

**SOCIAL EXCLUSION
IN COUNTRYSIDE LEISURE
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The Role of the Countryside in Addressing Social Exclusion

A Report for the Countryside Recreation Network

September 2001

This report is sponsored by:



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- managers and employees on projects who allowed the detailed scrutiny of their project in the cases selected; and
- beneficiaries who gave up their time to talk about the projects which had created new opportunities for them to use the countryside for recreational purposes.

Without the ability to explore and discuss these in-depth cases with employees and beneficiaries, it would have been impossible to connect the ideas explored in the literature review with contemporary practice. By rooting the study in the exploration of good practice in existing projects, it becomes possible to explore the realities of what is being achieved on the ground. The openness and helpfulness of our respondents is much appreciated.

Bill Slee & Derren Joseph, University of Aberdeen

Nigel Curry, Countryside and Community Research Unit.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project was commissioned by the Countryside Recreation Network (CRN) to develop its understanding of issues of social exclusion and inclusion in countryside recreation. The principal aim was to illustrate best practice examples in providing countryside recreation by using cases from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Literature Review

A review of the literature reveals a range of definitions of social exclusion. The consensus amongst definitions is that social exclusion always a set of processes, that through particular institutional arrangement, one social group does to another. Exclusion is often associated with poverty, unemployment, isolation, discrimination and vulnerability. Some authors and institutions prefer to use the term social inclusion. They are exploring the same phenomenon, but feel that inclusiveness is a more positive concept.

Studies identify four groups whose participation rates in countryside recreation are low: young people; low-income groups; ethnic minorities; and disabled people. However, one should not assume that all members of such groups are excluded.

Welfarist social policy argues that the state should endeavour to correct perceived 'inequalities' in recreation participation. *Merit good* arguments suggest that the state ought to provide leisure because everyone benefits from it (other *merit goods* include the police and basic education). More recently, ideas of *citizenship* have underpinned attempts to create more inclusive leisure policy. In these, the state limits its role in leisure provision/management and the citizenry shares the responsibility for its own leisure.

In relation to countryside recreation, there is evidence of major variations in participation between different groups. Age, health and disability, socio-economic group and ethnicity all influence participation in countryside recreation. There is compelling evidence of low participation rates amongst ethnic minorities, poorer socio-economic groups and an inference that disabled and ethnic minorities may feel stigmatised in their use of the countryside.

Methods

The methods used to select the case studies included a trawl of local authorities, government bodies and NGOs for a long list of projects relating to social exclusion/inclusion and countryside leisure. Then 23 projects were shortlisted in a 4x2 matrix, with one axis reflecting the excluded group (by age, ethnicity, disability or income) and the other where the project was located (peri-urban areas or the deeper countryside). From this, 12 projects were selected for detailed study.

Project staff and beneficiaries were interviewed by semi-structured interview. Wherever possible, written project information obtained to obtain a clearer picture of the project.

Cases

The individual projects examined comprised Fairbridge Edinburgh, The Big Issue Hill-walking Club, Midlothian Council (Vogrie Country Park), PACE (Promoting Access in Croydon for Everyone), The National Trust's Inner City Project in Newcastle on Tyne, Northampton County Council (Brixworth Country Park), Greenwood Community Forest (focusing on Bestwood Country Park), Antrim Borough Council, Black Environment Network, The Mendip Hills AONB's Farming and Countryside Education Partnership, the Glodwick Community Outreach project (Oldham) and the Youth 70 project in Motherwell.

The background to each project and the results from interviews with key personnel and beneficiaries are presented case-by-case.

Key Findings Relating to Drivers of 'Success'

This research profiled a range of quite diverse initiatives seeking to combine social inclusion and countryside recreation. The main drivers behind successful initiatives include them:

- being community driven;
- having empowerment as an objective;
- having social cohesion as an objective;
- promoting partnerships;
- having '*Outreach*' as opposed to just '*Countryside*' staff;
- being assessed by both '*quantitative*' and '*qualitative*' indicators; and
- using effective marketing.

Projects tend to have been limited primarily by inadequate financial resources or inappropriate human resources.

This research project exposed a number of issues that merit further attention. There are differing perspectives on the distinction between exclusion and non-participation. When position in the life cycle precludes affluent young people from participating in countryside recreation, the problem is less one of exclusion and more one of designing more attractive leisure products to better match their leisure preferences. Yet when poor people desire access to the countryside, but are excluded by limited resources, when ethnic minorities feel uncomfortable in a distinctly 'British' countryside, and when little is done to meet the needs of disabled users, then forces of social exclusion may be manifest.

Empowerment stands out as a factor of paramount importance. The achievement of empowerment for an 'excluded' group often means that the rationale for the project disappears. This paradox can create a potential conflict of interest: whilst successful projects devolve power to groups, there may be a tendency for project staff to maintain paternalistic control, resulting in continued dependency by the beneficiary group.

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SECTION I - SCOPE OF PROJECT

This project was commissioned and by the Countryside Recreation Network (CRN) to develop its understanding of issues of social exclusion and inclusion in countryside recreation. The principal aim was to illustrate good practice with regard to inclusive approaches to the provision countryside recreation.

The consultants from the Department of Agriculture & Forestry of the University of Aberdeen and the Countryside and Community Research Unit of Cheltenham and Gloucester College adopted a UK-wide perspective which included an examination of examples of good practice in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The project falls into four main parts:

- An examination of the literature relating to social exclusion and inclusion, with particular reference to countryside recreation.
- A screening of, and classification of, projects based on a list derived from contacts with CRN agencies, local authorities, park authorities, community forests and NGOs.
- A detailed examination of twelve case studies which involved the collection of qualitative and quantitative data from project managers and discussions with project beneficiaries.
- A synthesis of findings from the case studies which allows the identification of the principal drivers of success for projects which have enabled more inclusive approaches to countryside recreation to be achieved.

SECTION II - BRIEFING PAPER

1. Introduction

1.1 Definitions

1.1.1 Social Exclusion

Teague and Wilson note that social exclusion has “*gate crashed the debate about the direction of social policy without paying the entrance fee of a definition*” define (Democratic Dialogue 1995). Although many users of the term regard it as more than a redefinition of poverty, others are less sure (Spicker 1997). It is, as Hilary Silver has noted, very difficult to define (Democratic Dialogue 1995). Yet this definition may be what Rene Lenoir (who is generally credited with coining the term in 1974) meant when he used to describe the 10% of the French population then excluded from employment-based, social security systems (Bittman 1998).

However, in recent years a number of people have offered definitions. The Cabinet Office (2000) (<http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/seu/>) suggest that:

‘social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown’.

The Local Government Association (1999) defines social exclusion as:

‘the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live. This can include a range of processes (e.g. unemployment, lack of entitlement or access to social security benefits, social security benefit levels, and poor transportation) and outcomes (e.g. poverty, ill health and isolation).’

Burchardt *et al.* (1999) offer a further definition:

‘An individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her control he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens of that society and (c) he or she would like to so participate.’

No statistics use social exclusion as an official category, so poverty indicators are often conveniently substituted. The Strategy Action Team (1999) considers social exclusion to be a term that refers to a range of complex social problems, the heart of which (for many of these problems) is income poverty. Atkinson (Bittman 1998) points out that social exclusion is a relative concept and "*we cannot judge whether or not a person is socially excluded by looking at his or her circumstances in isolation*". He goes on to say that "*people are excluded from a particular society: referring to a particular place and time*". This kind of analysis goes beyond resource allocation and includes social identity, culture, agency and ultimately power relations (Bittman 1998).

The Wolverhampton Council (2000) says that social exclusion encompasses a number of more common descriptions – poverty, unemployment, isolation, discrimination, segregation, powerlessness and stigma. This is similar to Seamus O Cinneide's (of the EU Observatory on National Policies to Combat Social Exclusion) outline of the three key dimensions of social exclusion: unemployment; poverty; and personal and public rejection. Silver argues that such definitions as international agencies or governments use, "*tend to be the vague product of consensus seeking or the ideological upshot of national traditions or interest-group rhetoric*" (Democratic Dialogue 1995).

The emphasis in this project will be on agency and process. Social exclusion is *always a set of processes, that through particular institutional arrangements, one social group does to another*. It can go even further, in that this relationship (between social groups) can refer to damaged prospects for the future – that temporary disadvantage may become permanent. In this way, the concept of social exclusion comes close to the concept of vulnerability (Bittman 1998). Vulnerability is seen by some as that aspect of poverty that results in "*insecurity, defencelessness, and exposure to risks and shock*" (de Haan 1998 cited in Bittman 1998).

;

Social exclusion is usually associated with stigmatisation and stereotyping, and some of those who experience it, tend to develop survival strategies which are premised upon its continuance. Teague and Wilson go on to say that the concept highlights the primary responsibility of the wider society for the condition of its marginal members, of the need of all to share equally in the fruits of citizenship (Democratic Dialogue 1995).

The manifestations of social exclusion and how it is understood vary across countries (Democratic Dialogue 1995). It is multidimensional while being simultaneously both economic and social. The Third EU Poverty Programme considered that exclusion is a dynamic process that may result from (as distinct from cause) a lack of resources or denial of social rights. Exclusion itself may result in multiple deprivations such as breaking of family ties and social relationships, or loss of identity and purpose.

1.1.1 Social Inclusion

In the mid nineties, Pauline Conroy (cited in Democratic Dialogue 1995) noted that poverty and social exclusion were often approached with trepidation, while locked into economic models that relegated social exclusion and deprivation to residual outcomes of the market. She asserted that social exclusion was often replaced by the “happier” notion of social inclusion. Social inclusion is a term, which conjures up a familial sense of belonging – without consideration of the entitlements, rights, and resources that might have to be devoted, realistically, to its achievement (Democratic Dialogue 1995). This preference for the term social inclusion over social exclusion has changed since the change in government. The establishment of a Social Exclusion Unit highlights this.

Communities are made up of individuals and groups (communities of interest) that share a place of residence and/or common experiences or interests (Strategy Action Team 1999c). Social inclusion is said to emphasise the values and principles of social communities which are tolerant, aware, interdependent, compassionate, are based on mutual respect and commitment and which value diversity (Wolverhampton Council 2000). Similarly, the Shetland Islands Council sees an inclusive society as one which values diversity, working to secure the rights of all the people by combating disadvantage, discrimination and abuse (Shetland Islands Council undated).

The Scottish Office (1999) does not define social inclusion but describes inclusive communities as those in which decision-making has been devolved to community level. It widens community participation in decision-making processes; builds community capacity; develops the concept of “active citizenship” through participation in voluntary and community activity, community and further education, sports and the arts; and broadens participation to include young people and marginalised groups.

Beall (1998) is critical of the idea that exclusion can be resolved by adoption of the norms of mainstream culture in an implied desire to impose uniformity in the face of social diversity. Perhaps Shucksmith gets closer to the recognising the highly subjective nature of social inclusion when he notes that 'belonging' or the feeling of belonging, is a highly personal and subjective experience. Inclusion and exclusion are thus subjectively perceived consequences of a range of social, economic and cultural processes which can be defined by a variety of means (1996, p 481).

For the purposes of this project, *social inclusion is defined as the perception of being a part of mainstream society.*

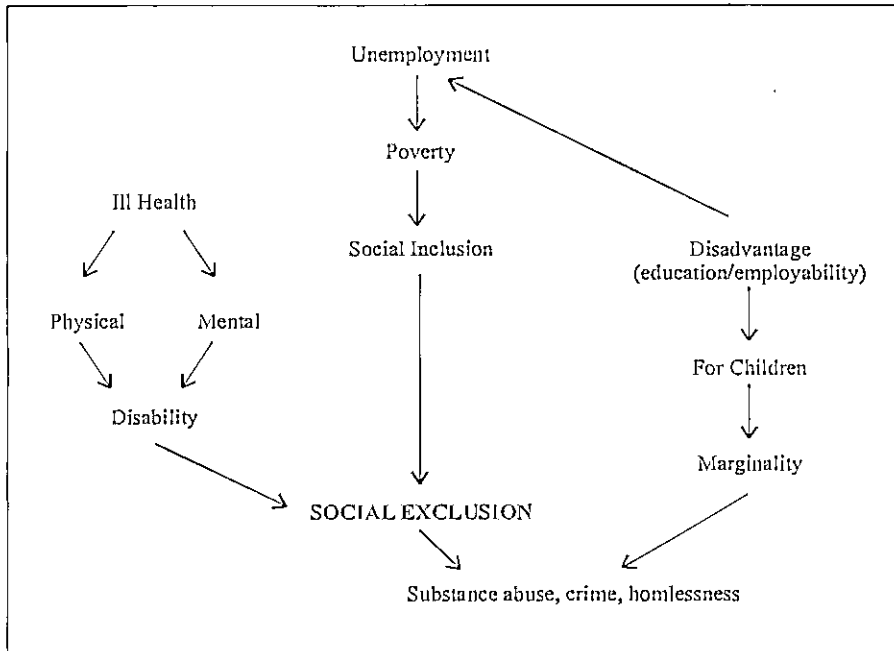
1.1 Factors Contributing to Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is often considered (by writers such as those at the Rowntree Foundation) to be a recent phenomenon, emanating from global economic restructuring, family dissolution and strained social contacts of the previous two decades. Others such as Silver (Democratic Dialogue 1995) question the newness of social exclusion, given that many that are disproportionately excluded today resemble traditionally disadvantaged populations of the past. Michael Bittman (1998) has noted that notions of "social exclusion" have largely supplanted those of "poverty" but this has led some to narrowly view the phenomena as if it were simply poverty in another guise.

Social exclusion occurs throughout the UK, but its causes and the groups of people most likely to be at risk vary from region to region (CCRU 1999). These causes are numerous and take many forms, including for example geographical, educational, wealth, cultural and other factors. People experience marginalisation or exclusion through poverty, homelessness, lack of opportunities to participate in public life, or through other cultural factors such as lack of fluency in the English language or lack of familiarity with bureaucracies. People, of course, can be categorised in several ways, and many experience multiple disadvantages.

McLaughlin places social exclusion within the structural dimensions of multiple deprivation, as indicated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1



Source: <http://www.democraticdialogue.org/report2/report2b.html>

It has been recognised and accepted that both central and local government have contributed towards social exclusion and that both have a role to play in executing new approaches and solutions (Local Government Association 1999).

1.2.1 Economic Factors

Much of the literature emphasises economic causes of social exclusion. The Strategy Action Team (1999) considers income poverty to be at the heart of many of the complex social processes that produce social exclusion. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (quoted in Local Government Association 1999) has shown that although average incomes have grown since 1979, overall income inequality was greater in the UK in the mid 1990s than at any time since the late 1940s. Single parents, those living in social housing, pensioners, and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented amongst poorer households. Hence, their apparent social exclusion.

Ralf Dahrendorf (cited in Vertovec 1997) has observed that we are faced with "*the condition of global competitiveness coupled with social disintegration*". Throughout Europe and the wider world, globalisation in the form of processes of structural transformation has severely impacted on people's lives.

Geographical isolation is a particular problem in rural areas. At the same time, however, being geographically isolated does not necessarily mean 'feeling' isolated (Shucksmith 1996, p. 443). Processes of social exclusion (when viewed as poverty-driven) operate widely in rural Britain - with one in three people in rural Britain experiencing poverty at some time between 1990-96 - even though these processes may not be as visible as in urban areas. Key issues from Shucksmith (2000) include:

- the hidden and dispersed nature of poverty in rural areas, which makes it hard to address through area-based policies or community development;
- a high incidence of poverty among older households, often in private housing;
- the low take-up of benefits, reflecting inaccessible advice and information services, differing perceptions of poverty, and a culture of independence;
- low pay, especially in small workplaces which dominate rural economies, which may trap people in a lifetime of low-paid work, combined with the high incidence of poverty among self-employed people in rural areas;
- a lack of transport, childcare, and affordable housing which compounds inequality;
- progressive 'gentrification' of rural England is projected by the studies to continue, as wealthier households outbid poorer groups for scarce housing, and social exclusion thus becomes spatial exclusion; and
- the low priority given by policy-makers to exclusion in rural Britain (until very recently).

1.2.2 Political Factors

In the UK, as in the wider EU, the uncertainties and insecurities associated with economic restructuring (or maybe a desire to push back the frontiers of the state) have been key factors fuelling a political drive towards dismantling many of the post-war welfare state mechanisms. Considerations such as diminished tax receipts and privatisation of public sectors have translated into social programme cutbacks, which many see as a catalyst to societal breakdown and therefore increased exclusion (Vertovec 1997).

At the same time, Sewell notes that the Government has set its sights on ending social exclusion (Gingerbread 1999), particularly at the family level with policies (such as New Deal, National Childcare Strategy, Sure Start and Supporting Families) emphasising

prevention of exclusion and early intervention. The government has even set up a cross-departmental Social Exclusion Unit to address this social evil (Bittman 1998).

1.2.3 Social Factors

Jurgen Habermas (cited in Vertovec 1997) describes “functional differentiations” of society that conditions of modernity have produced, which include:

- acquisition of ever greater access to and
- participation in, an ever greater number of “subsystems” –such as markets, work environments, public services, associations and communities
- changing relationships and social patterns, which produce a multiplication of social networks for individuals (Rogers and Vertovec 1995, cited in Vertovec 1997).

This implies that the social and institutional lives of people have become more complex, and hints that they may have become more disjunct.

Vertovec (1997) goes on to note that we live in age when immigrants are no longer required to “assimilate”, leading to an even more pluralistic society. Given that institutionalised racism has been identified in the UK, this increases the likelihood of social exclusion of immigrant groups.

1.3 Identifying the Socially Excluded

The EU social policy white paper (quoted by Kilmurray in Democratic Dialogue 1995), noted that the:

“...marginalisation of major social groups is a challenge to the social cohesion of the Union”

This paper calls for a mobilisation of efforts by Member States and all the parties concerned, and for a reinforcement of the bulwark of social rights. It is clear that *“contemporary economic and social conditions tend to exclude some groups from the cycle of opportunities.”*

(<http://www.democraticdialogue.org/report2/report2b.htm>)

These groups are now considered.

The Invitation to Tender (14/7/00) highlights the following underrepresented groups in countryside leisure activity:

- young people
- low income groups
- ethnic minorities
- disabled people.

Shucksmith (2000), writing about rural areas, asserts that the main axes of inequality in rural Britain are social class, gender and age. The principal groups affected by exclusion are older people, young people, low-paid people in work, self-employed people, people detached from labour markets, and women. Ethnicity is less apparent as an axis of exclusion in rural areas, largely due to the small number of rural residents from minority ethnic communities, but this subject is under-researched. Certainly, ethnic groups experience significant social exclusion in Great Britain as a whole (Shucksmith 2000b; Social Exclusion Unit 2000). As in urban areas, loss of a job, marital breakdown, and changes in the composition of the family or household can trigger poverty and exclusion. Factors which are considered more important in rural than urban areas include low pay, inadequate pensions, poverty in self-employment, lower levels of benefit uptake, and fear of stigma in small communities.

Most expressions of concern about the participation of excluded groups in countryside recreation assume that these groups are predominantly urban. However, there is good evidence that many rural groups also experience exclusion (Shucksmith and Chapman 1998). Problems of social isolation are widespread amongst certain groups, and engagement in some types of leisure offers potential to reduce exclusion. The case for examining innovative ways in which access to recreational opportunity might be enhanced for excluded rural residents is compelling, but is not explored further in this study.

1.3.1 Young People

The UK Day Visits Survey (SCPR, 1999), noted significant underrepresentation by under-25s in countryside recreation. Although low levels of countryside recreation may represent nothing more than a preference for urban rather than rural leisure experiences, there is still concern about young people in the social exclusion literature for at least two reasons.

First, theories of the cyclical nature of exclusion are asserted which suggest that exclusion is partly about learned behaviour from those who engender inappropriate forms of leisure (the 'moral underclass' discourse). Here the stress is on the cyclical nature of exclusion and how behaviour is linked to poverty, negative role models, bad parenting and relaxed attitudes towards drugs and crime.

Second, young people are more likely to be excluded because of changes in the labour market, which have meant an increase in unemployment and inactivity for people aged 16-24 (Byrne, 1995 cited in Scottish Office 1999b, p. 44).

At the same time, some argue that underrepresentation of young people in countryside recreation is simply a product of 'stage in life cycle'. Summers (Warwickshire's Countryside Recreation Manager) asserted that "*...on this age issue I am not particularly concerned for country parks. Visitor surveys show us that people visit at different periods in their life, reflecting their lifestyle and interests at the time. Yes there are gaps – teenage years, perhaps families with young teenagers, but they come before, in between, and after (thus I don't go to discos – sorry clubs- any more, only the occasional rock festival, ...) so they are generally established in the local culture.*"

1.3.2 Low Income Groups

Countryside recreation is dominantly consumed/experienced by the more professional and managerial sectors of society (Glyptis, 1991, Harrison, 1991, Curry, 1994).

In analysing social phenomena, it must not be assumed that social groupings are homogenous. As such, the low income group is composed of heterogeneous groups of people who primarily identify themselves as single parents, ethnic minorities, working class, refugees, disabled, chronically ill and so on. Essentially, we must be cautious when discussing 'low income' groups as if they were a single homogeneous entity.

The core of the policy debate on low income being a barrier to countryside recreation however, has been the provision of 'adequate' public transport. Here 'adequate' is defined as public transport that is affordable, available, accessible and acceptable (DETR 2000, p. 33). However, although access to many countryside recreation activities is free, there are also many activities that require significant items of capital equipment.

1.3.3 Ethnic Minorities

Ethnicity is defined in differing ways. The UNRISD (1993) views ethnicity as incorporating three components: collective consciousness, bases of affinity, and behavioural effects. Above all, ethnicity refers to collective group consciousness, that is, a shared sense of identity with a larger community; it pertains to the perception that one shares a common identity with a particular group and, in turn, is so perceived by others. Of Britain's 56 million people, 7% belong to minority ethnic groups.

The literature is sensitive to the need to consider differences in cultural values and explores 'who' is doing the excluding. Research conducted through the Black Families Talking Project in London (from 1994 to 1996) revealed that many families from ethnic minority backgrounds put a high value on maintaining a strong cultural identity distinct from mainstream British society (Scottish Office 1999b, p. 53).

Refugees are a particularly vulnerable group exposed to social exclusion (Scottish Office 1999b, p. 53). The status of refugees differs from migrants in that there is little choice in their status, and they have often been forced to leave their homeland. Many suffer a deep sense of isolation, insecurity and fear, with the children of refugees suffering most. Language is a serious social barrier to social participation.

1.3.4 People with Disabilities

For the roughly seven million people with disabilities in the UK, countryside recreation is not always undertaken easily. According to the Fieldfare Trust, a Sheffield-based charity specialising in outdoor recreation for people with disabilities, many people are deterred from enjoying the pleasures of the countryside and rural activities due to problems of access.

Disabled people are marginalised and excluded from 'mainstream' society (Alcock, 1993; Kitchen, 1998 cited in Scottish Office 1999b, p.54). Kitchen argues that to understand the processes of exclusion, a spatial perspective is required. He asserts that: "disability has distinct spatialities that work to exclude and oppress disabled people.

Spaces are currently organised to keep disabled people 'in their place' and 'written' to convey to disabled people that they are 'out of' place".

2. Social Inclusion and Leisure Provision

The discussion in this paper so far has focussed on the development of an understanding of the nature of social inclusion and exclusion and their respective causes in contemporary Britain. This section reviews the literature that sets social inclusion in its current political context, specifically in respect of leisure. In the following section, the nature of social inclusion and social exclusion in countryside recreation are addressed directly.

2.1 Welfarism, Merit Goods and Social Inclusion

Within leisure studies literature, there is a continuing debate about social inclusion in the context of contemporary notions of citizenship and Third Way politics (Giddens 1998). A dominant view here is that the state should be the provider of leisure. For welfare reasons, it is at “the apex of the pyramid of welfare rights” (Henry, 1994, page 52, cited in Coalter, 1998). In this way, as welfare policy, one of the objectives of leisure provision should be to correct inequalities in recreation participation. Thus, social inclusion is at the centre of welfarist leisure provision. As the Local Government Association (1999a), page 1) suggests: *“Leisure has an important role to play in meeting many of the wider social objectives that contribute to social inclusion”*.

It also is argued in the literature that leisure provision should be provided by the state, because it is a merit good. The state should provide what it considers to be good for people, and this position too, holds the importance of inclusive state leisure policies.

Critics of the welfarist and merit good approaches to social inclusion, however, note that the state simply has not achieved a more even distribution of participation across the community, despite prevailing policies for more than 30 years. The Audit Commission (1989, cited in Coalter, 1999, page 98) summarises it thus:

“across the board subsidies have a perverse effect from a redistributive perspective. Many poorer people are, through their rates, paying to subsidise the pastimes of the rich”.

Much of the reason why social inequalities have not been achieved through state leisure policy derives from the fact that many of those who do not consume leisure do so because they have a preference not to, rather than exhibit a lack of means to. This explains the ineffectiveness of social policy directed at improving the means to participate (Curry, 1994). Thus, there is a need to clarify relationships between exclusion, non-participation, and notions of choice. Non-participation may, for many leisure activities, be the norm.

Exclusion might be considered to arise only where the individual or group is denied access to opportunities by virtue of their social, economic, demographic or cultural perspectives (Hague et al, 2000).

Further, merit good arguments are accused of being out of date, since their origins lay in 19th century Britain and such policies were addressing an urban population living in poor environmental conditions, which, by and large, no longer pertain. Merit good policies are seen as more about social engineering than social welfare. There remains, too, confusion in state policy as to whether people should participate in countryside recreation (the merit good argument) or should have the opportunity to participate (the welfare argument) (Coalter, 1998).

In this context, it is suggested that whilst state provision may have a genuine concern for improving the lot of the working population, both welfarist and merit good approaches have been predicated on value systems of an elite. This prevented an important role for working class self-organisation, to do what they wanted rather than what was considered good for them (Houlihan, 1991). Interestingly, these two arguments for state provision have spawned criticism from both the political right, who have argued the ineffectiveness of welfare motivations, and the political left who have argued the elitism and social control of merit good motivations.

2.2 Citizenship and Social Inclusion

Contemporary writings about citizenship (which is posited as being the dominant ethos of the current Labour government (Parker, 1999)) in leisure also express reservations about the appropriateness of state welfarist and merit good provision. A central tenet of citizenship is that there should be no rights without concomitant responsibilities (Hutton, 1999). Critiques of the state provision of leisure in this context, suggest that such provision confers rights with no responsibilities and that perhaps citizen responsibility in this area might be to provide as much of his or her own recreation as possible.

Certainly, citizenship cannot equate to Welfarism, since its essence is that it is displacing the state. The roles of old-style welfarist *executive government* are giving way to more contemporary notions of an *enabling governance* within stakeholding Third Way politics (Lowe et al, 1995). Welfarism from a citizenship point of view considers a responsible citizen to be a participatory citizen and non-participation is seen as a threat to social stability.

As Aitchison (2000, page 15) notes:

“The inclusion/exclusion dualism thus appears to imply that to move from being excluded to being included requires excluded individuals and groups to adopt and conform to a predetermined set of roles, behaviours and values already in place”.

Modern notions of citizenship, according to Coalter (1990), uphold the right to choose.

As a result, citizenship does acknowledge a role for markets in leisure. Public policies largely have failed to respond to consumer demands, choosing instead to extol the virtues of merit goods. Public resources have been wasted as a result because it was always unlikely that all sectors of society would want to use the same amount of public provision. In this context, non-consumption certainly does not equate to exclusion (Coalter, 1998). Further, the ‘privatisation’ of state leisure facilities (for example through Compulsory Competitive Tendering) can ensure demand-led services and ensure market responses. This would allow consumer rather than producer led-provision on the assumption that consumers know best what they want.

2.3 Critiques of Social Exclusion

But what of notions of ‘exclusion’ within citizenship? Both liberal and communitarian notions of citizenship contain strong elements that favour exclusion. The former is based on the right of the individual and the trading of leisure opportunities through the market. The latter places an emphasis on the community rather than the individual, but such communities are strongly proscribed. Those outwith the particular community that holds the leisure opportunity will be excluded from access to it (Parker, 1999). As Seabrook (1988) notes, leisure either by the individual or within the community is an inherently exclusive realm.

One of the central planks in the development of governance (as opposed to government) is that welfarist principles of *common* public support are giving way to more communitarian principles of citizenship. Hall and Held (1989), for example, suggest that notions of citizenship must take into account the *differentiated* ways in which people now wish to participate in leisure activities.

Citizenship in the context of Third Way politics is all about *local* communities and the *differentiation* of citizens by their local spatial and social context. In this light, notions of equality and universality are the antithesis of citizenship.

Postmodernists, too, argue for difference, pluralism and the 'incommensurability of cultures and values' (Turner, 1990, page 12). For some, the notion of inclusive social citizenship is a paradox. Holmwood (1997), states (quoted in Coalter (2000, page 173):

"any values of common citizenship would involve the imposition of the values of one group on another"

In this context, he recommends the market as a framework that allows different values to flourish. Corrigan (1996) also argues that consumption experiences for recreation take place within a wide field of choice and that consumption takes place very much more often than the experience of being a citizen.

If social exclusion in leisure is therefore not to be old wine in new plastic bottles, maintains Coalter (1998), it must be treated with some caution. Some seem to regard 'social exclusion' as simply a synonym for inequality (Deem, 1999) and to take the absence of certain groups from leisure participation as evidence of 'exclusion' (Collins and Kennet, 1998). The concept needs to be theorised and operationalised in empirical research. There is a need to know from what people are being excluded and on what basis. The absence of particular groups in participating in countryside recreation of itself, does not mean social exclusion (Coalter, 2000). If countryside recreation is simply a palliative (an alternative to other more inclusive forms of leisure) to what extent is it combating or ameliorating social exclusion in any meaningful sense?

Coalter (2000) suggests that there are two possible conceptual approaches to social exclusion. Firstly, the individual can be excluded only if there is a frustrated desire to participate. What is the relationship between general conditions of deprivation (unemployment, low income, poor health and disability) and factors that indicate a propensity to participate (age, social class, cultural background, personal psychology)? Secondly, individuals can be considered socially excluded if their exclusion is regarded as damaging to the cohesion of society. An individual's propensity not to consume is not relevant here. Social *inclusion* is more likely to be individualised than any notion of social exclusion.

2.4 Social Exclusion within Pluralistic Provision

With such a diverse range of views about the relative merits of state provision (be it through regulatory or economic means), citizenship provision (through the voluntary or community sectors) or market provision, it is inevitable that leisure in general and countryside recreation in particular, will continue to be delivered through a mix of all of these. Countryside recreation is too diverse to be considered solely as a collective right and where there is a role for state provision in a mixed mode of delivery, according to Roberts (1978), it is to serve the needs of distributional equity, whether it actually achieves this or not.

Within pluralist provision, therefore, the more pertinent question to ask is which types of provision are most appropriately provided by which sector and under which circumstances. As Warde (1992) suggests, less emphasis should be placed on which sector produces which kinds of access. Rather, more consideration should be given to the social and economic circumstances of delivery and the social and cultural benefits surrounding the experience of final consumption. Do the socially included necessarily wish to be included?

3. Countryside Recreation Participation

3.1 Attitudes

On the face of it, countryside recreation holds almost universal appeal. Attitudes of the general public over the past 20 years have suggested that there is a clear commitment to wanting to secure greater access to it in a variety of ways. In its work on public attitudes to the countryside, for example, the Countryside Commission (1998) found that over half the population of England expressed a wish to live in the countryside. This is twice as many as already live there. There was, in this survey, also a strong desire for better access to the countryside, particularly to 'natural open areas' close to towns and cities. In a recent Gallup (1998) poll, too, it was found that upwards of 80% of the population would like to see greater access to the countryside. MVA Ltd's (1999) study of people's attitudes towards access to open country, again found that about 80% of households were in favour of extending statutory rights of access on foot to open countryside (of all types), with just 15% of households opposed. Such attitudes, however, are based on rather simplistic questioning and closer investigation might suggest that such desires, certainly for *more* access, would not necessarily lead to more participation.

Whilst the desire for more access is the wish of 80% of the population, 93% of them in the Gallup survey had no idea of the length of the rights of way system in England and Wales, for example. Some 44% simply did not know 16% thought that it was less than 1,000 miles in length, 30% less than 5,000 miles and nearly 40% less than 10,000 miles. The fact that it is approximately 109,000 miles in length in England and Wales (82,500 miles in England) suggests that the population might considerably under-estimate the amount of existing linear resource (or simply not be able to gross up from their own experience). In addition, half of the population was not aware that private landowners do open up parts of their land for access on a voluntary basis.

The MVA (1999) survey, specifically in relation to open country clearly indicated a high degree of uncertainty about what rights of access are available in England. Of the sample population, nearly 70% did not understand their access rights (by giving an incorrect response to at least one of four statements about these rights), while a further 12% felt unable to answer at least one of the questions. Therefore, just one-fifth of the respondents were both confident and accurate in their understanding of their current access rights.

A desire to see more access resource in the countryside would therefore appear to be based on a considerable underestimate or uncertainty, on the part of the public, of how much actually exists and of what type, at least in England. Throughout Scotland, where levels of statutorily defined access are much lower (Shoard 1987, cited in Slee 1998), a different situation may prevail.

Would a greater understanding of access, however, lead to more participation? If there was perceived to be more access to the countryside within 5 miles of home, the Gallup Poll suggests that 41% of people would visit it more frequently than they currently do. If the destination were more than 50 miles away, however, only 13% would go to such destinations more often. The MVA (1999) study suggests that while the majority of the respondents (69%) did not think that an extension of their access rights to open country would lead to a change in their use of the countryside, approximately 25% felt that it would. For this 25%, the greatest impact was felt to be in terms of the time they would spend in the countryside. When the data are grossed up to reflect the entire population, the findings suggest that approximately 2% of England's population would spend an extra one to two hours a month in the countryside, particularly in woodlands and along watersides, if access to open country became law. Of the 80% of the population who would like to see more access provision in the Gallup poll, frequent users are proportionately less likely to want to see more access than those who never visit the countryside (Gallup, 1998).

In respect of the cost of greater access to the countryside, Gallup (1998) asked how important this would be as a priority for government expenditure amongst Government's competing demands. On a scale of 1 - 5, 28% of the population ranked it as very important. Of interest to this study, here, there is a close association between this priority and social group.

This is presented in figure 2:

Figure 2 – Increasing access to the countryside as a priority for Government expenditure, by social group (% suggesting that it is a very important priority).

Social Group	% considering increased access as a high priority for Government expenditure
A/B	15
C1	24
C2	30
D/E	41
Weighted mean of population	28

Source: Gallup, 1998

Increased access to the countryside is considered to be a high priority for Government expenditure in greatest proportion, amongst lower social groups. It is noted below, however, that these groups are those who use it least for recreation purposes.

3.2 Reasons for Non-Participation

As has been already stated, the reasons why certain groups, indeed people in general, do not participate in countryside recreation are complex. The UK Day Visits Surveys (Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR), 1995, 1997, 1999) indicate that the countryside as a destination of visits from home is not universally popular. In 1994, 62% of households in Great Britain had made no visits to the countryside in the two weeks prior to the survey, and a further 17% of households had made only one visit. In 1996, these figures were 61% and 17% respectively, and in 1998, 64% and 15%. The incidence of not making visits to the countryside in Scotland is consistently slightly higher than the Great Britain norm and in Wales consistently slightly lower. English non-visitation approximates consistently to the Great Britain average.

Whilst these data simply interrogate the previous two weeks of activity, the surveys provide information about those who never visit the countryside at all during the year of the survey. In 1994, 38% of households in England did not visit the countryside at all, in 1996, this figure was 33% (36% in Scotland and 37% in Wales) and in 1998, it was 34% (41% in Scotland and 36% in Wales). Well over a third of the population of Great Britain therefore would claim that visiting the countryside is not part of their leisure lifestyle at all.

The reasons that these people did not visit the countryside were considered in the 1996 and 1998 surveys and are presented in figure 3 below.

Figure 3 – Reasons for not visiting the countryside for those who did not visit at all during the year in Great Britain (% of reasons ranked for 1998)

Reason	1996	1998
No particular reason – just have not gone	23	19
Health reasons or disability	13	18
Work reasons -- always too busy or a lack of time	19	17
Not interested: the countryside has no appeal	19	17
Lack of suitable means of transport	7	9
Not enough money or can't afford it	6	7
Nervous or uneasy about visiting the countryside	0	1
Lack of information about where to go	1	0
Other reason	12	12

Sources: Social and Community Planning Research, 1997 and 1999

Of these reasons for not visiting the countryside on the part of the population as whole, material constraints (money and car ownership) together constitute only 16% of the stated reasons for not visiting. *Preferences* for not going embrace the fact that people simply have not gone (it might be, here, that they are doing other things in their leisure time) or that they are not really interested in the countryside. Together these account for 36% of stated reasons for not visiting. On this evidence, therefore, preferences are more than twice as likely to lead to non-participation as *material* constraints. Significantly, however, other factors limit participation as well as preferences or material constraints. These are health reasons or disability, considered further below (18%) and a lack of time because people are too busy at work to go (17%).

3.3 Participation and Social Exclusion

Evidence on attitudes towards, participation in, and motivations for undertaking, countryside recreation is therefore complex. Positive attitudes towards recreation on the part of the public at large will not necessarily translate into consumption. Upwards of a third of the population do not participate in countryside recreation, and the reasons for this are predominantly to do with preferences or lack of time. From the national evidence, it can be seen that inhibitors to participation in relation to health and disability are stronger than material constraints. This is an important context for the study as a whole, since any attempts to increase participation on the part of targeted socially excluded groups are likely to be successful only to the extent that

these groups want to participate but are in some way constrained from doing so. National evidence, for example, would suggest that those with health or disability problems are more likely to be constrained from participating than the less well off whom, to a greater degree, simply may not wish to participate. Exploration of the attitudes towards countryside recreation on the part of socially excluded groups will therefore be central to the development of policy for them.

4. PARTICIPATION CHARACTERISTICS

4.1 Participation, Age and Gender

In respect of age and gender, from the UK Day Visits Survey (SCPR, 1999), figure 4 below indicates the age profile of all those in Great Britain over the age of 15 who were active countryside recreation participants in the two weeks prior to the survey. This is compared with the age distribution of the United Kingdom as a whole for the same year.

Figure 4 – Age distribution of active Great Britain recreationists (in the two weeks prior to the survey) compared to the age distribution of the United Kingdom population as a whole, both for 1998.

Age	Active recreationists (%)	UK population (%)
15-24	9	13.7
25-34	18	19.6
35-44	19	18.0
45-54	16	16.5
55-64	15	12.4
65-74	14	10.6
75 and over	9	9.2
	100	100

Sources: SCPR (1999) for recreation data, National Statistics (2000) for United Kingdom data

- Notes:
1. These are percentages of the population aged 15 and over for recreation data for national data.
 2. Data for recreation are for Great Britain and national data are for the United Kingdom.
 3. Percentage figures are of the total (or sample) population over the age of 15.

The most significant age under-representation here is in the 15 – 24 age group (only 9% are active countryside recreationists, whilst they represent 13.7% of the population as a whole). Perhaps surprisingly, there are more active countryside recreationists between the ages of 55 and 74 than there are members of the total population. In all other age categories, the proportion of the recreation active population approximates to their representation in the population as a whole.

In respect of gender, data from the UKDVS of 1998 (SCPR, 1999) indicate that of those over 15 visiting the countryside overall in the previous 2 weeks of the survey in Great Britain as a whole, some 45% were men and 55% were women. For the United Kingdom in the same year, women over the age of 16 accounted for 51.4% of the total population. Women are therefore over-represented in the recreation active population compared to the population as a whole.

The conclusions from these national data, therefore, are that if social inclusion policies for countryside recreation are to focus on age and gender, they should be orientated towards encouraging younger people into the countryside, and more men. This might provide some tensions in relation to other policies, particularly those relating to older groups, that might seek to encourage them into the countryside for health reasons.

4.2 Participation, Health and Disability

It has been noted in figure two that health reasons or disability are amongst the most commonly expressed reasons why people do not visit the countryside for recreation purposes. Clearly, this is an area where targeted policies offer some potential, given that over 10% of the UK population is disabled (Yesson 1999, p. 15). A recent survey of recreation demands in Surrey (Curry and Ravenscroft, 2000) suggested that some 19% of active recreationists had some form of disability needs (although clearly not sufficient to preclude participation), around half of whom felt that such needs were not being satisfactorily met within the county.

However, we can widen the concept of disability to include (Yesson 1999 p. 15):

- The 16% of England and Wales that have some degree of literacy difficulties.
- The 14% of people that are hearing impaired.
- The 1.1 million that are registered blind or visually impaired.
- The 1.7 million people unable to read standard print with ease.
- Fewer than 5% of people with disabilities use wheelchairs.
- The 1 million people with learning difficulties.

For someone with disabilities, the countryside could be an intimidating environment. Yvonne Hosker, project manager at Fieldfare Trust notes:

"It could be a case of physical exclusion, with someone in a wheelchair being unable to negotiate a muddy path or it could be that there is no provision for those with sight or hearing difficulties. For example, a leaflet is no good for someone who is blind and a guided walk without sign language is no good for someone who is deaf" (Henderson 1994).

Countryside for All, was an initiative that sought to create more opportunities for everyone to enjoy the countryside. Countryside for All was managed by the Fieldfare Trust, and aims to help those with hearing or visual impairments or learning difficulties, who may be able to get into the countryside but have problems finding out what is available when they get there. It aimed to also benefit mothers with young children who find some activities inaccessible and make provision for the increasing numbers of elderly people, who are forming an increasingly larger percentage of the population (Henderson 1994).

4.3 Participation and Ethnic Origin

The analysis of participation of ethnic minorities in countryside recreation is complex. Compounded by the fact that people from ethnic communities are a diverse range of backgrounds, making generalisations dangerous. Some people have the confidence or interest to visit green places, but may not know where they are. Whereas some people will go outside their local area, many do not have the confidence to visit green spaces independently or may not have the language skill to understand publications in English (Yesson 1999, p. 5).

The literature suggests that current participation in countryside recreation by such groups is limited by two principal factors. The first is the cultural disposition of such groups towards the English countryside, where it can have a limited role to play in their leisure traditions. The second is a sense of alienation, or 'not belonging' to the countryside, which can lead to a sense of displacement.

4.3.1 Cultural Distance

Harrison (1991) concluded in her detailed evaluation of residents of Greenwich that one of the strongest triggers to participation in countryside recreation lay in the social or personal meaning of the countryside for participants. An interest in the countryside was not universal and a significant proportion of her interviewees had no particular disposition towards the countryside at all.

She concluded that the development of policy for countryside recreation in respect of the dominance of 'quiet enjoyment' had essentially perpetuated a distinctly English middle class set of values in relation to the countryside rather than anything that was more broadly based or multi-cultural.

In this respect, earlier research by Strelitz (1978) amongst the London Afro-Caribbean community suggested that they had little interest in the English countryside because of their cultural background. In particular, older members of this community had suggested the countryside to be beyond their cultural horizons, adhering instead to stronger traditions of spending leisure time in social and family groupings. She did note, however, that these attitudes could become less entrenched as subsequent generations became exposed to the English educational system.

In this vein, too, Walker (2000) notes an interview with Julian Agyeman, formerly with the Black Environmental Network:

"It's not so much that black people experience racism in the countryside, but they have experienced something different... they come to an area which is very isolated, where they have not got all of the other things that exist in a multi-racial, or more visibly multi-racial area." (page 94),

and in interviews with the black community in Gloucester:

"What I find is that ethnic groups like to be together - they have a sense of closeness. If you go out of the city, you are far away from family and friends." (page 149)

Policies in the past have attempted to broaden the base of participation in the multi-cultural arena, but have led to limited success where these cultural differences have not been acknowledged. Operation Gateway, for example, established in the mid-1980s, was to *"widen people's horizons, so that the countryside becomes more naturally used by people from all walks of life"* (Ashcroft, 1986). Indeed, the objective of this policy instrument was actually to change people's natural dispositions in the use of their leisure time: *"some disadvantaged people's traditional enjoyment comes from a high intensity of experience, with lots of things to do, entertainment and excitement. A challenge.... is whether the slower pace but rich contents of the countryside can be interesting and enjoyable"* (page 1).

That such an approach could be viewed as overly interventionist and intrusive can be seen in the results of some of its initiatives. Harrison (1991) cites the attempted 'bussing' of the Asian community from central Nottingham to Sherwood Forest as an example.

The first free coach trip was well attended. Subsequent trips, however, were not popular. On investigation, it was found that Sherwood Forest was of little interest to the community, chiefly on the grounds that there was 'nothing to do'. When given free rein to take the bus where they wanted, a trip to the Blackpool Illuminations was organised.

The London Borough of Croydon PACE project, cited the following as (cultural) reasons for ethnic minority attitudes towards the countryside:

- some people come from cultural backgrounds where walking was a necessity and not a leisure activity – therefore they may need something to walk to, such as an activity or a place;
- lack of time- due to family or business responsibilities;
- dress codes – some people may feel that the clothing they wear to satisfy their religious and cultural requirements is not suitable for outdoor activities;
- lack of single gender activities, such as guided walks, with someone of the same gender leading (this is important, for example, to older South Asian women, Muslim women of all ages and older Muslim men) and
- perceived risk of encountering dangerous animals, such as snakes, as may be the case in the countries of origin.

4.3.2 'Not Belonging'

Many authors have argued that a key aspect of English national identity is constructed largely around representations of the countryside and the rural idyll (Halfacree, 1996, Daniels, 1993, Guibernau, 1996). However, this also has been seen as a national identity essentially produced by white men (Philo, 1992, Agyeman and Spooner, 1997). This may serve to exclude or deter minority groups from using the countryside because the countryside is seen as "*an arena of conformity where difference is construed as deviance*" (Milbourne, 1997, page 4).

Mike Phillips, is a Guyanese writer who migrated to England in 1955. He describes the English countryside as "*a fundamental element of English nationalism and once you're here you become aware that English people still see the countryside that way*".

He goes on to note how the "*notion of the countryside is a last refuge of English nationality, a protection against people who really ought to be foreigners*" (Coster, 1991, p6).

As the Countryside Commission (1991) noted, the numbers of minority ethnic people visiting or living in rural areas is very low and can be the result of a variety of factors such as fear of racism, cultural determinants, economics (particularly migration to urban-based jobs), lack of support networks or other exclusionary devices (Agyeman, 1990). Whatever reasons prevent or deter minority ethnic communities from rural spaces, it is easy to see how forming an identity can be difficult.

Phil Kinsman's work on *Landscapes of National Non-identity* investigated the issue of exclusion from the nation and sums up the importance of the argument in a short quote in an article on the photography of Ingrid Pollard:

"if a group is excluded from these landscapes of national identity, then they are excluded to a large degree from the nation itself" (Kinsman, 1995, p. 301)

Pollard's own work, *Pastoral Interludes*, presents images of black people in rural areas juxtaposed with powerful text identifying issues of exclusion. For example, one picture of a black woman sitting on a dry stone wall with open fields behind her is accompanied by the following play on the celebrated prose of Wordsworth:

"It's as if the black experience is only experienced within the urban environment. I thought that I liked the Lake District, where I wandered lonely as a Black face in a sea of white. A visit to the countryside always is accompanied by a feeling of unease, dread". (cited from Walker, 2000)

Walker (2000) also finds this attitude amongst the Afro-Caribbean community in Gloucester:

"Visiting the countryside gives me the sense of being in a goldfish bowl. I think, when you go out all eyes are on you. You don't want to feel uncomfortable enjoying what is there for everyone"(p.153).

And:

"We visited a country pub.... And as soon as we walked in, nobody actually said anything, but it was that first look and gasp, we were probably the first black people who had ever been in this pub... not such a strong feeling that we were not welcome, but that we were clearly out of place (p. 153)."

The London Borough of Croydon PACE (Yesson 1999, p 33) project, cited the following as reasons for non participation by ethnic minorities:

- Information about walking and green spaces is not geared towards or interesting to them. Wordy detailed text about natural and architectural history in some publications is presented in a very staid way.
- Photographs of people may not make them feel as though they will be welcome or that the place is for them (in the same way that publications including pictures carrying out an activity can encourage other young people).
- Absence of people from their own community.
- Actual or perceived experiences of racism.

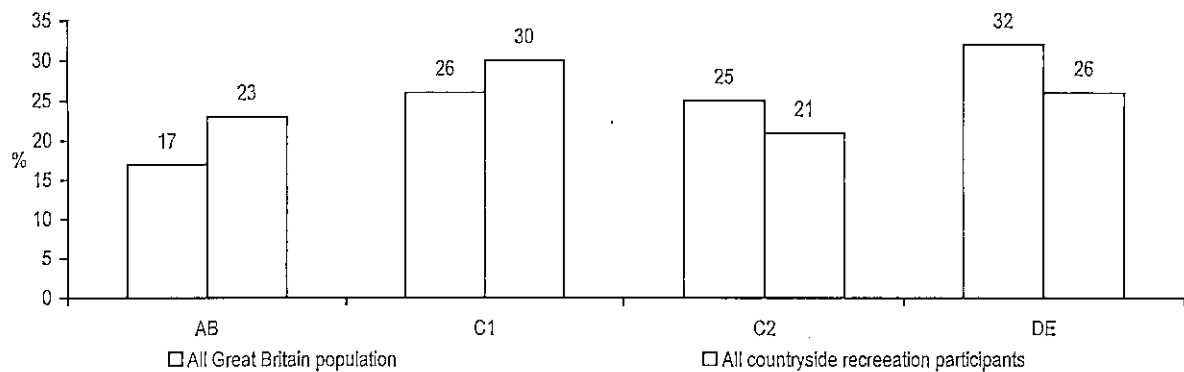
4.3.3 Policy Responses

In respect of general policies for ethnic minorities in rural areas, the NCVO has been conducting a Rural Anti-racism Project and the National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux, and initiative called the Rural Race Equality Project (Walker, 2000). Specifically for recreation and access, The Rambler's Association has instigated its own 'Lets Get Going' project, in the hope of improving access to rural areas amongst disadvantaged and minority communities (Walker, 2000).

4.4 Participation and Social Class

The fact that countryside recreation is dominantly consumed by the more professional and managerial sectors of society is now well-established (Glyptis, 1991, Harrison, 1991, Curry, 1994). This is confirmed by the latest Great Britain data on countryside recreation, again from the UK Day Visits Survey (SCPR, 1999). This examines participation both by social grade (social groups A – E), which is the classification used by the Market Research Society, and social class (or occupational status) which is the comparable government classification. Data on social grade for the Great Britain is shown in Figure 2 below, compared with the social grade structure of Great Britain as a whole in 1998.

Figure 5 - Social grade structure for participation in countryside recreation for Great Britain compared to the British population as a whole in 1998 (percentage of participants and percentage of the total population)



Key:

Social Group A - professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top level civil servants. Retired people, previously grade A and their widows.

Social Group B - middle management executives in large organisations with appropriate qualifications. Principal officers in local government and the civil service. Top management or owners of small business concerns. Retired people, previously grade B and their widows.

Social Group C1 - junior management, owners of small establishments and all others in non-manual positions. Varied responsibilities and educational requirements. Retired people, previously grade C1 and their widows.

Social Group C2 - all skilled manual workers and those manual workers with responsibility for other people. Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their jobs. Widows, if receiving pensions from their late husband's job.

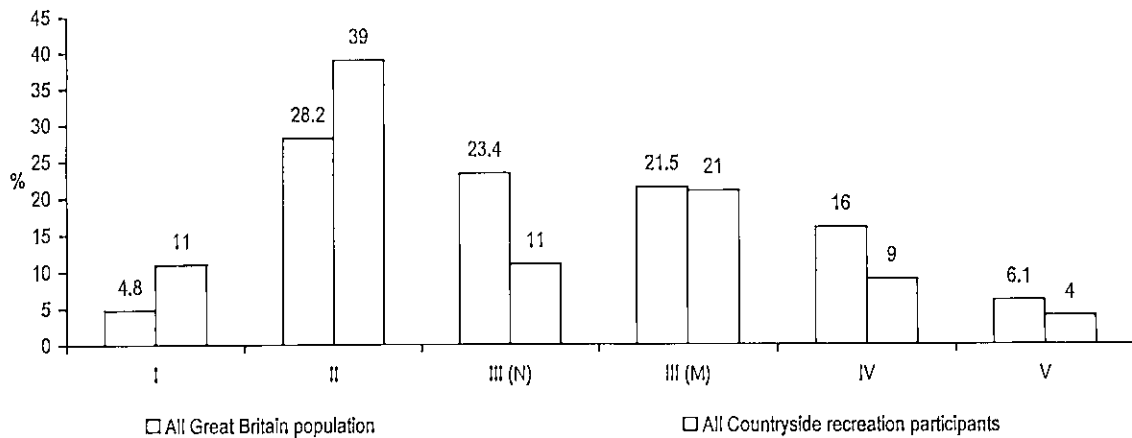
Social Group D - all semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers. Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their jobs. Widows, if receiving pensions from their late husband's job.

Social Group E - all those entirely dependent on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons. Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months. Casual workers and those without regular income.

Sources: all recreation data, UKDVS (SCPR, 1999) national data, Market Research Society (1999)

Social class distributions for participation in countryside recreation activity, compared to the Great Britain population as a whole, are depicted in figure 3 below. These data, in respect of comparison with the national distribution, are likely to be less meaningful than the data for social grade because social class data, as collected by the National Office of Surveys, is available for Great Britain as a whole only for 1991 (from the Census) and it is therefore being compared with data some 7 years later.

Figure 6 - Social class structure for participation in countryside recreation, for Great Britain, 1998, compared with the social class structure for Great Britain in 1991 (percentage of participants and percentage of the total population).



Key:

- | | | | |
|------------|---|-----------|---|
| <i>I</i> | <i>professional etc occupations</i> | <i>II</i> | <i>(M) skilled occupations – manual</i> |
| <i>II</i> | <i>managerial and technical occupations</i> | <i>IV</i> | <i>partly skilled occupations</i> |
| <i>III</i> | <i>(N) skilled occupations – non-manual</i> | <i>V</i> | <i>unskilled occupations</i> |

Sources: all recreation data, UKDVS (SCPR, 1999 – see appendix 1) national data, Office of National Surveys (1992)

Both of these figures indicate that social grades A and B and social classes I and II participate in all types of countryside recreation in greater proportion than they are represented in the population as a whole. In all cases too, social grades C2, D and E and social classes III (N), III (M), IV and V participate in all types of countryside recreation in smaller proportions than their representation in the population as a whole.

5. Conclusions from the Literature Review

The concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion have been introduced relatively recently to mainstream political debate. The development of this new terminology might be regarded by some as a convenient rhetorical smokescreen, rather than as a multi-faceted policy attack on the structural processes that lie behind social exclusion.

Central and local government and public agencies have relatively modest resources with which to intervene in the leisure sphere, and even fewer resources with which to deal with exclusion issues in a rural setting. There is widespread evidence of low participation rates in countryside leisure for certain groups (ethnic minorities, young adults, disabled people) but not of elderly people in general.

One major source of uncertainty is the extent to which exclusion from use of the countryside is associated with wider processes of social exclusion. Put simply, are low levels of countryside use a matter of personal choice or a product of socially structured exclusion? For some groups the personal choice argument appears persuasive. Young adults from affluent backgrounds may not find the countryside an attractive venue for their recreational activities, but equally may not be excluded under any normal definition of the term. However, Harrison (1991) presents evidence that suggests that some of what manifests itself as low participation is socially constructed exclusion. This is reproduced in what she sees as the assertion of an 'aesthetic imperative' over the countryside. More recent assertions indicate that disabled and ethnic groups are stigmatised in their use of the countryside as a leisure resource, confirming the existence of socially structured exclusion.

The search for innovative ways of addressing social exclusion is not particular to the arena of countryside leisure. Geddes and Root (2000) describe how the language of social exclusion has been mainstreamed in local government action and thinking. However, whilst the structural determinants of inequality remain, it is difficult to see how policies for social inclusion can resolve the inequalities in leisure participation.

This makes it incumbent on policy makers and implementing agencies to ground their actions in an understanding of factors that have (or might) overcome the structural deterrents to participation and have created inclusive countryside leisure opportunities for previously marginalised groups. An exploration of best practice can thus be seen as a platform on which to build new strategies to increase inclusiveness.

SECTION III - METHODOLOGY

6. Approach to Selecting Cases

On completing the first draft of the briefing paper, the process of collecting as large a number of cases as possible began in mid- September. It was not the intention of the contractors to identify all projects addressing social inclusion through countryside recreation, but as many as possible, as geographically representative as possible and as innovative as possible. This phase fell into the following stages:

6.1 Project Identification

In this phase, letters and emails were sent off, together with phone calls made, to:

- 320 local government organisations (including county, metropolitan, unitary, borough and district authorities);
- 12 national parks;
- 12 community forests; and
- various NGOs working with projects related to countryside recreation.

Between 150 and 200 responses were received by fax, phone calls, emails and post. Given more time, it is believed that more responses could have been solicited. At this stage, the responses were plotted on maps of the UK to ensure that responses were geographically representative and not concentrated in any one particular region.

The responses received were screened to exclude projects that did not seek to attract participation from the target groups identified in the Invitation to Tender, and those that were not considered successful. No detailed investigation was carried out on the projects at this stage (contacting beneficiaries for example). Reliance was placed on the project details supplied by project facilitators or other respondents who directed the research team to the projects. In this process there was no prior screening and the project team sought as many projects as possible. This long list was reduced to 23 projects that clearly sought to promote inclusiveness in countryside recreation, and which were considered to have achieved most, if not all of its predetermined objectives.

6.2 Short List

At this stage, the 23 shortlisted projects were placed in a 4 by 2 matrix (see Figure 7 below) in order to classify them according to target group and location. This was only used to ensure that our shortlisted projects covered all our targets groups as evenly as possible. From this, it was also clear that the cases were weighted heavily in terms of initiatives targeting wheelchair disabled while initiatives targeting low-income groups were much rarer.

Figure 7 - The distribution of the 23 shortlisted projects from which the CRN selected 12

Target Group	Peri-urban	Deeper Countryside
Ethnic Minorities	3, 9, 15, 18	21, 22
Disabled	2, 4, 19	1, 5, 13, 14, 16, 20
Low Income	8, 17	6
Young Elderly	11, 23	7, 10, 12
<i>N.B. some of these projects would fit into more than 1 box</i>		

The shortlist was forwarded to the CRN steering committee, from which a final list of 12 was determined.

6.3 Field Visits

These visits to the 12 finalists took the form of informal meetings with project facilitators and project beneficiaries. With project facilitators the aim of the meeting was to obtain background information on the project. With the project beneficiaries, the aim of the meeting was to explore the project from their viewpoint, in their language.

Information gathered included the:

- history of project;
- aims of project;
- source of funding;
- project context – part of wider project, free-standing, etc;
- managing structure: under authority – central government, local government etc;
- details of which NGOs or partnerships, if any, are involved;
- extent of participation with intended beneficiaries in programme formulation;
- details of the perceived barriers to participation at the beginning of the project;
- extent to which the project addressed these barriers;
- extent to which the project translated into changes in wider policy;

- replicability / transferability of the project;
- sustainability of the project;
- extent to which the stakeholders consider it good value for money; and
- methods by which 'success in addressing social inclusion' is assessed including whether Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of efficiency and effectiveness, or other forms of evaluation were used.

Respondents were encouraged to raise any important issues not being addressed by the project researcher. At the same time, all project respondents were assured of absolute confidentiality.

6.3.1 Project Facilitators: Semi-structured Interviews

Most of the meetings with facilitators took the form of semi-structured interviews. Interviewing is a well-established method of gathering data when undertaking research in the social sciences. Interviews have been described by Ackroyd and Hughes (1992, p. 100 cited in McCulloch 1996) as "encounters between a researcher and a respondent in which an individual is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research". The respondent's answers constitute the raw material to be analysed at a later point in time.

Interviewing can be undertaken using a number of different approaches. Much of the literature on this method of data collection places interviewing techniques along a 'continuum of formality' with a *structured* approach at one pole and an *unstructured* approach at the other. In between these two extremes lies an approach, which can be termed *semi-structured*.

Semi-structured interviews are seen as less intrusive to those being interviewed as the semi-structured interview encourages two-way communication (Case 1990). It can confirm what is already known but also provides the opportunity for learning. Often the information obtained from semi-structured interviews will provide not just answers, but the reasons for the answers. It is also thought that when individuals are interviewed (separately as opposed to in a group) they may more easily discuss sensitive issues.

The major weakness of this approach is also its strength - the skill of the interviewer. It is possible that the technique would not permit the interviewer to pursue topics or issues of interest that were not anticipated when the interview guide was elaborated. Furthermore, interviewer flexibility in wording and sequencing questions may result in substantially different responses from different persons, thus reducing comparability (World Bank, undated).

6.3.2 *Project Beneficiaries: Focus Groups & Semi-structured Interviews*

Focus groups were used as the principal means of eliciting information from the beneficiaries, the intention being to give the focus-group session a free-flowing and relatively unstructured format, which would allow participants to use their own language. Focus groups usually lasted for between 60 and 120 minutes and were tape-recorded. The focus group moderator followed a preplanned script of specific issues and set goals for the type of information to be gathered.

Focus groups were originally called "focused interviews" or "group depth interviews". The technique was developed after World War II to evaluate audience response to radio programs (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990 in Marczak, undated). Since then social scientists have found focus groups to be useful in understanding how or why people hold certain beliefs about a topic or programme of interest. A focus group could be defined as a group of interacting individuals having some common interest or characteristics, brought together by a moderator, who uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about a specific or focused issue.

There is no one correct way of carrying out a focus group. Typically however, there are 7-10 people who are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group. The moderator or interviewer creates a permissive and nurturing environment that encourages different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants to vote, plan or reach consensus (Krueger, 1988 in Marczak, undated). The group discussion is conducted several times with similar types of participants to identify trends and patterns in perceptions. Careful and systematic analyses of the discussions provide clues and insights as to how a service or opportunity is perceived by the group.

According to Gibbs (1997), the main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys.

Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context. Compared to observation, a focus group enables the researcher to gain a larger amount of information in a shorter period of time.

Focus groups are considered particularly useful when there are power differences between the participants and decision-makers or professionals. They are also useful when the everyday use of language and culture of particular groups is of interest, and when one wants to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic (Morgan & Kreuger 1993 in Gibbs 1997).

The advantages of focus groups include:

- They encourage interaction between participants highlighting their view of the world. The language used about the issues reveal underlying values and beliefs about the subject. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understanding of their specific experiences.
- They reveal multiple understandings and meanings of terms and concepts such as social inclusion, exclusion and what constitutes countryside recreation.
- They can be empowering for some participants, giving the opportunity to be involved, to be valued as experts, and have the chance to work collaboratively with researchers.

Although focus group research has many advantages, as with all research methods, there are limitations. Careful planning and moderating can overcome some, but others are unavoidable and peculiar to this approach. These include:

- The researcher, or moderator, has less control over the data produced than in either quantitative studies or one-to-one interviewing. The moderator has to allow participants to talk to each other, ask questions and express doubts and opinions, but has limited control over the interaction other than generally keeping participants focused on the topic. By its nature, focus group research is open-ended and cannot be entirely predetermined.
- The individuals in a focus group may not be expressing their own definitive individual view. They are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture, and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to clearly identify an individual message. This too is a potential limitation of focus groups.
- Focus groups can be difficult to assemble. It is not easy to get a representative sample and focus groups may discourage certain people from participating, for example those who are not very articulate or confident, and those who have communication problems or special needs. Further, in this project, it was essential to use the facilitators as gateways to beneficiaries, with the possibility that there would be a 'favourable bias' in the sample of beneficiaries.
- The method of focus group discussion may also discourage some people from entrusting the wider group with sensitive or personal information, resulting in the information gleaned being partial and selective.

On balance, it was decided that the combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups offered a valuable means of obtaining insights into issues of inclusion/exclusion in countryside leisure, building a platform on the information about the project from the facilitators. This allowed a range of respondents to participate in structured discussions about the topic.

SECTION IV – CASES

This section of the report briefly describes 12 cases of social inclusion in countryside recreation taken from throughout the UK. The intention here is to illustrate the variety of 'best practice' with regard to social inclusion being undertaken in selected projects. This ensures that the issues subsequently discussed are grounded in the realities of various projects.

The individual examples are described by reference to written information received from project management and from interviews and focus groups with a range of respondents, including managers and project beneficiaries.

7. Cases

7.1 Fairbridge Edinburgh

Fairbridge Edinburgh is part of Fairbridge UK, which is a registered charity. This national-level project sees countryside recreation as part of a larger programme that seeks to integrate young people into society - particularly into employment or further education.

7.1.1 *Project History*

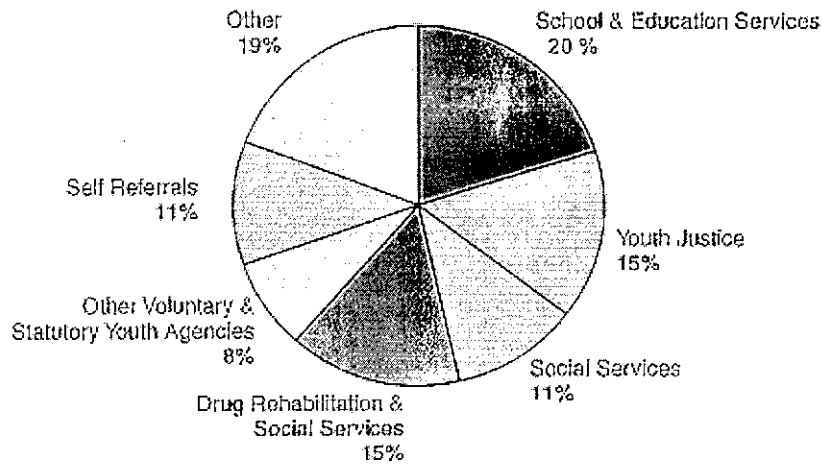
7.1.1.1 *Fairbridge UK*

Based in 12 of the most disadvantaged urban areas in the country, Fairbridge supports 14-25 year olds who are not in education, training or employment or who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out.

Clients are referred by over 1,400 different organisations (see figure 8). These young people often face a range of problems and may have been excluded from school, endured long-term unemployment, faced homelessness or become involved in criminal activity. Many are without the support of their family and on the margins of their local community.

Figure 8 - Fairbridge Referral Sources

Referral Sources 1999/2000



Source: <http://www.fairbridge.org.uk/>

7.1.1.2 Fairbridge Edinburgh (our focus)

Fairbridge run a year-round support programme for socially excluded teenagers and young people aged 14-25. In Edinburgh, they run a joint programme with the John Muir Award (this award is a national environmental award, open to all, which encourages the discovery and conservation of wild places - all in a spirit of adventure and exploration - contact David Picken 0131 624 7220). This has included a 7-day canoe journey on the River Spey. Other activities include hill walking, gorge walking, sea level traversing, abseiling, kayaking, orienteering, and skiing. Conservation work is also undertaken.

The aim of the programme is to develop motivation, confidence and personal, social and life skills. Use is made of a wide range of challenging activities: from abseiling to business projects. Each young person is individually supported in creating an action plan linking the activities they enjoy with the skills they need to develop. For many, involvement with Fairbridge is the first step to reconnection with mainstream opportunities. The long-term personal development programme builds up the self-confidence, attitudes, personal and social skills, which offer an effective route to social inclusion.

Challenging and exciting outdoor education activities encourage disaffected young people to volunteer for the programme, and comprise about a third of all activities.

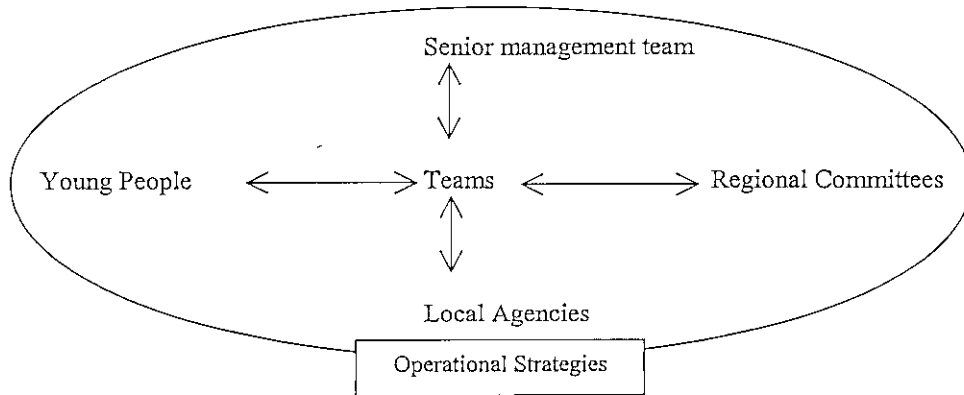
As participants progress, they build up their independent living, work, community activity and leisure skills, by selecting from a wide range of courses facilitated by Fairbridge. Young people are supported to create and implement a personal action plan as a key step towards greater responsibility, self-reliance and independence. Fairbridge often works over several years with a young person, whose objectives may range from personal hygiene or basic social interaction to international work placements or voluntary care work.

7.1.2 Fairbridge Project Structure

Fairbridge Edinburgh has links with RSPB rangers, Speyside way rangers, estate owners / factors, in conservation work undertaken in areas such as Insh Marshes.

Within Fairbridge UK, the structure is usually as follows:

Figure 9 - Project Structure



In Fairbridge Edinburgh, half of the staff are trained or qualified in outdoor recreation facilitating such as skiing, first aid, mountain leadership, etc. The focus of staff activity is in a social work function.

Main sources of funding (UK wide) are as follows:

- 15% - corporations and individuals such as Abbey National plc, Andersen Consulting, Barclays, Lloyds TSB, BBC Children in Need, Proctor & Gamble;
- 20.5% - statutory bodies such as DfEE, Edinburgh City Council, European Social Fund, Scottish Office - Education Department;

- 42% - trusts such as Lord Barnby's Foundation, CHK Charities Ltd., Edward Cadbury Trust, Drapers Co, Walter Guinness Trust, Freemasons' Grand Charity and Alan Higgs Charity;
- 7.5% - National Lottery.

7.1.3 *Project Impact*

H. M. Inspector of Education is quoted as having described Fairbridge as - "*the single most effective charity working with and training demotivated and disadvantaged young people, particularly with those living within inner city areas of the UK*". Other reports from Fairbridge note that two thirds of its clients return to training, employment or join another organisation. A Probation Service study discovered that reoffending rates were halved. This is supported by a Home Office study, of a project run by Venture Trust, an associate charity of Fairbridge, which concluded that their 3-week course dramatically reduces reoffending rates.

In terms of countryside recreation in general, project facilitators believe that low participation by young people is initially due to poor information, a lack of motivation and prohibitive cost (transport and equipment). In this way, Fairbridge 'bridges' this gap. In fact, outdoor / countryside recreation is actively used to promote the project.

Although no formal records seem to have been kept, the feeling of the project manager (Giles Ruck) is that there is limited participation in outdoor recreation after clients have left the project. Activities after clients have left Fairbridge, include hillwalking and rock climbing (especially at indoor facilities) but particularly within the context of other clubs or programmes.

Aside from the cost factor, it is believed that the clients prefer recreation within a 'structured' or 'club' context. Organisations like Raleigh International are more popular than (the more traditional) uniformed 'brigades'.

The impact of outdoor recreation (especially where it includes residential activity) on the young participants is difficult to assess, but terms such as 'bonding', 'time to think', 'inspire', 'talk about feelings' and 'spiritual experiences' come up regularly.

The reports made available to the consultants are filled with quotes from participants on how the programmes inspired young people to alter the course of their lives.

A focus group session was held with a group of 6 young males who had been hill walking earlier that day. For most of that group, a school outing was their only prior experience (prior to Fairbridge) of hillwalking. When asked why young people (in general) seem to be uninterested in countryside recreation, the first response was a collective giggle (which was interpreted as indicating a question with an obvious answer).

This was followed by ideas such as it being 'boring', requiring a lot of time and money to organise, and being 'distracted' by so many other (competing) activities.

After having been exposed to countryside recreational opportunities however, there was consensus that it is a rewarding and worthwhile activity. Ideas such as being 'athletic', meeting different people, enjoying fresh air, the 'nice scenery and that', clearing the mind, and a sense of 'freedom' were offered. As to whether they will continue countryside recreation, not everyone was certain, some said 'definitely', others that they would 'try', while some remained silent. When asked about what could be done to make the countryside more attractive for them, the main responses were closer (green) areas and convenient transport (access).

7.2 . The Big Issue in Scotland

The Big Issue Hill-walking Club was formed in Glasgow, in April 2000 as part of the outreach work of the Big Issue's charity arm. The Big Issue is best known for its magazine, which gives vendors 60% of the cover price. Vendors are socially vulnerable people who are without permanent accommodation.

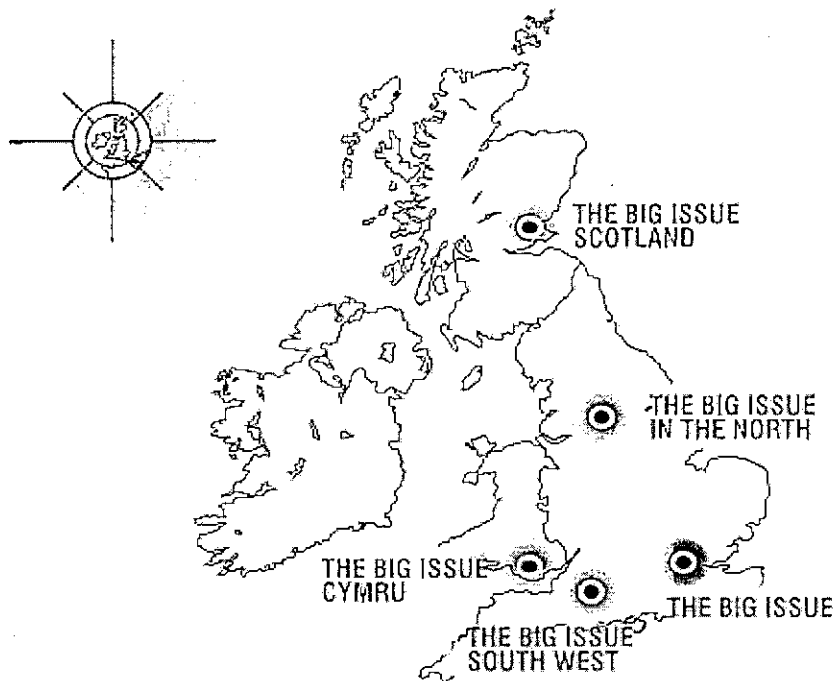
7.2.1 Project History

7.2.1.1 The Big Issue

The inspiration for **The Big Issue** came from **Street News**, a newspaper sold by homeless people that Gordon Roddick, of **The Body Shop**, saw on a visit to New York. **The Big Issue** was launched in September 1991. John Bird initially established it in London, with the assistance of **The Body Shop International Plc**. The circulation was 30,000 per month, and its format was an A3 monthly newspaper. Now over a million people read **The Big Issue** every week (National Readership Survey 1997).

The magazine campaigns on behalf of homeless people and highlights the major social issues of the day. It also allows homeless people to voice their views and opinions. Five editions of the magazines are printed in the UK as is seen in the following map (See Figure 10).

Figure 10 - Editions of the Big Issue in the UK



Source: <http://www.bigissue.com/uk/Default.htm>

7.2.1.2 The Big Issue in Scotland

In April 2000 a Big Issue Hillwalking Club was created in Glasgow, whereby 'each trip means (members) conquering their personal challenges and problems'. The trips have been initially funded by the Big Issue Foundation, which is the charitable arm of the magazine. It is intended that by the end of 2001, the club will be self-financing. Most activity days (mainly Sundays) are 'mountain' days, but some days are spent in training, doing conservation work or on sponsored walks.

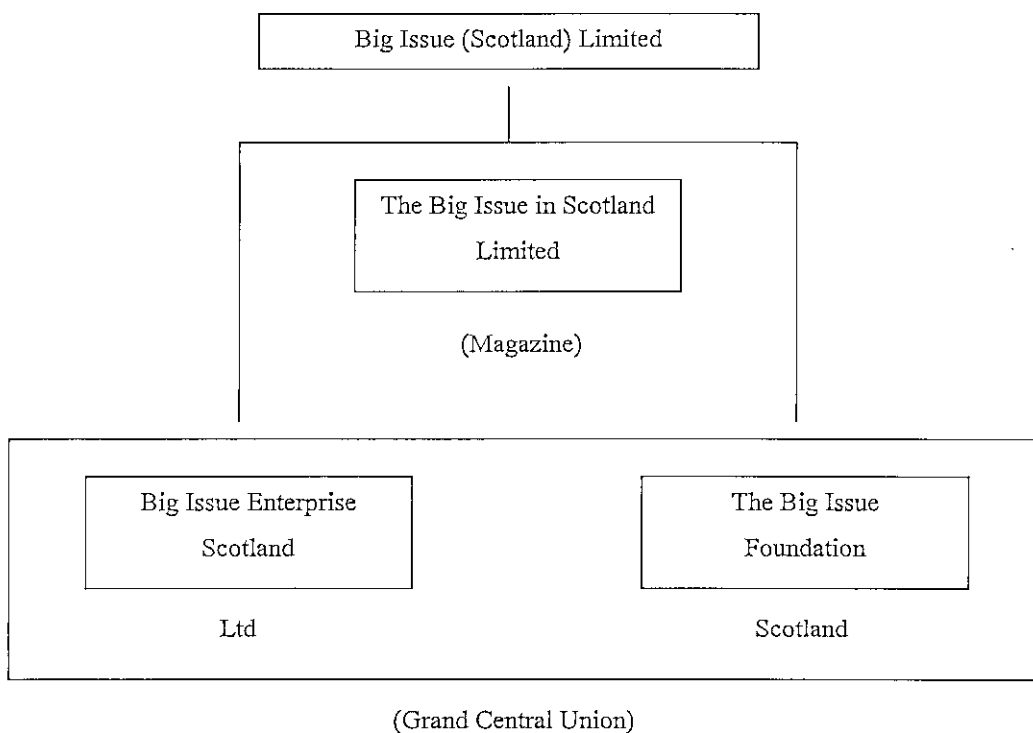
Many of the vendors, who attend, live in hostels or supported tenancies and many have 'slept in outdoor conditions as hostile as any Scottish mountain'. If they can attract sponsorship, the club hopes to organise a trip to the Swiss Alps in the summer of 2001 and the Himalayas in 2002.

7.2.2 *Project Structure*

Inspired by a similar (community development) project in New York City, The Big Issue Scotland's outreach manager Jim Brown formed The Big Issue Hillwalking Club as one of a number of clubs which homeless people would progressively take control of, thus increasing their life skills.

Grand Central Union (GCU) is a joint venture between The Big Issue Enterprise Scotland and The Big Issue Foundation Scotland. The overall structure is as follows:

Figure 11 - Big Issue Scotland's Organisational Structure



GCU focuses on projects operated 'with' people not those operated 'for' people. As such, it has a community development mandate rather than a social welfare one. This policy (or perhaps 'ethos') change for the Big Issue was born of the realisation that conventional 'social welfare' approaches are failing. As Mr. Jim Brown notes "*...this boiled down to the homeless person was being treated like a child, and had no ownership of the process*".

Membership of the club is open to anyone who is homeless (at the time of joining the club or of becoming a member of GCU) and members of staff and volunteer workers of GCU.

Ownership of this project by the members themselves is stressed as vitally important. Supporting organisations of The Big Issue Hillwalking club include:

- Drumchapel Adventure Group (DRAG) - is a registered charity providing outdoor activities resource service to communities in the Glasgow area. Services provided include minibus and equipment hire, instruction and the provision of information on all forms of outdoor pursuits.
- Alba Adventures - this is a commercial outdoor activities company based in Glasgow that has undertaken to provide club members with training (navigation, outdoor leadership etc.) in a wide range of outdoor pursuits at cost price. This is in exchange for publicity in the editorial columns of the magazine.
- John Muir Trust - the John Muir Award (this award is a national environmental award, open to all, which encourages the discovery and conservation of wild places - all in a spirit of adventure and exploration) is being offered to homeless people in Glasgow. This is through a co-operative initiative between the trust and The Big Issue in Scotland.
- Glasgow City Council Countryside Ranger Service - has undertaken to run the John Muir Award scheme for homeless people in Glasgow on behalf of, and in conjunction with, The Big Issue in Scotland.

An equipment appeal in the press resulted in 113 items being received (from 16 pairs of boots and 18 waterproof jackets to 2 windsurf boards and a wet suit).

7.2.3 Project Impact

A total of 46 different people participated in the April to mid November 2000, which includes seven staff members and two volunteer workers. Average attendance per day was eight people over the 39 activity days. Members themselves have raised most of the funds used for club activity (mini bus and equipment hire, fuel costs and training). A sponsored walk was used to raise funds for training as the club moves towards self-sufficiency.

The single major factor identified by all parties as restricting the growth of the club is lack of transport. They are all certain that if cheap, reliable transport could be secured numbers participating would be much bigger. As it stands, people are turned away on some days because of a lack of space. Arrangements with Drumchapel have not evolved as the club would like and alternative transport is actively being sought. The club is to a large extent dependent on club members who are also staff, to provide transport with their own cars.

Despite this setback, benefits have already emerged from the project. Jim Brown first notes health benefits (physical and mental), as many members of the homeless population in Glasgow have a drug problem.

The second benefit is developing social skills, as many of the members live a somewhat isolated existence. Improved self-esteem is another benefit. Not just the satisfaction that comes from completing a challenging walk, but that which comes from setting a goal and achieving it.

For six of the members, this translated into a John Muir Award (publicly presented to them by Tom Weir, a well-known outdoor writer) for their conservation works in an area within Glasgow, which received good press coverage.

Mr. Brown believes that key to realising the full potential of this venture is ensuring that the homeless people themselves own the 'project' or rather 'club' as he prefers to call it. This also builds into it an element of financial accessibility and sustainability.

Although half a dozen were invited, we spoke with just two 'members' of the club who are also socially vulnerable. One of whom has been to almost every outing and was awarded with the John Muir Award. They spoke of the feeling of accomplishment that accompanies each successful walk. So much so, that they believe that those who are unable or unwilling to come do not know what they are missing! One member testified to his own personal transformation, which he attributes to the experiences that the club has offered him. Conservation work, such as that done for the John Muir Award, is also fulfilling as members hope that it may help others experience (countryside) what they have. In terms of entering the job market, they were quite pleased with the training they were receiving which one hoped might lead to him *"getting a wage for something you love doing...and nothing is better than that!"*.

7.3 Midlothian Council

This Council manages the Vogrie Country Park. This country park (just outside of Edinburgh) has sought to facilitate physically and mentally handicapped people in accessing its facilities.

7.3.1 Project History

7.3.1.1 Midlothian

Best known for its mining heritage, Midlothian is situated to the south of Edinburgh with a population of almost 82,000. The main towns are Penicuik, Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith, Mayfield and Easthouses, Loanhead and Gorebridge. Midlothian Council is the largest employer in the area with over 4,000 employees.

7.3.1.2 Vogrie Country Park

There has been a large house at Vogrie for several centuries, but the present one dates from the 19th century. Coal was once mined on the wider estate and the property now belongs to Midlothian Council and attracts thousands of visitors.

The park includes a children's adventure playground and a walled garden. Ranger-guided walks take place regularly throughout most of the year, and there is a Travelling Nature Club. A 9-hole golf course is popular, while the attractive stables building has residential accommodation for organised groups.

7.3.2 Project Structure - focus on Vogrie Country Park

The council's move to address social inclusion / exclusion in countryside recreation, dates back to its 1998. Social inclusion was made a priority in its Ranger Service 3-year management plan.

An Access Forum meets every quarter to discuss issues dealing with countryside access in Midlothian. This forum includes members of the local disability coalition, farmers, landowners, horse riders, cyclists, and walkers and is administered by Midlothian Council. The work of Midlothian Council's Access Officer is given a general steer by the Forum who provide a 'sounding board' for Midlothian Council's plans for access development.

A series of initiatives are now in place which include:

- a weekend bus route to Vogrie Country Park which is not on a bus route - 14% of Midlothian's population do not have access to a car;
- 'Countryside on your Doorstep' walks were introduced as part of the Ranger Services annual programme of events which targets the 'working classes' (particularly those without cars) accessing the countryside nearest to their local community;

- a 'Paths for All' Partnership within the wider Scottish programme, focusing on reversing the public's lack of confidence in the use of routes (because of a feeling that they are trespassing) through better sign posting and clearer paths; and
- targeting the physically and mentally disabled through the development of a sensory garden in the principal (Vogrie) country park which forms the subject of this case.

Vogrie Country Park is not on any bus route and as such, only car users have access. A Rural Bus Service was introduced (during the summer peak visitor period) in 1998, but funding restrictions in 2000 meant that it was not continued.

Transport is seen as a key factor restricting access. From a conservation standpoint, large numbers of cars during peak visitor seasons is less than ideal for the parks but still the numbers who did use the buses were not enough to make it economically feasible.

Transport is even more important, given that 50% of visitors come from outside of Midlothian - from Edinburgh. This 100-hectare site gets roughly one third of a million visitors every year. It has a large house, a large area of woodland and scrub, with some grassland, a conifer plantation and three ponds.

As far as normally underrepresented countryside users are concerned, (physically and mentally) disabled groups are the key users. Initiatives include no charge being made for use of the (disabled) car park, which is closer than the main car park, to the main building and pathways. Frequent rest stops (with benches) along paths are made available, and a sensory garden has recently been constructed. Rangers and the access officer have also undergone Disabled Awareness training, and there is disabled access to the visitor centre from the rear. There are wheelchair 'friendly' paths (gravel and tarmac) throughout the park, including access to the adventure play areas and disabled toilets.

Details of access for disabled people is available from the Lothian Coalition for Disabled People - <http://www.lcdp.org.uk/parksmid.html>. The three regular (disabled) institutional users of the park are Bonnington Resource Centre, Red Hall Walled Garden and Telford College, which are all in Edinburgh.

7.3.3 Project Impact

In assessing the impact on users we interviewed two groups of people who were enjoying the park that afternoon. Further to this, we had telephone contact with two of the three major user institutions:

- Red Hall Walled Garden (0131 443 0946) - a mental health institution.
- Telford College (0131 332 2491) - severe learning difficulties.

For all users, transport is a (limiting) factor as the park lies outside of bus routes. Those with children enjoyed the two well-maintained play areas. None of the users that evening were wheel chair bound and as such physical access was not an issue for them.

Red Hall has been accessing the park for ten years, and has been to Vogrie Park five times this year (as at 06/12/00). Although pleased with the park in general, they did express a desire for more covered seating at the top end of the park where they tend to favour (especially helpful when it rains). Aside from taking part in ranger-led walks, they also assist in minor conservation work. Overall, the park visits are an invaluable help in the institution's focus "on social integration".

Telford College has only recently begun visiting the park. With groups of seven adults (aged 20 to 30), they have visited five times within the last three months. Like many urban disabled users, the park has been their first countryside experience and "the excellent facilities and the helpfulness of the staff" (who are sometimes involved in their activities) impressed them. All the students enjoy the outing and look forward to the next one.

In terms of wheel chair access, the access to the main building is at the back, which may send an inappropriate message. Midlothian Council are aware of this problem, but changing this is proving to be difficult because of the historical nature of the main building. A newly created sensory garden, however, should make the experience of disabled and able-bodied users alike more enjoyable.

7.4 PACE Project - Surrey County Council / London Borough of Croydon

This project has sought to increase access to urban green spaces by ethnic minorities and disabled people in the London Borough of Croydon. Started in 1996, the PACE (Promoting Access in Croydon for Everyone) project was a 3-year initiative funded by the London Borough of Croydon, the Corporation of London and the European Commission's LIFE fund.

Surrey County Council provided office accommodation in the Downlands Countryside Management Project (DCMP). PACE is one of the many initiatives managed by the DCMP (which is on going, in Sutton, Surrey and Croydon). The London Walking Forum's 'Footpaths to LIFE' Project was also a project partner.

7.4.4 Project History

7.4.1.1 London Borough of Croydon

The London Borough of Croydon (or simply 'Croydon') is an outer London borough, covering an area of 33 square miles.

The north of the borough is more densely populated in line with the close proximity to inner London boroughs, while the south is more suburban with large areas of open spaces (13% is public open space) and close access to the open countryside in Surrey.

However, 40% of residents live in areas deficient in local parks, while 17% of the population live more than 1 km from a site of significant nature conservation importance. In the north, green areas are smaller, more fragmented and less well-known. While in the south, the Corporation of London owns and manages the four popular Coulsdon Commons, covering 192 hectares.

7.4.1.2 Ethnic Communities

In Croydon, 17.6% (55 115) of the population are from ethnic minority communities, of which 98.1% are of Caribbean, Asian and African origin. The 1991 census also shows that the ethnic population:

- has a much younger age structure than the white population;
- is concentrated in the north of the borough and
- speak mainly Gujarati, Urdu and Hindi.

There was no promotion of countryside access to ethnic minorities before PACE.

7.4.1.3 People with Disabilities

There are an estimated 20 000 people with disabilities living within Croydon. Disability groups include Croydon Deaf Club, the Croydon Hard of Hearing Project, Croydon Voluntary Association for the Blind and Croydon, Sutton and District Spastics Society.

Before PACE, information about sites, paths and facilities was not detailed enough for people with disabilities. None of the self-guided walks leaflets or guided walks programmes produced were geared specifically towards people with disabilities, though some contained basic information about accessibility.

7.4.2 Project Structure

The remit of the PACE project was to work within Croydon focusing on the following objectives:

- to establish an example of best practice in encouraging access by all sections and members of the community to green areas and rights of way on the edge of urban areas;
- to promote environmentally sustainable recreation practices by encouraging people to discover the full recreational potential of green spaces;
- to promote walking as a health and recreation asset which is freely available to all members of society (especially targeting people from ethnic communities, deprived urban areas, and people with disabilities); and
- to provide a network of walks in the Croydon area which are accessible to all and which link existing long footpaths with new local walks.

7.4.2.1 Ethnic Minorities

A volunteer researcher undertook a study in 1996 to:

- discover attitudes about walking in Croydon's green areas and
- promote walking.

Follow up interviews and talks to groups promoting the health benefits of walking also took place. The major drawbacks of this phase of this project were the low response rate, the predominance of southern green spaces vs. northern ones in the questionnaire, and the narrow categories of 'ethnic minorities' targeted which excluded some groups.

The studies did show that there is an interest and desire for access by ethnic minority communities but restrictions exist in the form of:

- lack of time and money;
- distance;
- cultural considerations;
- lack of information and
- worries about safety.

In response to this survey, the PACE project attended shows and fairs, promoted self-guided walks leaflets and guided walks programmes produced by other organisations, including the Downlands Project, the Corporation of London and Croydon (local authority).

Multilingual leaflets were produced providing an introduction to green spaces in Croydon and listing all self-guided walk leaflets available. Text was kept to a minimum and most was translated into Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil - the 4 most widely spoken languages in Croydon.

A programme of 'Guided Strolls' was put together by the PACE Project as part of the Croydon Festival of Walking. The aims of these were to:

- cover a wider variety of topics and lengths to attract a wider audience;
- make as many as possible free and available to families, people with disabilities and people from ethnic communities;
- be located in areas where public transport was readily available, to make them available to everyone and not just those with cars; and
- ensure the subject of the guided strolls would be geared to families, making them something of a special occasion, through promotion of self guided walks leaflets, other guided walks or by joining a walking group.

The PACE Project also collated information from various walk leaders into a leaflet of 'Guided Strolls'. The leaflet was distributed all over Croydon (libraries, residents associations, community groups, churches, supermarkets, youth centres, clubs, doctor's surgeries, outdoors shops, council offices and at shows).

7.4.2.2 People with Disabilities

Removing physical barriers to sites, paths and facilities is usually the primary consideration when providing access for people with disabilities. Physical barriers can include narrow gates, paths which cross slopes, loose or muddy surfaces, steps, stiles, badly designed access to buildings and lack of accessible toilet facilities.

The PACE Project has consulted with the Croydon Association of People with Disabilities (CAPD), which is an independent voluntary organisation run by people with disabilities and their families and which aims to increase awareness of disability issues among non-disabled people. It provides information, advice and can arrange training.

Surveys and access audits were carried out on the borough's green spaces. As a result of these, paths were improved and sign-posted. Furthermore, training courses in disability awareness were held for countryside staff. These included:

- introduction to various disabilities;
- how to be a sighted guide;
- experience of pushing someone with a wheelchair;
- information on the Disability Discrimination Act; and
- simulation exercises allowing staff to experience the difficulties incurred by some people with difficulties (e.g. partial vision and bumpy tracks in a wheelchair).

An access directory for Croydon was produced. This allows people with disabilities to choose for themselves which sites are suitable using a directory, which contains separate site or walk cards with detailed maps and information. The text is produced in clear, large print and the maps have good colour contrast to make for easier reading by visually impaired people.

7.4.3 Project Impact

Despite all these efforts over two successive years in removing identified barriers, the results gathered from walk leaders' feedback forms, suggested a consistently low turn out from people from ethnic minority communities. It was suggested in the project report that some of the issues described above (which restrict greater ethnic minority participation in countryside recreation) cannot be solved over a short time scale. The PACE project is seen to have only begun this long process. No details of the ethnic minority groups involved, was made available to the consultants.

In terms of disabled people, the project was successful in highlighting barriers to participation and in removing some of these barriers. The project also produced a comprehensive access pack detailing disabled access, with some leaflets available in Braille. In terms of actually increasing numbers participating in countryside recreation, it is unclear how effective the project was.

The DCMP is of the opinion that the remit of the project was too wide, funding too limited and the time frame too short. The PACE officer leaving the post, half way through the project compounded the problem. Furthermore, the staff bias was always for setting up walks and encouraging disabled access as opposed to ethnic minority access. The DCMP suggests that someone with more of a community outreach background might have been (and would be) more effective.

The Croydon Association of People with Disabilities (CAPD 020 8760 9927) agrees that this grant-driven project did translate into increased participation in park recreation. It is sustainable to the extent that facilities are maintained and promotional material continually made available. The CAPD worked closely in implementing the project and may therefore feel some 'ownership' of it and therefore greater commitment.

The disabled users also felt that the project was instrumental in opening the council's eyes to the challenges that face disabled citizens.

Finally, the PACE projects also helped accomplish:

- The London LOOP (London Outer Orbital Path) - a 240 km (150 mile) walk around the capital.
- The Capital Ring Walk - a 72 mile circular walk devised by the London Walking Forum.

7.5 NT Inner City Project

The National Trust Inner City Project has operated in Newcastle upon Tyne since 1988. Although it initially focused on 13 to 25-year olds, it now encourages all age groups to access the countryside.

7.5.1 Project History

7.5.1.1 The National Trust

The National Trust was founded in 1895 to own land on the people's behalf. In the Victorian tradition of social concern, their motives were inspired by a desire to preserve landscapes access and significant buildings.

7.5.1.2 The Inner City Project

In Newcastle, the National Trust Youth Project, now called the Inner City Project (ICP) was originally funded by the Rank Foundation to work with the 16 to 25 year old age group. The aim was to reaffirm the original ideas of the founders in a way that reflected the realities of life for the urban dweller in the 1980s and 1990s (Evaluation of the National Trust's Inner City Project, Mary Wootten, 1995).

The NT does operate other ICPs as in Middlesbrough and previously in Birmingham, but the Newcastle project has been in operation for the longest period of time and is generally regarded as the most effective.

The Inner City Project (now with over 100 members) seeks to develop awareness and continuing interest in the environment and countryside. As the Project developed, it was realised that other sectors of the community could also benefit from being involved and the Project now works across the city with core groups of: young people (13- 25 years), older adults (50+ years) and other community groups.

From October 1997 the Project was based at the rear of Byker Community Centre but has now moved to the Holy Jesus Hospital (formerly the John George Joicey Museum) on City Road, giving the Project a long awaited city centre base.

The project aims are as follows:

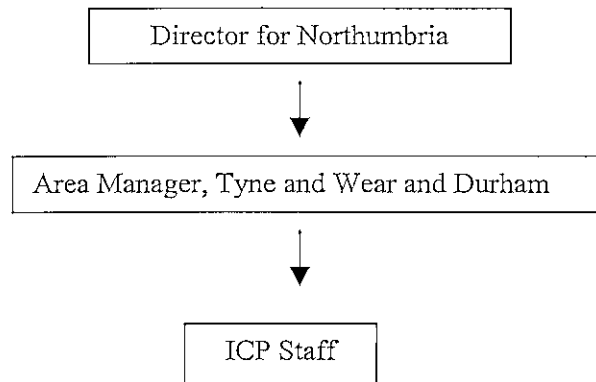
1. To continue to develop the work of the ICP with its core groups of young people aged 13 – 25, older people aged 50+ and other inner city community groups in order that barriers to access to the countryside such as awareness and attitude are overcome.
2. To enable inner city groups to identify resources to enable them to overcome the obstacles preventing their continued access to the countryside such as poverty, lack of crèche facilities and transport.
3. To network with other agencies within the Tyneside area to broaden the appeal of the Trust and provide a link between the Trust and agencies that would like to take part in or develop similar activities to those offered by the project.
4. To integrate the Project's work with National Trust properties (especially Gibside) around the region, including the Regional Office.
5. To promote and publicise the work of the ICP.
6. To maintain an evaluation process for the Project's work.

7.5.2 Project Structure

The Project is co-ordinated by Gerard New, full-time Youth and Community Worker. Kath Lohfink and Bren Riley, Assistant Youth and Community Workers and Mark Hamilton, sessional Youth Worker working 12 hours per week assist Mr. New.

The project structure is as follows:

Figure 12 - National Trust ICP structure



An advisory group was set up in 1992 to advise and support the Inner City Project staff on the development of the project and its work within the city of Newcastle. The group consists of Inner City Project staff, the Director for Northumbria, the Area Manager for Tyne and Wear and Durham and members of the NT Regional Committee, all of whom are experienced and influential in their own field of work.

Funding is through a variety of sources, which include:

- The Kellett Fund (Community Foundation).
- Chapman Fund (Community Foundation).
- The Four Winds Trust.
- Events such as *Team Challenge*.
- The National Trust Tyne Valley Association
- Individuals such as Chris Brogan and Jenny Power who asked their wedding guests to donate to the project rather than buy them gifts.

The main initiatives are as follows:

7.5.2.1 Young People's Work

The project works with teenagers and young adults aged 13 to 25. The aim of this work is to pass on the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for the groups to access the countryside independently. The work incorporates the general youth work principles of enabling young people to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood. To do this the project uses informal education to help the young people explore and understand some of their experiences during this sometimes unsettling and difficult time.

Groups begin by workers inviting young people, from local schools with little or no experience of the countryside, to take part in taster sessions in outdoor activities. The groups meet on a regular weekly basis to plan, organise and take part in activities, with the emphasis on outdoor activities and gaining access to the countryside. Gradually, the groups are encouraged to take on more and more responsibility for the running of their groups.

7.5.2.2 Trailblazers (West End)

The Trailblazers is a group of young people that meet every Monday night to take part in a varied programme of activities. The group plans its own activities including ice skating, golf, games nights, 'ready, steady, cook' nights, social evenings and planning residential events.

During the school holidays the group took part in day activities such as rock climbing, mountain biking and a trip to Beadnell and Lindisfarne Castle as well as a residential weekend at High Wray near Ambleside in the Lake District. The group took part in a day's conservation work with a National Trust warden. Some group members also took part in an Ocean Youth Trust voyage, sailing the vessel, James Cook, from North Shields to Hull.

7.5.2.3 Millennium Volunteers

In 1998, The National Trust was successful in gaining funding from the DfEE to run a demonstration project for the Millennium Volunteers (MV). This ongoing scheme aims to increase volunteering activities taken up by young people aged 16 – 24. The project provides support and training to enable young volunteers to take action on issues that are important to them. It is hoped that each MV will achieve a certificate for one hundred-hour voluntary work and an award of excellence for completing 200 hours of voluntary work within a year.

The project has strong links with conservation work at local NT properties. Young people are volunteering at Gibside and Souter, learning practical estate management skills.

Others are volunteering in primary schools, helping children with their reading; assisting Project's staff with the Trailblazers young people's group; working with the Newcastle City's Ranger Service, even organising a talent competition for pupils in year seven at Walker School. There are also joint conservation tasks, residential weekends and celebration events for those achieving certificates and awards. These have included weekends at National Trust basecamps in the Lake District and at Craggside, undertaking conservation tasks for the National Trust; outdoor activities such as rock climbing, mountain biking and caving; as well as social events such as Ten Pin Bowling.

7.5.2.4 Timebank

In January, the Inner City Project was involved with filming a BBC television series "Timebank". The series aimed to promote the benefits of volunteering to a wider audience and encourage people to give some of their time and volunteer in their local community. The Inner City Project got together with the Newcastle Ranger Service to create a pond and a herb and butterfly garden at Jesmond Dene (Newcastle) and so increase the Dene's educational resources.

7.5.2.5 Residential Events

The Inner City Project places great emphasis on residential events and the learning that takes place when people are living and working together in a close environment. This includes activities such as the younger people spending a weekend in the Lake District, staying at High Wray near Ambleside. They took part in conservation work, and visited Keswick. For many of the group, this was their first time away from the city.

7.5.3 Project Impact

The ICP is the longest established and generally recognised as the most developed and effective community development based project within the National Trust. Project Manager Gerard New sees the objective of the ICP as eliminating their own job. This entails making the clubs and groups that form as free standing as possible. Being an independent club, however, necessitates having insurance and a detailed constitution. These two requirements in particular have deterred clubs from becoming fully independent. Instead, all clubs are regarded as being led by NT volunteers. As such, the NT retains responsibility but in practice, the clubs operate freely and independently.

The ICP (aside from the MV) has no established criteria upon which they are ultimately judged, aside from the personal development of their members. Mr New believes that this puts the project under less pressure than more output driven initiatives.

His key messages however, are that the members would never have known the NT otherwise, some may not have been able to access the countryside, and the NT may not have had as many volunteers, visitors or people working to raise money on the NT's behalf. The ICP is not just about access but personal development.

It was noted that the ICP failed to include disabled and ethnic minority groups in their initiatives. Whilst the staff believe that other groups working with people with disabilities may be doing this effectively, they admit failure in effectively including ethnic minorities - "this is an area we need to address". There are not many groups, if any, on Tyneside involving ethnic minority groups in countryside recreation. This is an area that, at national level, the Trust is "keen to address".

A focus group was held with about 10 participants of the main initiatives. The meeting time however, meant that most of who attended were mature members.

In terms of the 'mature' members (55+), most were female. The group agreed that inner city life today tends to isolate and exclude older women especially. Older women tend to outlive their male counterparts and perceive themselves to be at greater risk of crime. As such, there is an observed tendency for women to outnumber men in these groups. All the women were vocal in their praise of the NT who they see as "giving them their life back" - allowing them to socialise and enjoy countryside recreation activities in ways that were previously impossible. The women in particular work hard in volunteering and fund raising activity for the trust, in an effort to "pay them back for all the Trust has done for them".

In general, the ICP was described as an opportunity to meet new people, increase self-confidence, and knowledge of the National Trust. Participants believe that for many, the NT is still seen as just being about "old houses", and as being a predominantly white, middleclass institution. These perceptions are undoubtedly a barrier to greater participation.

Other comments included:

- giving something back to others;
- enjoying the sense of achievement on finishing a job;
- gaining experiences which will be beneficial in the future and
- learning and doing things that they probably would never have done.

In terms of young people, there has been a lack of recent success in establishing strong groups with large numbers of young people. Both facilitators and young people themselves believe that this is because of the other activities that compete for the time and attention of young people. As such, they see more effective marketing as the key. In addition, there is a view that in central Tyneside, where there are a relatively high number of youth-oriented initiatives, resulting in some competition amongst agencies to recruit and retain young people.

7.6 Northamptonshire County Council

The Council operates Brixworth Country Park, which has sought to encourage traditionally underrepresented groups to access the countryside since 1995.

7.6.1 Project History

7.6.1.1 Northampton

There are six country parks under the management of countryside services. These are:

- Barnwell - 15 ha (of which 6 ha are lakes);
- Brampton Valley Way - 22 km linear park;
- Brigstock - 15 ha;
- Brixworth - 16 ha;
- Irchester - 81 ha and
- Sywell - 58ha.

Brixworth Country Park at Pitsford Water (reservoir) is located 10km to the north of Northampton in an area of countryside that includes the Brampton Valley. There are 12.8 million people within 90 minutes driving of the area including Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Peterborough, Bedford, Milton Keynes and Kettering.

7.6.1.2 Countryside Access

In 1995, the Council employed a full-time officer to address social inclusion issues. From September 1996 to March 1997 research was carried out on to find out more about certain groups and why they were rarely seen in the countryside. The groups were:

- local parents with babies and toddlers;
- local teenagers / young adults;
- minority ethnic groups;
- people with learning difficulties;
- people with hearing impairments and

- people from a 'key ward' (including non-car owners, people in low cost rented accommodation, the unemployed and single parent families).

This study led to a 3-year work programme (final phase in 2000) to address the issues raised by these groups. The objective is not to force people out into the countryside, while expecting that everyone will find a countryside visit equally rewarding. Rather, people are made aware of countryside opportunities that are open to them, allowing them to make informed choices when using leisure time. It also means giving people a feeling of confidence that they will be welcomed if they do chose to visit.

7.6.2 Project Structure

There are two distinct yet connected initiatives by the Council.

In 1995, there was the 'Pathways to Partnership'. This was jointly funded by the British Trust and the Northamptonshire County council and concentrated on the development of sustainable links between Adult Disability Day Centres and Country Parks. Twelve centres participated (physical disability - 4; learning difficulty - 6; mixed disability -; profound disability - 1) and six country parks (Barnwell, Brampton Valley Way, Brigstock, Brixworth, Irchester and Sywell).

From 1996 to 2000, there was a 'Countryside Access for All: A Millennium Project at Brixworth Country Park and Pitsford Water'. The objectives were to develop these two sites as a Countryside Access for All sites. This includes providing carefully targeted information and by using varied and interesting interpretation. The project partners are Anglian Water, the Council, Toc H and British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV).

This Millennium Project began with focus groups (groups identified above) of underrepresented groups in countryside recreation. Common barriers to participation in countryside recreation (within the parks themselves) were identified, and these included:

- lack of clear, obvious and accessible signing;
- friendly, knowledgeable staff who have received Access for All training;
- lack of effective marketing - particularly leaflets (and ranger visits) targeting community or group leaders;
- lack of appropriate visitor centre displays in the visitor centre - pictorial images which are changed periodically and
- a varied menu in the café - foods and drinks that reflect differing cultures.

As a result of this initiative, the following elements have been developed:

- accessible country park landscape;
- Pitsford Water cycling and walking trail;
- Countryside for All visitor centre;
- Countryside residential / training centre;
- accessible transport scheme;
- cycle hire facility;
- catering facility;
- access improvements in sailing;
- improvements to Lamport Station House.

7.6.3 Project Impact

The focus of this long-term millennium initiative has been on Brixworth Country Park - 16 ha, opened in 1990. This country park overlooks the 300 ha Pitsford Water owned by Anglian Water. Pitsford Water and surrounding land is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

One of the interesting features of this project is its detailed consultation with the community while identifying and assessing barriers to countryside access. At the same time, the project partners (the council in particular) remain in firm control, with no user-driven advisory group in place. This is considered to be advantageous as the council can provide impartiality in park operations, especially given the many competing community interest groups.

The project is taking a long-term perspective to the removal of barriers to access. Nevertheless, certain groups are already feeling more welcome to the site. The Leyland Resource Centre of the National Autistic Society does conservation work at the park. The Centre's Ms McQueen praises the work of staff (particularly the BTCV) who work with them, and notes the development of skills in her group, including bench building, tree trimming and path clearing.

A social worker from a centre for people with learning difficulties agrees that the project has been "successful" for his group in terms of improving levels of independence, confidence and initiative. For him, the scheme is "bang on". Most importantly, his group "looks forward to the next visit" to the park in which conservation work includes planting trees and digging ditches. BTCV staff undertake transport and guidance in conservation activity.

A representative from BTCV spoke of his using the parks to facilitate the National Conservation Training courses (NCTC) that he promotes with some of the park's users. Activity includes constructing bird boxes, planting trees, constructing paths and benches with both special needs and regular groups. Improved self esteem and the acquisition of practical skills are the main benefits that were noted by the groups that he works with in the parks.

Such conservation work has led to a sense of ownership and pride in the country parks where work is done.

A visually impaired user maintains that the biggest barrier does not lie within the park but is the difficulty in getting to the park. Within the park itself, there is an 'easy to see' sign board (tactile signboard) and a sensory garden and other tools to facilitate access by the physically impaired. Most important for this user, was the fact that "people are actually considering us at last".

Park visitor surveys (car only) show a 77% increase from 1996 to 2000, with 64% of Northamptonshire's population using the Country Parks as opposed to a national average of 10%. At the moment, no statistics yet exist of the total number of people visiting (aside from car users). The perception, however, is that underrepresented groups have been visiting in greater numbers and more frequently.

Customer care panels (focus groups) are also organised by the Countryside Network Officer, and used to ensure that the process of removing barriers to access is ongoing and effective. In this context, outreach work is integral in keeping in touch with community group and inviting them to the countryside. Out of consultation with community groups has come the 'Roots Culture Fest'.

Now in its fifth year, it is an open-air music event that celebrates cultural diversity and the countryside. It is believed that this event has been very effective in reducing barriers to some groups with a history of low rates of participation.

On-site accommodation on the visitor centre is also seen as a unique feature of their Access for All drive. Rates are kept low, and are even waived for particularly disadvantaged families or individuals needing to a 'holiday in the countryside'.

7.7 Greenwood Community Forest

Bestwood Country Park (the focus of this analysis) is a part of the Greenwood Community Forest. The Country Park has sought to encourage access by disabled and ethnic minority groups in Nottingham. Of particular interest is a partnership with Groundwork in Nottingham that has encouraged use by members of the Sikh community.

7.7.1 Project History

Established in the 1990s by the Countryside Agency and the Forestry Commission, Greenwood is one of the 12 Community Forests established in England. It stretches for 161 square miles from Nottingham in the south to the countryside beyond Mansfield in the north.

The key partners of Greenwood are: The Countryside Agency; Forestry Commission; Nottinghamshire County Council; Ashfield District Council; Broxtowe Borough Council; Gedling Borough Council; Mansfield District Council; Newark & Sherwood District Council and Nottingham City Council.

The population living in the Greenwood and within an 8km hinterland is just under 1.2 million with nearly 500 000 households. Over one third does not own or have regular use of a car - moreso in urban than in rural areas. Over 20% of the population is retired and over 5% are unemployed.

Bestwood Country Park (the focus of this analysis) is 650 acres and lies just 4 miles from the centre of Nottingham in a challenging urban fringe environment. The Nottinghamshire County Council and Gedling Borough Council jointly manage it. It is a gateway to the Greenwood Community Forest and is the most southerly remnant of Sherwood Forest.

The basic purpose of Bestwood Country Park is *"to promote access by the community to experience and enjoy the countryside"*. It also seeks to develop, manage and promote the Country Park as a recreation and education resource for the local community, and for people of the inner city and urban fringe areas of southern Nottinghamshire.

Bestwood has specifically sought to encourage access by groups who are underrepresented in countryside access.

7.7.2 *Project Structure - Bestwood Country Park*

Greenwood has various partnerships that are relevant to our study. The Bestwood Country Park encourages access by people from disadvantaged groups such as inner city communities, the elderly, people with disabilities, young people, people with mental health problems, autistic adults, people in hospices and members of ethnic minority communities.

Break Free is a 'walks pack' for the entire Greenwood Community Forest targeted at those with disabilities, the elderly and those recovering from illnesses. The pack was produced in partnership with the Countryside Agency, Nottinghamshire County Council and the Sensory Trust.

7.7.3 *Project Impact*

A meeting was held with the representative from the Disabilities Living Centre who participated in the preparation of the Break Free walks pack. Including beneficiaries from project inception was beneficial - *"I was part of the team and I felt that...that was important to me!"* Joan, as a wheelchair user (who prefers not to be called 'disabled'), was insistent that the objective of the walks pack is *"giving people the choice ... not telling somebody what is good for them, and that's what it's all about!"*

As such, information is just as important as facilities (improvement of which, is an *"ongoing process"*) in *facilitating access for everyone -"information is empowering...it's about informing people and letting them make up their minds about what they want to do"*. From the marketing perspective, attractive presentation and effective distribution were also seen as crucial in getting the information to the people who may be interested.

Although there are no figures to support it, the perception is that the Break Free walks pack has been successful in increasing participation in countryside access. Participation by other groups with mobility problems such as mothers with pushchairs have also increased.

The walks pack was also successful in opening the eyes of agency administrators to the various needs of countryside users - such as wheelchair users or those who may not have English as a first language. *"It is about giving opportunities to everybody...not about people who are a bit more privileged getting more than others which I think still happens in society"*. *In this sense, the project has deemed a success, it has "broken down barriers"*.

The walks are believed to contribute to the physical health and self-esteem of those who take part in them. *"If you feel good about yourself, your self esteem raises, you feel better health-wise...a positive image"*.

The consultant also met with three rangers from Bestwood Country Park. Working with many underrepresented social groups (those that are not "white, middle class, 2.4 kids, Volvo owners"), they have been innovative with initiatives such as Envirocamp (in partnership with Groundwork) a residential that targets young people. The core of their activity in the countryside is allowing people to get to know themselves and the natural environment.

The Park is active in trying to overcome what they perceive as key barriers - information, transportation, physical infrastructure for disabled users and cost factors. The focus is on making access sustainable and non-coercive. Sustainable in that it is independent of external assistance. Non-coercive in that barriers are only removed without obligating groups to access the park - *"if they don't want to do it that's great...but give them the choice, remove the barrier and if they don't want to go through, that's their choice!"*

In working with young people, the rangers see it as being important to give an accurate depiction of the countryside - no gimmicks to lure them into the parks and understanding that they may not *"get the same love of the place as we do"*. Sustainable access by young people is believed to have increased but no figures are available to substantiate this.

Community involvement and effective networking is seen as crucial to their twin aims of recreation and education. Having to deal with groups as diverse as HIV patients, school-aged children and physically challenged people require more of a 'community outreach' approach than simply a countryside access one.

The rangers stress that outcome based indicators do not effectively reflect the benefits that the park offers to users - particularly those from more challenging backgrounds. Benefits that the park offers to the community include *"social inclusion, (improved) quality of life, (community) regeneration and lifelong learning..."*.

The consultant also met with a representative of the Sikh community who spoke of her group's recreation in Bestwood Country Park. Access was facilitated with the aid of a partnership between Groundwork and Bestwood rangers.

Among the main barriers was a perception that only 'appropriate' uses of the park would be encouraged - *"we wanted to have a barbecue in Bestwood Park...(we thought that others would say) that this loud lot cannot have a barbecue in that place!"*

This particular barrier is in the process of being overcome as Sikhs and other ethnic minorities are increasingly accessing the park. The Sikh community undertakes both recreational and religious activity at Bestwood. One particular religious festival, the 300th anniversary of Vaisakhi, saw 300 trees being planted by the Sikh community - "*six double-decker buses were packed of the people...a barbeque was organised*". The particular project was funded by the Greenwood Partnership and the Countryside Agency, and was co-ordinated by the Bestwood Country Park Ranger Service and Groundwork Greater Nottingham's Green Connection project.

7.8 Antrim Borough Council

Formed in 1995 in Northern Ireland, the ARCHES (Assisting Randalstown Community (towards) Harmony (and) Economic Success) community group has completed conservation work on a path that leads from the town centre to the larger countryside. The path also serves to unite the Catholic and Protestant sides of the town in County Antrim.

7.8.1 Project History

7.8.2 Antrim Borough

Antrim Borough is situated north west of the city of Belfast and bordering the north and east shores of Lough Neagh. Historically a rural community, the main population centre (2 out of every 3 residents) lives in Antrim town.

There are also the satellite villages of Parkgate, Templepatrick, Toome, Randalstown and Crumlin scattered beyond. Analysis of the socio - economic groupings in the Borough reveals a very diverse mixture of urban and rural communities, affluent and deprived areas and private and Housing Executive estates.

Antrim Borough Council's countryside recreation service was established in late 1997 when an officer was appointed on a three-year contract. Such has been the progress of the service that the post has now been made permanent. Antrim Borough Council was the first NI local authority to develop a countryside recreation strategy for their area. One of the action points from the strategy was the establishment of a local countryside recreation Forum.

This Forum is now up and running, facilitated by the countryside recreation officer and consists of a wide range of local representatives with an interest in countryside recreation, including local community development groups.

7.8.1.2 Various Countryside Recreation Initiatives in the Borough

The Toome Canal Walk Project, is currently being developed in conjunction with Toome Industrial Development and Leisure (TIDAL is a local community development group). The project consists of the development of a pathway leading from the lockgates area at Toome canal to the Point at Lough Neagh. The area is currently in a neglected state. The project is consistent with both Antrim Borough Countryside Recreation Strategy objectives and those contained within TIDAL's Tourism Action Plan. It is also complementary to the work that was carried out by the community and the Woodland Trust on community woodland in the immediate area.

It is now highly likely that the project will be progressed with the aid of residual funding from the DSD Sub Programme II (via the Dept. of the Environment for NI). The path will also be dual use to facilitate the Lough Neagh Cycle Way passing 'off road' through the village.

The Conservation Volunteers Millennium Tree Campaign called "Tree's a Crowd" was another notable initiative. From December to February 1999/2000, a series of community tree planting events was organised in conjunction with Conservation Volunteers NI and local communities. The events involved active participation by a wide variety of local people. There were eight planting sessions altogether over a wide spread of sites throughout the borough. These events were well supported by local communities. In all around 1,600 trees were planted and approximately 500 people actively took part.

Finally there is the ARCHES community development group situated in the rural village of Randalstown (designated a conservation area) with a population of around 2,300. Formed in 1995, their achievements have included the illumination of a Viaduct, publishing a local newsletter, a cross community drop-in centre and the Bridging the Divide project (which will be our focus).

7.8.2 *Project Structure - ARCHES*

Randalstown ARCHES Association was formed in 1995 to plan and implement improvements in the community. The establishment of the group was also a response to religious polarisation within the community. ARCHES is a company limited by guarantee, consisting of members of all ages, genders and religions. The members that the consultant met seemed to be drawn from the varying strata of the local community.

The 13 elected Directors are responsible for planning and carrying out developments as detailed in their published Strategy Document. ARCHES uses office space in the company of one of its directors.

ARCHES managed the "Bridging the Divide" project. This involved the reinstatement of a former Railway Bridge and repair to a dismantled railway across a viaduct. Contractors did all construction work. It has provided an off road walk and cycleway across the village and access to open countryside. The path also serves to link the Catholic and Protestant sides of the village. The Council's Countryside Recreation service assisted and the pathway was officially opened in November 1998. The 'Viaduct Walk' as it is known is heavily used by all in the village, particularly children and young people - providing a 'countryside experience above the village'

The project's funding package consisted of funds from the EU's Special Support Programme for Peace & Reconciliation, ARCHES themselves (through sponsorship), Council and the Environmental Heritage Service. The council now maintains the pathway. The ARCHES community group has plans for future projects including the extension of this path, but funding has not yet been found and negotiation with neighbouring landowners is ongoing. At the same time, plans are underway to make ARCHES self funding within the next three years. A property has been acquired and will be refurbished with rental income allocated to group activity.

Part of this property was vacant and the other half came up for sale due to a business closing down. ARCHES undertook local negotiation to purchase. Funding from IFI (International Fund for Ireland) paid for the purchase and some re-building costs. Further re-building costs were funded by the DFD Programme through Peace & Reconciliation, Charities Lottery, LEADER II, Antrim Borough Council and Antrim Towns Development Company.

7.8.3 Project Impact

The consultant met with members of the ARCHES group, council employees as well as the mayor. The project is considered to be successful primarily in bringing the two communities closer together - "I don't think that there is any community group as proactive as ARCHES". In keeping with the theme of 'Bridging the Divide', the first people to walk across the path, when it was opened, were two men representing each of the religious communities.

Disability Action provided advice during the planning of the pathway. As a result, the path is wheelchair friendly.

A nursing home is opposite one end of the path (the end in the town centre). The path has now meant that residents / patients can use the path for strolls, and for the more able-bodied, as a path to the larger countryside on the other end of the pathway.

The consultant also met with an elderly man who was cycling along the pathway. He confessed to being very pleased with the work done and to using the pathway everyday.

Unfortunately, vandalism continues to be a nuisance along the pathway. On occasion, lights are broken, benches are damaged and offensive graffiti spray painted on the path surface. Council, who maintain the path and surrounding landscaped area, adopt, as far as is possible a zero-tolerance approach to damage. Significantly, trees planted by the community during the aforementioned Millennium Tree Campaign are rarely targeted. ARCHES asserts that this is the work of a few idle young people rather than anything more sinister. The community is believed to have largely rallied behind the ethos of the project.

The pathway leads to open countryside, much of which is owned by a large estate company. The landowners are not wholly opposed to public access in principle, although they currently operate limitations. They are not part of ARCHES but, have been becoming increasingly accommodating of the work that ARCHES carries out. The success of ARCHES is believed to have influenced the formation of other community groups both in the borough and beyond. ARCHES has representation on Antrim Borough Countryside Recreation Forum, and this is believed to have facilitated networking with other interest groups in the borough.

7.9 Black Environment Network

The Black Environment Network (BEN) is a UK wide non-profit organisation that encourages ethnic minority groups to access the countryside. In Wales, they were one of many partners in the 'Gateway Project', which sought to encourage underrepresented groups to access the countryside.

7.9.1 Project History

7.9.1.1 BEN

BEN stimulates and supports ethnic groups in environmental participation, which is relevant to their social and cultural needs. BEN works with organisations such as Greenpeace, the Ramblers' Association, Groundwork, the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts, English Nature, the Council for National Parks, the Centre for the Study of Environmental Change in promoting the understanding of the values of environmental sustainability within ethnic minority communities.

BEN is a membership organisation and has a UK wide network of over 600 members which bring statutory and voluntary organisations, academic and research institutions, community groups and individuals together to stimulate and develop ethnic minority participation in the environmental arena.

7.9.1.2 The 'Gateway Project'

Started in late 1999, the aim of this project is to enable access to the historic parks and gardens of Wales by as wide an audience as possible as part of The Millennium Festival Wales. To accomplish this aim, the project partners seek to:

- promote and facilitate free visits to historic parks and gardens in Wales by under-represented groups, for their enjoyment;
- enhance and develop continuing interest in the garden heritage of Wales, enabling the community to appreciate their historic parks and gardens; and
- encourage life-long learning about this aspect of Wales' heritage by developing an education programme for children and adults around the garden visits and their interpretation.

7.9.2 Project Structure - Gateway

The Gateway Project is being administered by the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, the lead partner in a consortium of other relevant charities. Other partners include the Prince's Trust Cymru, Age Concern.Cymru, the Sensory Trust and the Black Environment Network (BEN). It must be emphasised that BEN was one of many partners involved in this project. Partners were sought from among organisations that had experience in working with the under-represented groups identified.

The Gateway Project has funding to operate for 18 months (Heritage Lottery Fund) to the beginning of 2001, organising garden visits by under-represented groups. Fund-raising is ongoing as project partners seek to continue at least another three years. The under-represented groups identified, include people with disabilities, the elderly and infirm, families on low incomes, ethnic communities, children with special needs and schoolchildren.

Since September 1999 the Access Officer (Sharron Kerr) has been in place to co-ordinate these visits, carefully matching each site to its specific audience. Sixty-nine visits have taken place to December 2000. Visitor groups have included members of:

- Age Concern;
- the Stroke Association;
- Christian Lewis Children's Cancer Care;
- Ty Hafan Children's Hospice;
- Welsh Women's Aid;
- NSPCC Busy Bee Centre Gurnos;
- Swansea Bay Race Equality Council;
- Arthritis Care;
- the National Encephalitis Support Group;
- ABCD Cardiff (Improved Access for Black Chronically Sick and Disabled Children);
- the Princess Royal Trust for Carers;
- Carers National Association; and
- RNIB – Colwyn Bay Friendly Blind Club and the Pembrokeshire Blind Society.

In terms of the spaces allocated to BEN on the Gateway project, 10 visits had taken place to October 2000. The groups taken out include:

- Minority and Ethnic Women's Network (MEWN) Swansea;
- South Riverside Development Centre Women's Forum;
- Barnardos Family Project;
- Riverside Warehouse Youth Group
- Bangladeshi Association, Cardiff; and
- BAWSO (Women's Aid for Black and Ethnic Minority Women).

7.9.3 Project Impact - BEN's role

The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust (described as a "middle-class, white organisation") was aware of the limited audience for the gardens in Wales and decided to try to encourage under-represented groups to enjoy the gardens.

As one of the partner organisations, BEN was allocated between 300 and 400 places on trips to the countryside, over the life of the project. BEN's Siobhan Hayward sees this "brilliant" given the (often prohibitive) costs normally associated with taking a group to the countryside. Other barriers to countryside recreation that the project helped to address include information, transport and feelings of discomfort about visiting.

BEN sees the benefits of this project to include: *"relaxation", "social networking" and "broadening horizons...it inspired them so much...they didn't know...this existed"*. It has also translated into some groups accessing the countryside outside of the Gateway Project. BEN continues to look at ways of ensuring that the groups are able to access the countryside even after the Gateway Project has been concluded.

BEN allowed the beneficiaries to drive the project in that the site and characteristics of each visit was decided through consultation. The Gateway was a series of one-day visits only.

A focus group was also held with organisations which BEN has targeted in the project so far - the Riverside Warehouse (youth group), Riverside Women's Network, Swansea Bay Racial Equality Council, AWETU (mental health group for ethnic minorities) and Valleys Race Equality Council.

Barriers to access before the Gateway project included a fear of going (alone), lack of information, preference for gender separation on outings, inadequate transport, and for some, cost. The group seemed to agree that one of the greatest sources of satisfaction from the visits was the excitement of the children in the groups - *"they didn't want to leave"*. These very kids did not want to go in the first place - *"it would be boring...we would have nothin to do"*.

Another point made was that many people live and work in very urban areas. As such, the opportunity to visit the countryside is especially cherished - *"the noise they made...splashing each other, really having fun"*. Again they spoke of the kids coming from *"built up areas"* being given the opportunity to *"go wild...run about"*.

It should be noted that most of those in the focus groups were female, hence the attention given to the perspective of women and children. In addition, despite consultant efforts to focus on Gateway, the group often commented on trips that took place through other BEN initiatives.

Some of the trips involved members of different groups and ethnic communities. From this point of view, *"it was nice to get the different cultures and groups to actually work together...cause usually they are out in their own little worlds...no matter what you do, you know in school they might mix, but after school time you might get your odd groups but it is nice to mix...three or four different cultures all sleeping under one roof...cooking together, eating together..."*. Even political differences were forgotten while out in the countryside - *"...Iraqis sitting next to Iranians..."*.

For those with mental-health difficulties, being out in the countryside was a particularly touching experience. One mental health group worker noted *"one client (who) has mental health problems and he has learning difficulties as well...he says very very little...but when we were walking he said to me - I'm enjoying myself...I'm having a good day today! - it would bring tears to your eyes to listen to someone say that ...just walking through the park"*.

Others likened the feeling of being in the countryside to a religious experience. A follower of the Bahai faith spoke of the outing helping him *"to see what beauty the Lord has given to mankind..."*. A member of the mental health group is said to have commented on another park outing *"it is very spiritual...I would like to come back here..."*.

Some groups and individuals doubted whether they would access the countryside after Gateway. There are groups who have already accessed the countryside outside of Gateway. Individuals expressed preference for accessing as part of a structured group outing - *"going as a group you enjoy yourself more..."*. In fact, no one expressed an intention to access the countryside outside of a group outing.

Great interest was shown in doing trips with different groups - *"people can build friendships"*. It was seen as a great opportunity for networking with people with similar backgrounds or even living within the same neighbourhood.

The cost of hiring coaches for these trips were discussed as being prohibitive for groups seeking to access the countryside outside of Gateway (or similar schemes). Discussions were already being held with the local authority about support for this. One group thought it may be worthwhile to start charging - even a token sum to help defray the cost. Another thought it is better to get their group accustomed to going out first, and then start charging - *"it has to be a stage process"*. Regardless of their approach, most groups realised that self-financing outings was essential to keeping it sustainable.

7.10 Mendip Hills AONB

Mendip Hills AONB, in partnership with Alvis Bros. Ltd, a local cheese maker and farming business, formed a 'Farming and Countryside Education Partnership'. This popular initiative is aimed at urban schools in less favoured areas around Bristol. Students learn about food production, the environment, and much more that is directly related to the national curriculum.

7.10.1 Project History

Designated in 1972, 198 sq. km of the central and western Mendip Hills forms one of only 41 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England and Wales. Some parts of the area are intensively farmed, others are unimproved grassland and rough grazing. The Mendip Hills AONB is a partnership of local communities, local authorities, interest groups and national agencies promoting environmental and economic initiatives.

One such partnership is the 'Farming and Countryside Education Partnership' which began in 1981. In this initiative, Alvis Bros. Ltd, a local agroprocessor, sought to educate young people on how food is produced. The desire was to reduce the knowledge gap "between those that receive food and those that produce it". Under this scheme, schools visited Alvis Bros. on an occasional basis to carry out project work such as tree planting, pond dipping and to look at farm animals. This situation was less than satisfactory however, as there was a lack of structure or continuity in the learning process for students and staff.

The scheme was restructured in 1997 in a way that fit into the national curriculum.

7.10.2 Project Structure

Alvis Bros. Ltd is essentially a family owned business comprised mainly of two limited liability companies. Of the 2250 acres under production, 1950 is owned and the company employs 85 people and produces Farmhouse Cheddar Cheese, pork / bacon products and slaughter pigs. Cropping consists of 1400 acres of ryegrass lays, 50 acres of permanent pasture and 800 acres of forage maize and arable crops.

From 1997, Nick Baker, Farm Manager at Lower Stock Farm (part of Alvis Bros.) sought to organise an educational programme that would fit into the national curriculum, involving students of all ages through field and classroom work. On a voluntary basis, visits to schools are also undertaken - some based on the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Wardens from Mendip Hills AONB also play an invaluable role in facilitating visits. With the assistance of North Somerset Education Authority, Windwhistle Primary School in Weston-super-Mare was among the first identified for this project in 1998. It is located in the middle of Bourneville Estate with many of its students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Wyvern Comprehensive School started visits from 1999. The project does not usually include other schools who wish to visit on a 'one off' basis - outside of a structured programme, although those can be accommodated.

Planned through the National Curriculum units of work, the aims of the partnership are to:

- develop the children's sense of place;
- give them knowledge of a different lifestyle;
- develop skills of observation, measurement and discussion in a real context;
- make links for children between climate, land use and economic reality and to
- help children make judgement based on first hand experience.

There is the potential for increasing the number of farms working with classes and to improve the class facilities on existing farms to better cater for larger student numbers. In addition, protective clothing and coach transport are also proving to be limiting factors. Lack of funds is the major obstacle to these facility improvements, but the partners are now in the process of putting in bids for further funding. Outside of the potential to reach greater numbers, health and safety concerns (such as salmonella scares) underline the need for facility improvements - *"you constantly have to watch them..."*.

Subjects covered in the scheme include: biology and soil science, crops and climate, map skills, wildlife and habitats, economics and physics. Nick Baker insists though that *"anything that can be done in the classroom can be done out here!"*.

7.10.3 Project Impact

In a document made available to the consultants, the of Windwhistle Primary School Headteacher (Ms. Wendy Marriott) notes that Alvis Bros. were *"very sympathetic to our needs to offer children a cultural as well as an educational experience, rooting the children in the history and geography of their own country"*. Aside from impacting on the student's *"skills and understanding"*, the partnership with the company has *"meant a great deal to the whole school community...children know Farmer Nick and Les from the Mendip Centre as friends of the school"*.

Not just the students but staff have gained as well. Ms. Marriott notes that *"teachers have gained from working alongside other professionals to plan for the children's learning"*.

In terms of the stated objectives, the visits to the farm have "met our intentions and exceeded them" as *"children retain what they have learnt because they have been motivated by both the visits and the people"*. Furthermore, the Headteacher conducted one of these visits with one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools who felt that "it was one of the most significant things we were doing at the school".

The consultants met with Nick Baker of Alvis Bros. and two AONB wardens on the Lower Stock Farm a mere two hours after a class had left the farm.

Five schools, in all about 1500 kids are part of their structured programme. Nick Baker says that it is not about education but about *"identification...about getting some identity.... about actually belonging somewhere...building a link...these kids are deprived of any identity whatsoever"*. The only identity that these kids have he believes are *"chips, Neighbours, East Enders...Sky television"*. An AONB warden added that *"education is about improving people, allowing them to make informed decisions...these kids were realising that there was a link between animals and food production"*, especially given the need to counteract the urban perception of rural life which "is about 40 or 50 years" out of date.

The AONB wardens are personally amazed about the knowledge gap among urban students when it comes to the rural environment - *"wool grows on trees...one kid holds this egg up to me and says what's inside of this? ...he didn't have a clue"*. They also believe that the project helps young people respect their environment *"a sense of respect comes from a sense of belonging...everybody needs to belong which is probably why we don't get the access to the countryside...there was no sense of belonging"*. The project also works with a young offender programme, allowing young people to learn valuable skills - *"one even wants to come back and to do volunteer work!"*.

The AONB wardens and Alvis Bros. are quite disappointed by the response of the local authorities to the project, what has accomplished so far and the vast potential they see in this initiative. *"This is a major initiative that is providing really good results"* but the local authorities are not as enthusiastic as they would like - especially in terms of funding. Alvis Bros. and the Mendip AONB wardens continue to fund the project.

The Mendip AONB wardens budget is local authority funded, and funding from central government/extra local education authority is being pursued.

7.11 Glodwick Community Outreach Project

A partnership between the Glodwick Community Outreach Project (GCOP) and the Oldham Council was started in April. This 'Healthy Walks' initiative called 'Pehla Kadam' (Urdu) has succeeded in encouraging participation from Asian women in the Glodwick area.

7.11.1 Project History

Oldham is generally considered to be among the UK's most deprived areas. Before the Glodwick Community Outreach Project was launched in 1999, the Oldham Council through the Oldham Countryside Service, tried with limited success to encourage minority ethnic groups to access the countryside. The countryside service continues to have success facilitating disabled access (primarily wheel chair access). There are sensory gardens, tactile maps, audio-tape guides and one of the rangers is able to 'speak' Sign Language for hearing-impaired users.

The Glodwick Community Outreach Project (GCOP) was launched in the last quarter of 1999 and has funding until 2003. The GCOP is funded by the government's Challenge Fund (for economic regeneration), Oldham Council, West Pennine Health Authority and the North West Arts Board.

This community economic development project aims to develop the pre-employment skills of Glodwick residents through a variety of sports, cultural and health training projects. Of special interest are ethnic minority residents between 16 and 25 years old and women - this area has a large Asian population. Traditionally, uptake of sport, health and cultural initiatives has been low.

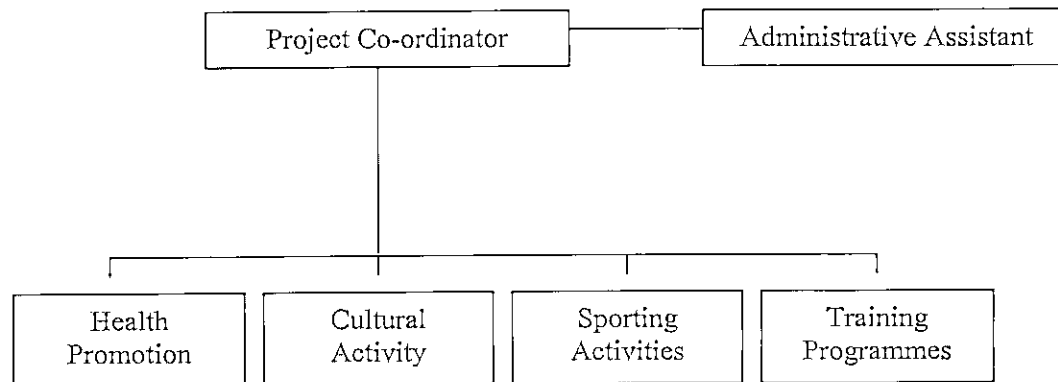
Aside from Pehla Kadam (healthy walks in and around Oldham for women) and other achievements, in the GCOP's short life thus far:

- 19 Residents qualified as community sports leaders
- 8 Residents successfully completed SITO Security Training
- 9 existing local businesses have received advice and support from GCOP and Oldham chamber of commerce.

7.11.2 Project Structure

The GCOP community regeneration project has six full time staff. The aim of Pehla Kadam is to promote physical well being and promote the use of local green spaces in the Oldham area. The initiative is undertaken in partnership with Environmental Health, Community Groups and Park Rangers in surrounding areas. The GCOP structure (see Fig. 13) is as follows:

Figure 13 - GCOP structure



The health promotion development worker (Nigat Ara) as part of her remit has identified Glodwick residents perceived barriers to accessing walking initiatives. She has worked in partnership with Oldham Countryside Rangers to raise participants awareness of local historical areas. This has also included addressing different methods of promoting local scenic areas.

Pehla Kadam consists of (local Asian) women only, weekly walks (every Thursday morning). They are limited to 12 women because of the size of the mini bus and the fact that the majority of women do not drive. Similar projects have been undertaken with Afro-Caribbean and Indian Associations but have not been as successful.

Pehla Kadam project partners include Environment Health, various community groups and the Oldham Countryside Service. The rangers at the Oldham Countryside Service are of the opinion that barriers to ethnic minority access to the countryside include lack of information and fear of trespassing. The GCOP adds fears about their safety, language barriers and lack of confidence as being barriers to participation.

Part of Pehla Kadam's objective is to train some of the women to enable them to lead walks on their own, until then they will be dependent on the GCOP. Another obstacle however, is the need for appropriate gear to use on walks.

7.11.3 Project Impact

The consultant met with members of the Oldham Countryside Service as well as staff at the GCOP. For religious reasons, the project beneficiaries were unavailable. The GCOP Project Co-ordinator (Steven Longden) is of the opinion that Pehla Kadam has been effective in enhancing participants' physical and mental health. Given the cultural context however, the project has also helped to overcome the sense of isolation felt by some of the women. The GCOP Health Promotion Development Worker (Nigat Ara) believes that the women are very appreciative of the initiative and are willing to go regardless of the weather - *"at the end of the day, they just want to go for a walk"*. Benefits include *"bonding" with others and getting exercise - "it's a cheap way of working out really"*.

She believes the program to be sustainable in that some women are already venturing (outside of this program) to certain parks with their *families "which is really good cause that's one of the outcomes that we want...so that they can go themselves and introduce their families"*. Nigat is very grateful to the Oldham Countryside Service (especially the female rangers) for helping with transport and providing guidance on walks. The service has begun discussions about produce multilingual walk leaflets (the main minority language in Glodwick is Kashmiri).

Although concerned about the short time-span for the GCOP (terminates in 2003), the Health Promotion Development Worker believes that the program helps combat isolation for some. The walks also help increase confidence, improve the ability to communicate with others, to work in a group and it is also good for mental health. Participants range in age from those in their twenties to women in their sixties and they actively help in planning walks.

Walks range from a brief stroll to six-hour walks. When possible, guides provide historical backgrounds to the sites visited. As Nigat Ara also speaks Urdu, she is able to translate the guide's descriptions when necessary *"it was an educational visit as well"*. Unfortunately, resources remain an impediment. Nigat remembers *"times when I have had to turn women away"* because of limited seating in the bus (12 people). Other equipment such as wet weather gear, also restrict participation and limit possible routes.

After each walk, participants themselves evaluate and make recommendations, through written questionnaires or verbally. In the long term, Nigat would like to work with local GPs to promote the health aspect of walking in the countryside to patients. A 'walk to prescription' scheme is already envisioned.

7.12 Youth Route 70

Formed in 1991 by a group of young people who were concerned about the lack of facilities in the Douglas Valley (in Motherwell, Scotland) for young people. Youth Route 70 is a community-based project that operates in partnership with the South Lanarkshire Council. A major part of this initiative involves countryside recreation and it has received many awards for its efforts. Activities include canoeing, skiing, hillwalking and mountain biking.

7.12.1 Project History

Formed in 1991, by young people who believed that no activities were available to them in the Douglas Valley area of Motherwell. The nearest activities were believed to be some 15 - 27 miles away. Supported by Community Education, an application to the Rank Foundation (Youth or Adult programme) resulted in £175 000 in funding which was to carry the project for 5 years.

The project is based in a youth centre that can accommodate 90 people. The project has had a number of accomplishments. These would include the B P Grizzly Challenge; finalist in the Scottish Television plc – Scottish Community Education Council "Group Learners Awards"; Certificate in recognition in The Royal Anniversary Trust's Challenge; and Honourable Mention in The Rural Community Initiative Award.

In terms of individual achievements, there are a number of Duke of Edinburgh awards holders, members of the South Lanarkshire Youth Council, some members have participated in the Tall Ships experience, and members were 'Journey of a Lifetime' Trust finalists.

Outdoor activities have included canoeing, skiing, hillwalking, drama, mask making, culture exchanges, conservation work, mountain biking and even fund raising for a brand new mini bus. Youth route 70's mission statement is:

"Youth Route 70 inspires young people to take responsibility to make a positive difference to their own and others personal development through informal education."

The objectives of the project are:

- to provide a meeting place for young people;
- to give young people say in what they do;
- to explore a range of issues e.g. AIDS, alcohol, health, relationships between generations etc.;
- to learn to run social and fund raising events for themselves and other young people;
- to develop a range of skills e.g. Video, photography, outdoor education, caring etc.; and
- to let adults see that they can be responsible, run their own project and make decisions for themselves.

7.12.2 Project Structure

The project is run by a management committee, which comprises eight young people and seven adults with the young people holding the officer's posts and also having the casting vote "*young people make decisions, adults facilitate or guide*". The committee is responsible for the management of staff, budget monitoring, fund raising, applying for grants, and preparation of the development plan. There is one full time Youth Worker (Paul Smith), and some trainees who are on work placements from the local college. Youth Route 70 has 150 members on register but the 'open door' policy means that many more than this participate in the centre's activities.

Youth Route 70 operates in partnership with the South Lanarkshire Council. The council has been very helpful in areas such as providing computers and financing internet access and other bills. The Countryside Ranger Service works with Youth Route 70 in outdoor education activities. The group also works with the Kings Cross Youth Project (London) and the Bengali Project (London). This particular relationship has seen exchange visits, joint activities and information sharing.

Members meet on a regular basis with the project worker to plan and run programmes and fund raise for these programmes through a wide range of social events such as discos, sponsored walks, prize bingo nights etc. The project is however, very dependent on grants. Grants have been received from Lloyds TSB, Fairfield Millennium Awards and the Scottish Executive. Of immediate concern is that the project is due to be wound up in April 2001 because funding has dried up. The Youth Worker is actively working with the council to source funding to continue work.

7.12.3 *Project Impact*

Youth Route 70 is quite proud of winning the BP Youth Clubs Scotland Grizzly Challenge which resulted in five members and one leader won the holiday of a lifetime to anywhere in the world. The group chose to go to India for 14 days. Such achievements undoubtedly enhance the self-esteem and inspire the young people involved onto achieving more.

For some grants, Youth Route 70 has had to quantify intended results (such as ten workshops on healthy living and 20 people through the Duke of Edinburgh scheme). The Youth Worker prefers not to quantify aims but focus on quality "*good youth work is not about numbers but about the young people*". He believes that this tendency can sometimes be counterproductive.

Youth Route 70 has relatively access to the countryside than other more 'urban' initiatives. As such, only financial resources and the "imagination" of the group limit the project. Joint activities with the Kings Cross Youth Project however, have allowed for young people who have never been outside London, accessing the countryside and even riding a bike for the first time.

There is no formal procedure or documentation tracking the activity of those 'graduating' from the programme. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in terms of countryside recreation, there is little access after the programme. Nevertheless, many have returned to volunteer, train as youth workers or seek qualifications. Some of these have gone on to do youth work in other areas. One student is known to have gone onto pursue a university degree while another has joined the RAF.

In general, participants in the Youth Route 70 project have all "recognised the role of the countryside" in their lives. While this may not translate into sustained participation in countryside recreation, it has benefited the young people in a wide range of ways.

SECTION V - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

8. Key Drivers Behind 'Effective' Initiatives

This section evaluates the case studies which have sought to increase inclusiveness in countryside recreation, with a view to identifying the key factors driving their success (however defined), as well as identifying the factors that limit the success of the cases. Case studies had different strengths and weaknesses.

There are a number of factors that are associated with increased (and sustainable) participation of previously under-represented or excluded groups in countryside recreation. Amongst these factors, a number combine to create greater likelihood of success. These are discussed below.

Rather fewer factors emerged that constrained success. In part, the research methods selected made it harder to identify limiting factors, in that the case studies were selected on the basis of their known success (loosely defined by project facilitators). Nevertheless, a number of facilitators and focus group participants commented on the factors constraining their project, and these factors are likely to be significant factors detracting from the success of other projects that seek to enhance inclusiveness in countryside recreation.

The literature review highlighted certain factors limiting the participation of excluded groups. The case studies allowed an informal appraisal of the extent to which these participation barriers had been removed or remained.

The literature review reveals evidence of social exclusion in countryside leisure. At a macro-level, it is possible to identify overarching social and economic forces that create differential life chances for different groups and which inhibit recreational participation of some people. The substantial under-representation of certain groups in countryside recreation, including poor people, ethnic minorities and disabled groups, are suggestive of social exclusion. Some have argued (Emmett 1970; Harrison 1993) that these exclusionary forces are reinforced by institutional responses, which reflect the disposition of power in contemporary society and thus compound the problem. The recent emphasis in policy on social inclusion seeks to redress the balance and challenge the forces of exclusion.

At the level of the individual, there is a degree of freedom to choose how to spend the leisure pound. Within the constraints of personal and domestic budgets, health, culturally informed preferences etc., individuals can either participate in or avoid countryside recreation activity. Non-involvement is not necessarily associated with exclusion, although exclusionary policies and practices may influence non-participation of certain groups. Throughout this study, efforts have been made to avoid the assumption that non-participation equals exclusion. Through the case studies, it has been possible to explore a range of examples of projects, which have promoted social inclusion and enhanced the opportunities for groups with traditionally low participation rates in countryside recreation.

Whilst the literature review highlighted certain factors limiting participation of excluded groups in countryside leisure, the case studies offer practical insights into how more inclusive approaches have been developed and what has been achieved to date. The case studies explored in this study reveal both social exclusion and actions that have been taken in a number of projects to ameliorate its effects. Few of those involved in such projects are naïve enough to think that they can alter the overarching structural causes of exclusion. However, most believe that their constructive action can benefit excluded groups and create new opportunities in countryside leisure for the project beneficiaries which, in the absence of the project, would not have occurred, and which, at the end of the project, might be sustained.

Cultural preferences will continue to shape leisure demands. Young adults are likely to be less interested in countryside recreation than older people. This may be less an indication of exclusion, than a reflection of the different ways in which young people choose to spend their (leisure £), especially when later in their lives they may engage in countryside recreation. However, the countryside is a complex cultural product, produced and reproduced, increasingly by the actions of public agency rather than private action. The agency responses to the reproduction of the countryside and the creation of leisure opportunity may be enabling (new access laws, provision of country parks) or constraining (closure periods on access, failure to provide facilities that interest and excite young adults or ethnic minority users). So what appears to be straightforward consumer choice is culturally influenced, agency mediated and individually chosen.

A shift towards a more inclusive countryside may cause friction. The contemporary countryside has many different groups residing within it, and an even greater number placing demands upon it (Macnaghten and Urry 1998).

These multiple stakeholders or communities of interest are likely to try to shape the policy process to sustain their interests, even at the expense of other groups.

In their different ways, the case studies explored have given insights into the ways in which social exclusion in countryside leisure can be addressed and hopefully reduced. The range of projects includes examples from the groups most widely regarded as experiencing social exclusion in the countryside, and yield grounds for optimism that exclusion is being addressed and at least partially resolved.

The 12 case studies revealed a range of factors that lay behind more successful attempts to enhance inclusiveness in countryside leisure. Discussions with both project team members and beneficiaries enabled triangulation, in order to sharpen understanding of the drivers of success, and to highlight the likely factors limiting success. Seven factors stand out as significant contributors to project success:

- That they are community driven (rather than imposed from the top down)
- That the project empowers beneficiaries rather than just provides recreational opportunity
- That increased social cohesion is an objective of the project (whilst respecting cultural diversity)
- That projects are not so much driven by an individual organisation but by partnerships
- That projects are developed not only by countryside managers but also by specialist outreach staff
- That project success is not assessed solely by quantitative indicators
- That projects are effectively marketed

Each will be considered in turn.

8.1 Community Driven

Projects, which are initiated within and/or championed by particular communities of interest (interest groups), tend to be more successful. The term 'community driven' focuses on project models that are initiated and/or 'championed' by the community of potential recreationists, rather than the agencies or institutions that administer projects. Amongst the cases studies examined in this report, Antrim Borough Council, the Big Issue Hill Walking Club, Mendip AONB and Youth Route 70 are good examples of this. Thus, in community-driven projects, there will be an emphasis on 'bottom-up' initiative rather than paternalistic top-down interventions. Community not agency has been the principal source of the initiative.

Without getting involved in the contentious debates over the nature of the term 'community' (see Liepins (2000) for a recent review), it can be loosely described as a social construct as well as a social phenomenon involving people, meanings, practices and spaces. The pluralistic nature of contemporary society means that there is not a single community of interest but many competing communities of interest. There are likely to be very different circumstances from project to project, where enhancement of inclusiveness is sought. In some cases, enhancing the interests of one excluded group may have adverse effects on the interests of another. Where the aspirations of different stakeholders are acknowledged, and the interests of different groups can be reconciled in recreational provision, the community can be seen to lie at the centre of the project. In such circumstances, projects are more likely to succeed.

Community-driven project models may have several potential advantages over those that are not. These include:

- *Higher levels of participation by user groups who feel an enhanced sense of ownership.* The Big Issue Hill Walking Club has to turn away people, whereas BEN's project users spoke of people sometimes not turning up and buses not being full. Whereas the Big Issue Hill Walking Club has grown out of the interests of employees and Big Issue sellers, BEN projects have a slightly more top-down character.
- *Greater commitment and long-term sustainability.* Ownership of a project by a community of interest enhances the likelihood of sustainability. Community-driven demands lie behind the formation and structure of the project and give it shape and identity. In other projects, core elements of structure and design are dependent on agencies. For example, changes in council personnel (and institutional objectives?) within the PACE project appears to have negatively impacted on its continuity and sustainability, whereas the high level of community participation in the Antrim project suggests better likelihood of sustainability.
- *The project remains focused on issues of importance to the community,* as opposed to issues of importance to institutions. Without latent demand in the community in question, uptake and engagement are likely to be more limited. Local community interests may at times converge and at others diverge from the prevailing agendas of agencies and local authorities. The response to the Mendip Hills AONB project suggests the model is appreciated by key stakeholder groups but to a lesser extent by local authorities who have yet to come out in support of it.

Yet community-driven project models are not without potential drawbacks. These may include:

- *Conflicting agendas, motives and personalities.* The Northampton Council project at Brixworth Country Park believe that social inclusion initiatives at the park should not be devolved, given the conflicting objectives of the various interest groups. They have consequently adopted a more powerful mediating role to try to circumvent perceived problems arising from too much control by the communities of interest.
- *Minority interests going unrecognised.* If either majority vote or the opinions of a vocal sub-group drive decisions, the risk of others being marginalised is greater. The Glodwick Community Outreach Project's Pelah Kadam targets women only, who for cultural reasons, may not be targeted at all if the project decisions were made by the Glodwick community. Active citizenship does not ensure that all stakeholder groups are represented, and in some circumstances may weaken the voice of the least articulate and powerful.

Community-driven project models are not a guarantee of success. In certain circumstances they can be extremely effective, while in others, their community-driven nature can be a limiting factor. In social inclusion initiatives, some level of participation is desirable. The nuances of the individual case must be examined to help decide how much participation and community involvement is appropriate.

8.2 Empowerment as an objective

Empowerment of particular communities of interest can be seen to lie at the heart of many of the projects and can be considered as one of the key drivers of success. Amongst disadvantaged groups, empowerment may arise endogenously, when particular issues cause people to work together to face challenges.

School closures or mass redundancy because of a factory closure can precipitate the release of energy and its focus on local projects. However, these will rarely be exclusively recreational. Recreational examples of empowerment are usually stimulated or catalysed by an agent acting on behalf of the community, but create empowerment because their actions are premised on a strategy to cede power and control to the beneficiary group.

Empowerment can be described as a process, by which an entity, individual or group is invested with power, especially legal power or official authority. In the context of social development and inclusion projects, this concept is very topical and much debated.

A report from the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD 1995) asserts that empowerment cannot be given, it must be self-generated. In the context of social inclusion in countryside recreation, empowerment would seek to enable targeted groups to access the countryside should they choose so to do. Some of the cases that stood out as actively seeking to facilitate empowerment were the Big Issue Hill Walking Club, the National Trust Inner City Project, Northampton County Council, Greenwood Community Forest project, Glodwick Community Outreach project, Youth Route 70 and Fairbridge. In all these cases, although different bodies had sought to facilitate the project, they were keen to engage with and empower (to varying degrees) those, whose opportunities the project sought to enhance.

Project models that actively promote empowerment of targeted groups as one of their objectives may realise certain benefits, which include:

- *Project sustainability.* Groups that are empowered may continue the activity that the project initiated beyond the formal life of the project. This occurs as individuals begin to see countryside recreation as part of an expanded 'opportunity set' when considering how to spend their leisure time. The Glodwick Community Outreach project's Pelah Kadam is already seeing participants accessing the countryside outside of structured visits. Thus the issue is not strictly the sustainability of the project, but the sustainability of the recreational activities (or removal of barriers to inclusion) generated by the actions of the project.
- *Enhancement of self-esteem.* This is a frequently cited benefit and one that benefits users far beyond the scope of the project. It is a benefit to society as a whole. Fairbridge uses countryside recreational activity as part of a wider package of activities to develop skills and self-esteem among the disadvantaged young adults who are their clients. Projects, which empower individuals, can be seen as actively contributing to enhanced levels of social capital.
- *The group itself helps to perpetuate the project.* This occurred with the National Trust Inner City project where participants give their time to raise funds for the National Trust. In both the National Trust project and Youth Route 70, beneficiaries have gone on to become project officers / facilitators. In the case of Youth Route 70, beneficiaries have gone on to work with youth outreach projects elsewhere in the UK. Further, in the Big Issue Hill Walking Club, the overall aim is to skill the disadvantaged group to take ownership of the club.

Club members have supported themselves to go on mountain skill courses (at subsidised rates) in ways that will help the ownership of the initiative to shift from the core staff at Big Issue Scotland to the club members, predominantly those who are homeless and selling the Big Issue.

Project models that have empowerment as an objective are not without potential drawbacks. Such drawbacks may include:

- *Empowerment is not easily quantifiable and therefore justifiable and defensible* as a project aim. In both Youth Route 70 and the National Trust Inner City project, there were demands to quantify project output which were seen as threatening project quality in favour of quantitative indicators.
- *Putting project officers out of business as people simply choose not to enjoy the countryside.* This a very real possibility as projects often find that intended beneficiaries (like the Sikh community in the Greenwood case) simply do not see the countryside as facilitators do. As such, when groups are given support in gaining access, as groups were in PACE (ethnic minorities), BEN and Fairbridge, they can choose not to continue accessing the countryside outside of the project actions.
- *Putting off traditional countryside users.* The Greenwood case was the only one where this sensitive point was raised. It is possible that when under-represented groups access the countryside in non-traditional ways (from using wheel chairs to engaging in religious ceremonies), traditional users may be put off. This phenomenon of competing interests and a desire for exclusive use is not uncommon and is recognised as a feature of some recreational sites as they pass through a life cycle of development and use by different groups. It is possible that it is exacerbated when the new users represent a very different set of interests and have very different demands to existing users.

8.3 Social Cohesion as an Objective

Increasing social cohesion can be seen as a desirable attribute of projects, but also as a contributor to project success. Especially where access is contested, projects that engender greater levels of cohesion amongst different stakeholders affected by a project will reduce barriers to participation and enhance the likelihood of project success. Where projects acted in ways that helped to welcome previously excluded groups (rather than make them feel threatened), projects were more likely to succeed. The Mendips AONB initiative stood out as one that sought to build bridges between groups and enhance social cohesion.

In the context of countryside recreation, there is the danger of conceiving of countryside access projects as a tool for encouraging under-represented groups to access, while expecting them to enjoy the countryside in the same manner as represented groups. It is generally accepted that certain under-represented groups do not access the countryside because they do not feel welcome. A sense of 'belonging' or at least 'welcome' for the beneficiaries is likely to influence project success. Projects which nurture activities and opportunities which leave the intended beneficiaries feeling uncomfortable and uncertain are far more likely to founder.

Partially based on the premise that underrepresented groups do not access the countryside because they may often feel unwelcome, all the projects profiled had social cohesion (in some way) among their objectives. Projects like Fairbridge, the Big Issue Hill Walking Club, Greenwood, the National Trust Inner City project, Mendip AONB and Northampton seem to have succeeded in allowing participants to feel 'welcome' and 'included' as they are. Greenwood and Northampton in particular stand out for allowing rather non-traditional uses of public space (a religious festival concert and outdoor music festival).

The National Trust Inner City project stood out for almost turning over the day to day running of the project to their members. Elderly women in particular admitted to feeling previously excluded from normal social activity and to regaining a sense of purpose through a project which was "giving them their life back". The Big Issue is also going a long way in using the countryside to reintegrate their members into 'mainstream' society.

Where social cohesion is an important project objective the benefits are similar to those found where empowerment was an objective. Benefits include better project sustainability, enhancement of self-esteem and the group itself perpetuating the project, both through their own enhanced capacity to organise and engage in recreation, and in the succour which they find from supportive organisations.

Drawbacks include the problem that social cohesion is not easily quantifiable and therefore justifiable / defensible as a project aim and the potential of new demand segments to deter traditional countryside users.

The one underrepresented group that none of the projects profiled seemed to have been able to encourage to access the countryside beyond the project was young people. Admittedly, Fairbridge and Youth Route 70 do not have this as an objective, but see the countryside as a tool in helping their members / clients (re-) integrate into 'mainstream' society. To this extent, they appear to have been successful.

In the case of the Big Issue Hill-Walking Club, some of their members were young and highly enthusiastic new recruits who strongly expressed their desire to sustain their newly developed access to the countryside, although at present they still depended largely on the club to secure access to the countryside.

8.4 Promotion of Partnerships

Because few of the institutions involved in the projects examined had the resources to go it alone, partnership was often a necessary means of pursuing the aim of greater social inclusion in countryside recreation. A partnership can be described as a relationship between individuals or groups that is characterised by mutual co-operation and responsibility, for the achievement of a specified goal or goals. The National Trust Inner City Project (and to a certain extent Fairbridge) are exceptions in that they have sufficient resources, but the majority of the projects benefited from formal or informal partnerships with a range of institutions and groups.

Partnerships are not simply about accessing resources that would be unavailable to a single organisation. They are also (especially with grass roots partnerships) about strengthening a community's capacity to effect change by building leadership and social capital more generally among local residents and organisations. Antrim Council's project is a shining example of this.

For most of the projects, external agencies that were also project partners assisted in creating an effective project, especially in the start-up phase. The experience of some of the partners enabled them to act as midwives at the birth of the project and trouble-shooters early in the life of the projects. The breadth of experience brought together a wider array of skills than could be found in a single organisation in ways that substantially strengthened projects

Project models that actively promote institutional partnerships may realise certain benefits, which include:

- *Access to greater and more varied resources and knowledge sharing.* In the BEN project, BEN was brought in by the lead organisation (the Welsh Historic Garden Trust) because of their extensive experience in dealing with minority ethnic communities. In some of the other projects, groups with experience in community outreach work partner with ranger services for guidance on countryside access. Perhaps PACE would have been more effective (the ethnic minority part of their wide-ranging activity) if they had partnered with an ethnic minority community group.

- *Building social capital.* Serageldin and Grootaert (1997, p. 44) see social capital as the glue that holds society together. Social capital is argued to have an individual and institutional component (Uphoff 1997; Krishna 1997). Institutions working together can help bond a community closer together. Projects provide the opportunity for unifying actions.
- *Partnership with user groups leads to a sense of ownership.* The Antrim Borough Council and ARCHES partnership are an excellent example where the user group (ARCHES) feels a strong sense of project ownership.

Project models that feature partnerships are not without potential drawbacks. Such drawbacks may include:

- *Conflicting agendas, motives and personalities.* Fortunately, in the partnerships profiled, this was not uncovered, but is a recognised feature of some partnerships.
- *Decisions take longer to be made and the authority mandate may be unclear.* Fortunately, in all the partnerships profiled, a lead partner ensured that this did not happen.

8.5 The 'Right' People - 'Outreach' Staff vs. 'Countryside' Staff

Projects that engaged outreach staff rather than exclusively countryside management staff were more successful in engendering participation. Community outreach is based on close community-based action, where engagement with particular communities of interest (interest groups) is the focus of work. Countryside management has often been driven by a rather different ethos, with resource protection figuring more prominently. Projects that were effective in enabling participation by underrepresented groups were able to draw on both skill sets.

Enabling underrepresented groups to access the countryside requires not only countryside knowledge but community outreach ability as well. As such, the lines between the two can and should sometimes be blurred. Some rangers and countryside managers have highly developed outreach skills. Equally, some outreach staff have empathy and understanding of the resources of the countryside.

However, in almost all cases examined it was not the 'technical' skills of the project staff that determined project success but more ill-defined personal attributes that include a range of leadership and management skills.

Antrim's ARCHES group argued that the single most important resource to have in place for a successful project was 'people'. They believe that the right people can attract and bid for more funds or devise effective strategies. These people are key agents in designing, attracting support and sustaining project momentum. In many instances, interpersonal skills are arguably more important than technical (countryside management) expertise. Technical skills can be learned, bought, or volunteered, but the ability to relate easily with a wide range of people, to give them confidence, to recognise and appreciate the abilities they already have and to provide the social glue that holds projects together is a crucial factor in project success. Only Fairbridge appears to have both skill sets in-house. Approximately half of their staff has some sort of outdoor training, and all are experienced (and many, qualified) youth outreach workers.

Projects such as the Big Issue Hill Walking Club, the National Trust Inner City project, Northampton County Council, Greenwood Community Project and Glodwick Community Outreach project formed partnerships that enabled them to effectively provide both skill sets. Many of the countryside staff in the more effective partnerships identified with a community outreach mandate. Many countryside service personnel have undergone disability awareness training, with, for example, rangers in Glodwick learning sign language, and one even considered learning Urdu.

Other projects may have had their effectiveness compromised by their inability to provide both countryside and community outreach skills. This particularly affected PACE, as it was unable to fulfil part of its mandate.

Project staff spoke of the process of building relationships with underrepresented groups. From this point of view, staff continuity was also flagged as important. PACE suffered from changing staff mid way through the project, as the successor had to re-establish links within the Croydon community.

At the same time, beyond being an outreach worker, many successful initiatives had staff who were very passionate about their work and committed to the project objectives. This energy, together with the charisma needed to motivate others is unquantifiable and difficult to describe. Project facilitators at BEN, Antrim and the Big Issue stood out as embodying these leadership characteristics.

8.6 Assessed by Both 'Quantitative' and 'Qualitative' Indicators

Where project success was not subjected to narrow quantitative evaluation, projects were more likely to succeed. This observation may say as much about the unrefined state of evaluation as it does about the principal drivers of success. The key issue is that certain of the attributes already identified as being instrumental in project success, such as empowerment, social capital building and social cohesion are not readily reducible to quantitative indicators. Consequently, where project continuity depends on the favourable reporting of partial quantitative indicators, key elements of success may be totally ignored.

At the local authority level, justification/evaluation is most often done through the use of performance indicators (as discussed in Towards Best Value - Cabinet Office, 1998). There has been a traditional bias in selecting performance indicators towards quantitative indicators. Countryside recreation and social inclusion issues, are not, however, best evaluated with purely quantitative indicators. At the same time, qualitative indicators alone may not be best. The ideal often lies in combining quantitative and qualitative indicators.

Most projects admitted being under (sometimes severe) financial constraints. In addition, they are increasingly being called upon to justify their existence and bid for further grants. In bidding for funds, it is often necessary to identify key performance indicators against which efficiency, effectiveness and therefore value for money can be gauged. Youth Route 70, in particular, will have to cease operations at the end of January 2001 if further funds are not sourced.

Botes and van Rensburg (2000) recognise what they term a 'hard-issue bias' in community development projects. A bias where issues that are technological, financial, physical and material are perceived as being more important than 'soft' issues like community involvement, organisational development capacity building and empowerment.

Projects such as Fairbridge and the National Trust Inner City project were not formally required to justify their existence to continue receiving funding. Others such as Northampton were required to identify benchmark indicators in their funding bids and were held to these targets. Bestwood Country Park (Greenwood project) rangers felt constantly under threat by budget cuts and unfairly biased by an evaluation system that favoured quantitative indicators. Rangers were concerned about the difficulties inherent in trying to justify project benefits for administrators concerned with more quantifiable output.

Fairbridge stood out as successfully combining both quantifiable indicators with qualitative ones. The documentation made available to the consultants used quantitative indicators (some from government studies) and qualitative data (anecdotal evidence and case studies) to communicate their project model's effectiveness.

Embracing qualitative indicators may involve a change in organisational culture which some may have difficulty understanding, but this is the only way given that the output of many of these projects do not easily lend themselves to measurement and quantitative assessment.

8.2 Effective Marketing

Effective marketing skills is likely to be a significant contributor to success. Projects that ignore their intended beneficiaries and assume responsibility for defining and then providing for their needs and demands are less likely to succeed. Kotler and Andreasen (cited in Williams 1998) define marketing as an exchange relationship in which the marketer attempts to influence the behaviour of the target audience. Marketing focuses on exchange. The ultimate objective is to change behaviour. One of the project partners in PACE believes that the PACE project would have been more effective with better marketing. Bestwood rangers (Greenwood project) also spoke of the importance of marketing. It is with the projects targeting young people however, that the concept comes up most often, not least because there are so many 'products' competing via marketing strategies for the attention of young people.

Northampton's work at Brixworth Country Park has succeeded in exceeding targets (visitor numbers and diversity) and they believe that effective marketing has played a large role in achieving these targets. This project stood out in putting the consumer (park users) at the centre of their attention and focusing on their consumers at every step of their programme. Brixworth Country Park has demonstrated an understanding of the concept of social marketing (an adaptation of the traditional private –sector marketing concept).

Particularly in the projects targeting young people, there is an appreciation of the increase in activities that now compete for consumer's time. Unfortunately, UK countryside recreation is not seen as 'trendy'. Some argue that a lifecycle approach predicts that consumers will eventually mature and begin to see countryside recreation as a viable option.

However, a billion-pound commercial leisure industry will make efforts to retain its share of the young persons leisure pound as (s)he passes through his life cycle.

There is a trend towards more and more UK residents holidaying outside of the UK, (the value of home-based tourism is now only half that of overseas tourism according to Keynote (2000)) with three or four very large companies aggressively marketing overseas travel. For those who holiday within the UK, the top destinations may include London (the Dome was the number one attraction for 2000), Edinburgh and Blackpool. Given that destinations and companies continue to use their vast resources to shape holiday behaviour, it is possible to make a case that countryside destinations that do not market themselves may continue to experience decline in visitor numbers.

9. Factors Which Limit 'Effectiveness'

9.1 Financial Resources

Shortage of finance has the potential to ensure or threaten the sustainability of every project profiled. Fairbridge, Antrim and the National Trust project appeared to be the three most 'financially sustainable' projects. Amongst the initiatives examined, Youth Route 70's financial position appeared to be the most precarious.

Fairbridge's strength was based on its *extremely diversified funding base*. Being a long established organisation, their London-based marketing and fundraising departments may have had more experience in networking and bidding for precious funds.

Antrim's ARCHES group is on the way to achieving the enviable status of *being self-financing*. This being achieved through investing donated funds into a local commercial property, which will hold their future office and generate rental income from letting surplus space to other users.

The National Trust Inner City project's apparent financial security obviously comes from it being a *part of the largest conservation charity in the UK*. Northamptonshire Council's initiative has benefited from significant funding for a long period of time.

For the many of the other projects profiled, inadequate finance was often flagged as a limiting factor. Project managers were devoting a substantial part of their time to securing funding rather than enhancing access opportunity. Some even asked whether their participation in this project might translate into better prospects for funding for their initiatives.

Though not sufficient to ensure project success, finance is a necessary part to any project of this nature. Fixed-term funding can lead to a short-term emphasis on achieving results and can undermine longer-term sustainability. A lack of sufficient financial resources will threaten any project of this nature.

9.2 Human Resources

Engaging the services of appropriate personnel on the project is also crucial. As the chairman of the ARCHES group in Antrim noted, having the 'right' people is more crucial than even funding. The PACE project is believed to have been severely limited by (by their own recognition) 'inappropriate' personnel, despite having sufficient funding.

Botes and van Rensburg (2000) note that a common problem with community projects, is the dominance of paternalistic professionals. Caring individuals can administer projects on behalf of people, but in so doing, often subordinate the beneficiaries values to their own value sets. There is a tendency for community development projects to be initiated by outside experts who dominate the decision-making process. This can effectively disempower the local community; making them dependent on the project and the project personnel.

Whether facilitated by personnel from outside or inside the target community, personnel in particularly effective projects saw their primary role as being 'outreach' and not 'countryside' workers - as Bestwood rangers clearly do. Such facilitators promote co-decision making in defining needs, goal setting and formulating plans. One of the many things that stood out in Northampton's initiative at Brixworth Country Park was their regular use of 'customer care' panels (focus groups) to constantly assess their progress in promoting social inclusion at the park.

Having the 'right' people in the project is no guarantee of effectiveness. The lessons of PACE however, suggest that the 'wrong' people may guarantee ineffectiveness.

9.3 Project Dependency

Participants in a number of the projects profiled would like to access the countryside (after the project has folded) but are doubtful of whether they will be able to do so. They can become dependent on the project.

This project dependency can be a function of the project staff who wish to protect their jobs or can arise because the project fails to resolve the structural disadvantage which lies behind low participation of some groups in countryside recreation. The head of the National Trust Inner City project recognises this danger when he describes his role as being to try to eliminate his own job. The Big Issue Outreach manager supports this ethos.

Exclusion will have been most effectively addressed when it is not successful projects that are highlighted but there is evidence of enhanced participation amongst groups, which have previously experienced exclusion. Such participation should be steered not so much by projects as created by empowered individuals working sometimes collectively, sometimes individually to satisfy their wide-ranging countryside leisure aspirations.

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