard to realise how seriously this can compromise them as reliable partners. I think this point of consistency is one of the few points relevant which I have not heard made here. I find that so many officers in voluntary bodies have great difficulty in steering a consistent course over even two or three years and this is one of the problems which makes it difficult for local authorities and others to work with them.

We've been over the questions of getting a better understanding of voluntary bodies and I think we've probably discussed that enough. I would like to go on now to the question of the getting an objectively balanced review of the state of the countryside as it affects us here, of the nature and scale and the aspirations of existing interests in it and the main issues needing to be resolved. There have been of course quite a number of reports, like the Strutt Report, but I think that even some of the things that were written very recently in the 70s are already looking a bit dated, because they reflect an understanding which we now see to be rather more blinkered and rather more fragmented than we would think right. I would commend especially The Common Ground by Richard Mabey and the report of Professor T. O'Riordan, recently produced for the Conservation and Development Programme for the UK, of which I was Chairman, called 'Putting Trust in the Countryside' which I think form a very valuable framework for preparing what I call a 'shopping list' of the actions required. On that basis we might find bodies willing to pursue each item on that shopping list.

Linked with this and moving on to what I may call the demand side, there seems to be a need for concerted countryside leisure resource programmes spelling out the combined and we may hope, reconciled demands from countryside user bodies and comparing them with available resources after taking account of other legitimate claims. In the case of water, the bodies using water are physically brought into confrontation more readily and more continuously than those using some other countryside resources and they have already been forced to try to take account of one another's conflicting interests. What are the interests making a demand on some part of the countryside; what is the seasonality of the demand; what are the criteria which lead them to certain sites rather than others, and so on? This needs a good deal more attention in my view because I think that a great deal of conflict and even collision could be avoided if all concerned were more alive to the areas where friction is most likely to arise and where damage to the environment, which somebody has to make good, is more liable to result. We'vehad this very much, for instance, with the question of swan protection, and the discarding of lines and lead by fishermen.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

These bring us to three wider questions: firstly what changes and expansions of state aid and activity will be required and where can State and local authority activity be minimised through voluntary or other compensating activities? Secondly, how much more can be effectively done by environmental education and how can educationists be moved actually to do it? Thirdly, how can a greatly expanded, broader, more imaginative and more effective media effort be promoted, to bring about much fuller understanding of the countryside by town-dwellers and countrymen. One of the difficulties is that where we have something like a rare bird or rare butterfly or something, it is fairly easy to get the media, particularly the pictorial media, to cover it reasonably effectively. But a lot of what we're talking about is very complicated and very abstract; it's not the sort of story the average sub-editor, who is in a hurry to get out for a drink, considers very newsworthy. I think one of our great difficulties is going to be how to dramatise or personify some of these things. We had some very useful pointers in Jeff Bishop's paper. We can't expect to get them over to the public unless they are covered by the media and we can't expect the media to cover them unless

we can make them more newsworthy and more capable of presentation in the way the media are used to and the way that they think their circulations require. This is quite different from the way we usually think of them and describe them in our handouts.

The countryside needs a lot of care. When we get on to the practical part of where we go from here, we've got to consider that this care must be done in many different ways. There is a special need for maintenance, so that resources can be used by local people and visitors, including recreational visitors. The dwindling number of people who work in the countryside can only cope with some part of all this and what bothers me is that it is sometimes only a small part. Where is the balance to come from? It can only come from some form of outside help.

Much of that help needs to be intimately bound up with country conditions, with country attitudes and with each parish community itself. This is where I think we have completely fallen down. We've made no serious attempt to consider the impact of what we want to do on the legitimate interests and concerns of the people who live there, who probably own or farm the land. There's far too much detachment in the rather superior way we come in and appear to be laying down the law about what should be done, without taking sufficiently into account the conditions in the field, the attitudes and the community interests.

So the conclusion I draw from this is that we need to bring help right down to the grass roots level; but this help needs to be matched in scale and in human dimensions with the parish concerned. Each village in fact needs to have its available man-hours for environmental care supplemented, not by some remote heavy-handed statutory or even voluntary organisation, but by enough hand-picked, neighbourly collaborators, whose faces can become known, to form an integrated team with the parishioners.

Surveys and calculations showing the range of jobs typically needing doing and the numbers of man-hours involved annually, are given in the accompanying paper by Lyndis Cole on 'Volunteering: a Look at Present and Future Roles in the Countryside'. Her paper will give an interesting cross-check, and I have relied on it a great deal as the basic material for what I am saying now. For a notional average country parish we may take as a norm a need for between twenty and forty volunteer 'Parish Friends' each giving one day every other weekend to his or her share of the tasks. This of course is simply arithmetic, it could be done in many other ways. The workload would evidently vary parish-by-parish and could be covered on a wide range of rotas, embracing the necessary skills and physical capacities. Each parish would need to work to an annual programme of 'community care', which might be drawn up in close consultation with the Parish Council by a trained, locally acceptable regular 'Parish Partner' acting as local group leader, organiser and local liaison. I think of this as perhaps fulfilling in an environmental field a role something like a district nurse in the health field - someone who is known and trusted right through the area, but who has both a remedial function and a positive constructive function in regard to the use of the environment.

One person might sometimes fill this role for a group of neighbouring parishes and obviously it will be much better if these people can be funded full-time. To ensure happy integration there should be some

social event or festivity at least once a year, at which the 'Friends' (who would each have the status of honorary parishioners in that village) would get to know one another, wherever possible with some local arts contribution as a focus. It would get the arts people involved with the environment too. It might even be possible for some individuals to be welcomed as extra members of particular families in the parish and to drop in for a chat from time-to-time. What I am after is rather akin to the twinning of towns between this country and other countries. It is a question of getting a personal exchange, not just of getting a number of hands to come along and do certain jobs.

This would thus reduce the sense of alienation and remoteness between town and country which has grown up since most people ceased having close relatives living on the land. It would also reduce the backlog of neglected environmental care in at least parts of the countryside and would establish new standards to educate public opinion. It could not and should not, however, attempt to do the whole job. Landowners, farmers and residents would continue to play their part with a minimum of help and advice available whenever they needed it. Water authorities, forestry services, golf clubs and other externally based bodies would normally look after themselves, but I would hope that they would be in close liaison from time to time. Parish Councils and meetings would thus be able to extend their powers and activities to make it much more worthwhile to belong to them without adding to their direct burdens. All parishioners would gain in status and in the richer social background.

To support such parish level voluntary effort there would need to be some kind of Countryside Care sponsors on a county or other wider basis. This might embrace all the voluntary bodies concerned, together with observers from interested authorities, but would delegate action to a small businesslike executive which would select and maintain the 'Parish Partners' as their eyes, ears and limbs on the ground and would budget and try to find necessary funding from the participants and elsewhere. It would also monitor progress and contribute to the national stock of data on the interpretation of problems and ways of tackling them, which we're having so much difficulty in building up.

The sponsor bodies would need to appoint one of their member bodies as their agents for administrative duties; in some counties it might be the County Trust for Nature Conservation, in another something on the community side might be more appropriate, in some it might even be District Councils. In this way national statutory and voluntary bodies would be freed to promote their broad objectives, by advice and grant aid where appropriate, without themselves becoming caught up in the local detail, or having to be in direct relations with parochial matters or scattered small projects. You see, a great deal of what we've been talking about implies that someone is going to do something in each local area, but this of course is an enormously complicated task in terms not only of funding and man hours but of public relations. What I am trying to do is to see a way of disentangling the sort of considerations which have been discussed here so well and the missing element of action right down at the grass roots.

This Conference illustrates what could be done at the sponsor level, in surveying requirements and impacts, in defining issues, in consulting national and specialist organisations and exploring strategies and lines

of possible agreement and in monitoring what is happening or not happening in different regions and different subject fields. That seems to me the proper sort of role for the bodies represented mainly at our level here today. But the data before us show that the vacuum persisting as one approaches the parish end of the continuum threatens to destroy the relations at national and regional level and to involve bodies belonging at that level in tasks and commitments outside their true roles and even beyond their capacities. A vigorous initiative in filling that vacuum would bring much relief and many missing satisfactions, even if it only took effect in a sample of regions in the first place. It would promise results out of all proportion to the modest investment required and would be able to build upon well-tried foundations such as competitions for the best kept village, Young Farmers' Clubs, and the Womens' Institutes, which are seeking a new lease of life.

I look back for instance, to the start of some of the bodies represented here, like the BTCV. When I think of that day in late February 1959 on Box Hill, when we turned out the first ever BTCV working party, we had some difficulty in raising 20 volunteers! The Box Hill Committee was chaired at that time by Lord Bridges, who was terribly nervous that we were going to bring into his quiet Surrey retreat a lot of 'Teddy Boys' who were going to burgle his friends' houses and rape his friends' daughters. I remember when he came round to inspect us, Lord Buxton, who was with me, said to him, "Well I'm sorry, we can only show you two Teddy Boys here: myself and Brigadier Armstrong!". So when I see what has grown from that in just 24 years (and it's only one of many examples), I believe that if we're looking forward to the end of the century we must think on a grand scale about the possibilities of getting a very much greater effort.

I now want to go on to environmental education. Some of my best friends are environmental educationists, but I can't fail here to say to you what I've said bluntly to them at their AGM recently: that their contribution so far, to the immense advances recently made in public knowledge and understanding of the natural environment, is miserably small. I was very glad to hear Foster Murphy being equally critical about them. The advances which have been made in public awareness relate mainly to the media and to voluntary groups such as the BTCV, which are encouraging environmental learning by direct physical involvement in the countryside - learning by doing and learning through 'community care'.

I would like to see a Grand Assize held at many places up and down the land. In Part One, past and present students from schools would be critically examined as to their knowledge of a range of matters which ought to be known by every citizen and the sources from which they acquired such knowledge. I am not suggesting a debate, more a trial. Part Two would consist of a full and frank discussion with teachers and education authorities about the situation disclosed and what they mean to do about it. They should be left in no doubt that unless we get a quick and effective response, it will be to their disadvantage. I am totally sceptical that our educational establishment will begin to do its duty in this field until it is put under strong and unremitting local pressure. Unless and until education can begin to pull its weight, we are forced to rely largely on the media to inform and provide interpretation and guidance on basic factors affecting the countryside, its management, conservation and conflicting uses. Luckily the media are not unaware of

these problems and, with the exception of the mass circulation press, try to give them sensible and balanced coverage.

We've only to look back however on the issues and facts which have been before us at this conference, to realise how fragmented and often superficial and unconstructive much of the media coverage is and how little we would understand the subject if we relied entirely even on what we can read in the class journals, let alone the mass newspapers, not I think so much through any fault of theirs in this case, but through failures on our side to give them a convincing, balanced and interesting brief.

CRRAG is not a decision-making body, but sound decisions rest on sound research and nowhere is the essential relevant research on these great matters more authoritatively brought into focus than here. One way or another, I feel we shouldn't leave here without being perfectly clear and have on the record, that a consensus has now been reached over the next steps forward, which should urgently be taken by the responsible authorities. I am happy that we have done so much to correct perspectives, to clarify thinking and to define terms, but that's not enough. We could argue about how many volunteers can dance on the point of a needle until the subsidised cows come home. But at the end of the day we have to act and thanks to all the good work brought into focus here, a basis for sound, far-reaching action now exists. We need to bring together our thoughts to that end. So I would in conclusion commend five action points for your consideration:

1. A definitive statement should be prepared on the basis of this conference, for agreement among those concerned, on progress towards balanced rural development in our field and the way ahead.

2. This statement should be submitted to the relevant Secretaries of State with a request for a Green Paper on future national policy, on lines to be indicated in it, to be followed, in due course, by a White Paper.

3. Meanwhile, a number of existing demonstration projects, not less than six - and I do want to pay tribute to the existing demonstration projects which have shown so vividly what ought to be done on a local parish or similar basis - should be chosen and lead agencies nominated to advance them to a state enabling the problems and potential for the future to be more clearly shown.

4. Concurrently with the above, invitations to be issued for bids from districts and parishes and other local community bodies, to form the first 100 model schemes, constituting the basis for a comprehensive national programme, complementing all that is represented here with an equally effective coverage at the local end.

5. A major conference of interested parties, official and unofficial, to be organised say, for 1986, as a launch occasion for a nationwide network, which will in due course bring to an end the shortcomings, the gaps and the deprivations which have been brought to light here by applying at the local level what we are all working on at the middle and national levels. Let us make sure that that can be carried into effect before this century is out.

DISCUSSION

T. Huxley (Countryside Commission for Scotland, CRRAG Chairman and Session Chairman)

Thank you very much indeed Mr. Nicholson. That was a marvellous bringing together of all our deliberations over the last two days. I think there is an opportunity for CRRAG to look at the first two of the five action points with which Mr. Nicholson concluded; that of making a statement on progress towards balanced rural development and of course in particular the role of CRRAG in looking at ways of moving this suggestion through to Ministers. We might be able to help: we have an opportunity, because CRRAG reports to a body called the Chairmen's Policy Group, of being able to get such a statement discussed by a wider and very important group of people and of encouraging it to be taken on from there.

J. Ashdown (Kent County Council)

About the little play act between Bob Hall and Terry Robinson, I go along with the five action points, but how are they going to help that 17 year old lad, the potential organiser, on the telephone to the Planning Department?

M. Nicholson

Well I think they're going to help a lot. What I'm asking for is that we publish the proceedings of this Conference, so that a compact and clear statement can be made. I think this is one of the usual problems of non-communication and lack of understanding. So far most of what we've said in this room would be news, not only to the 17 year old, but to a great many people who ought to know it. It's not entirely their fault that they don't know it and we must see that they do.

C. Speakman (Yorkshire Dales Society)

At the present time there seems to be a retreat from environmental education by the major environmental agencies. The Countryside Commission has no programme for environmental education; indeed I believe I am right in saying that there is no longer an education policy. It is rather sad, because I do think that if you can get into the education service at various levels, you can make an enormous impact, not only on the present generation of children, but on children's parents. If kids go into the countryside, their behaviour and understanding is going to find its way through to the attitude of their parents.

There are three major areas in which we ought to attack the problem. The first is in teacher training; if you can get into the Colleges of Education, you've got a whole new generation of teachers who will go out into the schools and make some impact. Secondly, in in-service training of teachers, we could again have a direct national impact. Thirdly and perhaps most effective of all, we could have an impact through the examination boards and the examination syllabuses for GCE, CSE and 16 plus. If an element of genuine environmental education is built into the examination syllabus, then this will find its way through

the school system, probably more effectively than through teacher training. But we've got to do this through a concerted national policy promulgated by the national agencies working with education authorities.

M. Nicholson

Yes, I quite agree with all that. But some of us have been talking about this for 25 years and have put forward all sorts of good suggestions on these lines. But the educational establishment has just not wanted to know about it. If you take the structure of education in this country, it really makes it very difficult, if not impossible. I'm not alone in this. If you had an industrialist talking here he would say very much the same thing: that the educational structure in this country is perfectly designed to prevent the important issues being addressed, whether the creation of wealth or the environment and to make sure that people come out of the system as ignorant and unfitted as possible for the problems they've got to deal with. I do not think we will get anywhere unless we handle this very specifically. I want to go to the village school and ask how much the pupils know and why they don't know more and then get the teachers to answer. We have got to be very persistent in this. We have many obstacles to progress in this country, but I think that the educational establishment, on its record in my lifetime, is one of the greatest obstacles and one of the greatest forces in dragging this country down.

T. Huxley

Colin Speakman threw out a challenge about the Countryside Commission not having an education officer at the moment. Now it's not for me to defend this, but I would ask you to remember that job-titles don't necessarily reflect the policies of an organisation. The Countryside Commission for Scotland still has a post of Education Officer and a number of posts in environmental education generally. But I don't think that job-titles alone are a sure indication of the work being done in an organisation. Terry, do you want to say something on this?

T. Robinson (Countryside Commission)

I remember this same debate taking place in the closing session last year, when we were discussing education for leisure, in relation to the discussion paper, 'Leisure Policy for the Future'. Someone made a very important point, that a large number of demands are made on the educational system for the inclusion of important new bodies of knowledge and that indeed the educational establishment does respond; but then when it changed, it was sharply reminded of its traditional responsibility for the three R's by public opinion. It does seem to be unfair always to lay blame at the doors of the educational establishment. It is society which that educational establishment works to, which must take some of the blame.

The Countryside Commission has made a firm policy decision to withdraw from a specialised role in influencing environmental education at the national level. It has undertaken to review that decision since it was taken only in the light of meeting a reduction in its resources. Why it selected that area is something you would have to ask the people who took the decision. But I suspect that it was partly because of the unproductive years that have been spent hammering on the doors of the

educational establishment trying to get environmental education taken seriously.

A second point relates to communication, because that seems to be just as important as education itself. I remember when I was working on Exmoor one part of my job was to get the key people in Exmoor together to talk about how they were providing or would provide education, interpretation and other services in the National Park. That meeting took place at a very highly charged moment, because the Porchester Report had been out for about 3 months and one of its recommendations had been to form consultative groups to get people talking together. Ostensibly we were there to discuss education and interpretation but the meeting ended up with one of the most vociferous opponents of the National Park Authority saying, "For God's sake, get us together more frequently, because this day has done us so much good". It is important that one of the things we take away from this conference is that it is important that all the people involved in influencing the countryside and the environment should talk together regularly and informally. David Fletcher didn't have time to mention this morning the yearly South Pennine 'Heritage Swap Shop' which is just such an event. It's almost the same sort of thing as the annual party that Max Nicholson referred to. Seeing faces across a room seems to achieve so much more than just exchanging letters.

I. St. John (South Yorkshire County Council)

I am a South Yorkshire County Councillor, but in my other life I am a teacher at a comprehensive school and at this moment somebody else is looking after the kids that I should be teaching in order that I can sit here. I'm afraid, Mr. Nicholson, that I am horrified with your effort to stir us by making an attack on the educational system.

There is no doubt that my job has become more and more difficult in the 18 years I have been teaching. In the last four years unemployment has caused a complete culture shock in the city of Sheffield, where I work, which is partly why you are trying to stimulate volunteers. To say that children should be taught more about their countryside environment is incredible. It wasn't long ago that the Confederation of British Industry was attacking teachers for producing kids who couldn't read and write. The fact is that teachers are working extremely hard. I can't say that loud enough. We could equally be talking about nuclear disarmament and somebody would say, "There is nothing more important than peace studies in schools. Why isn't the educational establishment doing something about it?". The fact is, we are under pressure from all sorts of directions and in the end teachers have to make value judgements. I think on the whole they do a reasonable job in very difficult circumstances.

I am not saying that the countryside is unimportant: of course it's important, but it's always going to be more important to older people who have had their life and have then been able to develop their interests. How many people here are unemployed? None, in all probability. It is too easy to stand back and say this should happen or that should happen, when in fact you have no real conception of other people's lives.

M. Nicholson

I feel that we have a misunderstanding here. I never mentioned the word 'countryside': I was talking about environmental education which is, or should be, based on ecology. In the Ecological Parks Trust, of which I am chairman, we involve a large number of schools. What I am contending is that ecology is systems analysis and a great deal of modern civilisation is about systems analysis. Ecologists invented it a long time before the systems analysts did and I am contending that the educational value of what can be provided in environmental education is being neglected by the educational system.

T. Huxley

I am glad the subject of environmental education has been explored and that Mr. St. John rose to the defence of teachers. I feel that people like Professor Smythe and others in Scotland who lead the Scottish Environmental Education Committee and the Institute of Biology in Scotland and the Association of Geography Teachers, are very active in this field. The problem I suppose is one of resources. Perhaps the problem lies further back than the 'chalk face'!

J. Iles (BTCV)

Perhaps we are not getting the facts through to decision-makers in formal education. There is a vast amount of practical environmental education going on. I've noticed since BTCV started work in South Yorkshire in 1975 that a lot of education authorities have taken up the idea of setting up nature reserves within school grounds. After the setting up of the William Curtis ecological park, we're now setting up ecological parks in places like Newcastle. At the grass roots level there is quite a lot happening. What may not be happening is the communication of all these different projects to the decision-makers and how they can help this process.

M. Nicholson

May I just say that I am quite aware of this and I don't want to give the impression that everything in the education system is black as regards the environment. All I am saying is that there is a very great time lag in the general adoption in education of things which have been proved to be educationally valuable. I think one should recognise that formal education is contributing little to people's knowledge of the environment. In a recent MORI poll people were asked about the sources of their information and understanding about the environment. Only two percent said they got their knowledge at school!

T. Huxley

I wonder if anyone would like to comment on the point Mr. Nicholson made about the need for consistency amongst voluntary bodies. Do you agree or disagree?

D. Fletcher

I'm not exactly sure in what sense 'consistency' was being used. Would Mr. Nicholson like to elaborate?

M. Nicholson

The thought is that voluntary bodies tend to change their policies and mood rather quickly: they are particularly susceptible to lobbying, to changes in funding and so on. There is a tendency for a voluntary body to make an agreement which only makes sense in the medium term and then a year or two later to get some quite different ideas. I don't know how often this happens, but I have seen examples of it and I do realise that it's rather trying to an administrator working to a rather longer time-span.

D. Fletcher

I think in some ways that is inevitable. There will be voluntary bodies that are consistent because they have been established by people who are committed to a certain aim, such as an ornithological trust. But environmental bodies at parish level of the type Mr. Nicholson was describing, are going to be more changeable. They are going to be all things to all the people that live in the parish and will have to reflect the changing events, campaigns and concerns that motivate the people in the parish. It is the activists who'll change. So I think it is inevitable that some voluntary groups will be led in different directions at different times. That is one of the drawbacks of having a very diverse, low-key parish level of activity. However, diversity is a strength in ecological terms and perhaps it is a good thing for the voluntary sector, as well as change, development and evolution. It may be trying for authorities dealing with voluntary bodies, but if they shoot off in new directions there's probably a reason and that reason needs to be understood so that communication can continue.

T. Huxley

That's the kind of answer I thought someone might give. I think Mike Collins would like to come in on the same point.

M. Collins (Sports Council)

I have two points which relate to that. The first relates to 'balance'. Mr. Nicholson said he thought we were in a position after this conference to take a balanced stance: I think I could take issue with that. In Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett's paper we were adjured to take equal account of the voluntary pressures created by the growth of recreation demand as it shifts geographically and socially and the more discussed, environmental and conservation movements. I don't think we've done that and any assessment of the sort he calls for so spiritedly would have to give more attention to countryside sport and recreation.

Secondly, I would like to make a point about consistency and relationship. The one thing that voluntary, conservation, amenity and recreation bodies share (and I come back to our title about the 'voluntary sector': we have talked a lot about individual volunteers and not nearly as much about voluntary bodies), is that they are selfselecting, self-aggregating, sometimes quasi-democratic and sometimes genuinely democratic groups of like-minded people. I would say to any public body from parish up to national agency that you forget that at your peril. My agency has been crawling into that trap in its relationships with governing bodies of sport at every level for the last ten years.

We have run the risk of placing upon these self-selecting voluntary bodies too much of the responsibility, for example, for a national public policy of promoting mass sport, when some of them are not capable of it, and do not wish to be anything more than large clubs of people who enjoy a particular sport, even if some of their members want to play to Olympic level. When we get into partnership with such bodies, we have to be quite clear what specific task we are asking of them in promoting mass participation since mass participation requires different resources from promoting excellence, different training and different organisation.

We have in part been guilty of leading them astray and some of them of colluding, by mixing up the two objectives of 'Sport for All' and the pursuit of excellence. I think in the future we will have to sort those two objectives into two different programmes. If the public sector is going to work in partnership to increase mass participation, it is going to have to demand some degree of organisational consistency. In any organisation, inconsistency is going to lead to a waste of resources and so at national and middle levels of voluntary bodies, one does need a more professional organisation and approach. Yet that's not got to compromise the voluntary nature of the body. I think we have been muddled in our thinking about the partnership and not just in the recreation field.

M. Nicholson

I welcome those two thoughts. When I referred to 'balance' I was quoting from Foster Murphy who said that we were getting to a time where there had to be a new balance struck between public and voluntary agencies. I wasn't saying that this conference was balanced; in fact I was apologising for the conservationists appearing to upstage the others. But I still think that in CRRAG as a whole you have a better chance of hammering out that balance than in any other body.

The other point I welcome was about the professionalism of voluntary bodies. I think it was Foster Murphy who said that voluntary bodies ought to look more at the way they work. They ought to be a bit more self-conscious about their operation and their structure. I think the paper from Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett will give them much food for thought in these areas.

T. Huxley

I have a question of my own, which relates to the question of state aid and the extent to which present resources need to be extended and how much they can be replaced by the voluntary sector. The question really comes under the heading of 'the hidden subsidy'. How important is the contribution which people in salaried employment are making to unsalaried voluntary activity, at the expense of their employers? Is this miniscule and unimportant, or does it actually represent quite an important contribution towards the setting up of voluntary bodies? If you think it is important, does anybody detect that in recent years the 'hidden subsidy' has tended to be more threatened and less tolerated than in decades past? Would anybody like to respond to that question?

J. Mackay (Countryside Commission for Scotland)

If I could widen the definition of 'voluntary activity' and say that I am active as a shop steward. I've never thought of that previously as a voluntary activity, but it is a kind of voluntary work. At national committee level I have been impressed by the degree of commitment that people show towards their union activities. Such organisations provide a framework in which a lot of people find an opportunity to express talents and skills which they cannot easily express in their mainstream employment.

I put it to Mr. Nicholson that there may be a range of untapped entrepreneurial and leadership talent and skill that people want to deploy which goes wider and deeper than grass roots work in conservation and amenities.

M. Nicholson

That's a very interesting question you've raised Mr. Chairman and a very interesting comment. In my young days, a great many people who were paid to carry out some economic activity were in fact spending most of their time on something else. For instance, a very successful steel master from Sheffield wrote 'The Birds of Siberia'. Yet running a steel works full-time in Sheffield doesn't really give you the time to write 'The Birds of Siberia' at the same time! There were many examples of people who took long stints of time off. Now we have firms like IBM formally seconding their managers to voluntary bodies in order to get the extra experience and impetus derived from serving in the voluntary sector. If it makes sense for leading companies to second people for this sort of thing, it hardly makes sense to criticise those who have done it informally or to worry about it.

R. Hall (BTCV)

Mr. Chairman, I don't think I know the answer to your question, but I would like to challenge the underlying assumption behind it, that somehow working for a voluntary body is necessarily working against the interests of your employer. I wonder whether we ought not to be looking towards a much more open attitude of public bodies towards volunteers. In parts of this conference I have sensed a distinction between the volunteers as 'them' and public bodies as 'us'. I would very much like to see the day when public bodies do see volunteers as part of themselves, as part of the available resources to be used, just like their own staff or their own finance.

I would like to pick up the first question of the discussion which came from John Ashdown, about how Max Nicholson's action-points will help the 17 year old, potential volunteer in my playlet. If they are acted on, then perhaps when a similar 17 year old picks up the phone - say in ten year's time - and finds a public body which is committed to the idea of involving volunteers as part of its community resources, he may get a better deal. I hope there will be at least one person to whom he can relate and that person will have been around for some time. That person will understand the motivation of volunteers. I think if we improve that aspect, things will be a lot better for our poor 17 year old!

T. Robinson

In the playlet we wanted to make it clear that the bloke on the other end thought he was helping as well! As far as he was concerned he was giving helpful information, not puting up obstacles.

T. Huxley

It was a fairly polarised situation that you illustrated.

D. Fletcher

In answer to the Chairman's question, a very great deal of employers' time goes into supporting the voluntary sector. But it is a two-way process: my employer gains a great deal from my work in the voluntary sector. I'm in a very fortunate and favoured position, being in higher education. I can take time off when I need to. I have a very flexible timetable and I can take a day or a week out to sit in the office of the voluntary organisation that I work for. I may well work evenings for my employer. I may well take the voluntary work into the Polytechnic and to the students. My students work for the charitable trust on placement. At any one time we've three or four students. This happens in quite a number of educational institutions, not just my own. There's a very free interchange and this works very well. It works a little less well at the secondary and primary level of education although to some extent it is working there: some teachers get time to come into our office and advise and help us. They bring their school parties and stay in our residential centre and we have a community liaison team that goes into the schools, out to parish councils and voluntary groups. Many staff of public agencies come to the Birchcliffe Centre at Hebden Bridge and spend perhaps rather more time than the strict interpretation of their duties might require. They are very useful to us: some of them are co-opted onto our working parties. Their authorities get benefits from this. It is beginning to happen more and more and I welcome it. It reminds us of the theme of this conference, which is the relationship between the professional public agency and the volunteer. We are blurring the distinctions though we've got an awfully long way to go, and the business of borrowing and lending time is part of it.

T. Huxley

I'm glad you've said that, though I fear that there is an accountant's mentality in the public sector at the present time. If you happen in your spare time and in your evenings to be a member of a voluntary body, but part of the action resulting from that has to be taken during working hours, there is no way other than by taking a day off that you can do this without infringing your employer's time. Maybe it is something that some people want to turn a blind eye to. But I wonder whether everybody still finds it as easy as I did when I was under instruction from Mr. Nicholson to help voluntary bodies and to use my employer's time towards that end.

C. Speakman

I've found a great deal goes on and thank goodness it does! In the 18th century it was the great landowners who patronised the arts and in the 20th century it is the state in various ways. It's no coincidence that

academics and teachers are very often the people who run many other organisations. It is also sometimes access to 'free' telephones, postage and photocopying which helps many small organisations survive.

As an extreme example, I know a character who works for a very large undertaking who - it is well known by everybody in the office - spends most of his time walking footpaths and is rarely to be seen. I suspect the citizens of the city in which he lives get better value from Mr. X walking footpaths reporting on their state and getting them improved in his firm's time than they would if he was actually doing the job he's paid for. Long may that continue.

M. Masterman (Association of Metropolitan Authorities and West Yorkshire County Council)

The answer to the question really depends on where you are employed. My employer positively discourages me from participating in certain things and I think quite rightly. I am in a position to influence policy and it could be that such policy came to favour things that I was involved in. I made a choice a long time ago that I would not put myself and my authority in the position to be accused in that way. I think academics are in an ideal position and I'm envious that they can operate in this way. Without wishing to take anything away from David Fletcher's ability as an entrepreneur, he operates in a favourable setting. If he were in another job I am sure he would seek out opportunities, but he might not be able to turn them to such effect.

M. Nicholson

I would like to come back to 'motivation'. I am sure that the voluntary bodies represented here would come out somewhere near the top of a national chart of 'motivation per worker or volunteer'. Many employers are conscious of the high level of motivation in the voluntary sector and how comparatively difficult it is for them to generate the same motivation in their workforces. Employers gain and recognise that they gain from having people on their staff who are used to the flexibility and lateral thinking which goes on in the voluntary sector. I believe everyone gains by becoming used to looking at problems in a way which may be very difficult to acquire in a firm or a local authority. So Mr. Chairman, I follow your thinking. Leading managers are now turning their thoughts towards the benefits of secondments etc., so I believe we have nothing to apologise for insofar as we use time and facilities knowingly or unknowingly from our occupations because I am sure employers gain through that process.

Thank you very much. I'm afraid I've had to speak, you may think, arrogantly. I'm very much aware that many of the qualifications and many of the other acknowledgements which should have been made haven't, but I do want to thank you for asking me to take part. I've learnt an awful lot from this operation and I hope you have. I think we have a great opportunity now to take another leap forward: we took a leap forward about 1960 at the time of 'The Countryside in 1970' conferences, when for the first time we began to talk on these subjects at national level. I think that enough of it has permeated and we're strong enough and sophisticated enough to be able to take the next step of bringing in on the act a great many people who have unfortunately and unfairly so far been left out of a great deal of what we've been talking

about. I hope you will regard your privileged understanding and strategic awareness of voluntary effort in the countryside, gained from this conference, as giving you a duty to see that the decision-taking and funding bodies and the legislators are informed that however many disagreements, differences and nuances there may be in the voluntary sector, there is a hard core of objectives which we can all agree on and which we can wish to carry forward and which we hope they can agree to implement.

T. Huxley

Thank you Mr. Nicholson, that brings this session to a close.

CLOSING REMARKS

Thomas Huxley

Chairman of CRRAG and Deputy Director,
Countryside Commission for Scotland.

I have a number of thanks which it is the duty and pleasure of the Chairman of CRRAG to make at the end of a conference. First of all, may I thank Nicholas Mays: although he has now left the Sports Council and the job of CRRAG Secretary for other employment, he was released by his new employer to be able to continue to organise this conference which he had done such a great deal to initiate. So, thank you very much Nicholas.

May I also thank the members of CRRAG themselves who have had good ideas that have borne directly upon the excellence of this conference.

Thanks are also due to the three Sessional Chairmen: they have thanked all the speakers in the sessions in their turn, but to John Foster, Maurice Masterman and to Colin Bonsey, very warm thanks. Finally, I always like to include thanks to the participants at the conference because really without you this event would not have worked so well. Everybody has spoken at some moment, and that is quite an achievement.

CRRAG CONFERENCE 1983

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