

Sport in the Countryside

*Planning and management for sport
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WELCOME

Martin Elson

Planning Policies Research Group, Oxford Brookes University

I would like to extend a warm welcome to delegates, who have travelled from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as from all corners of England to discuss leisure issues today.

Sport and active recreation in the countryside are believed to be some of the most rapidly growing areas of leisure. Such activities can have wide-ranging impacts on the environment, both in terms of landscape and flora and fauna. New activities are seeking land and water space in National Parks and other designated areas. There may be competition between would-be new activities and those already long established in the countryside.

Recent critical research has re-enforced the message of the Access Study, produced by the Countryside Commission and the Sports Council in 1986, that there can be difficulties and conflicts surrounding leisure use of the countryside ⁽¹⁾. The study Leisure Landscapes goes on to charge the statutory agencies and the land use planning system with glossing over difficulties and conflicts, at the same time giving greater prominence to the management approach than experience merits ⁽²⁾.

Government policy is to accommodate leisure use according to sustainable development principles. It strongly supports the management approach, not least through its statements of principle in the UK Sustainability Strategy ⁽³⁾. Today we shall be assessing the suitability of a range of planning and management approaches, and launching a new "good practice" study, jointly commissioned by the Sports Council and the Countryside Commission on the Planning and Management of Active Sport and Recreation in the Countryside ⁽⁴⁾.

A further contribution to this debate will be made this summer by the Environment Select Committee of the House of Commons. At this time they will publish the results of their inquiry into the Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities. Two of the main questions currently being addressed by the Committee are:

- to what degree does large numbers of visitors, and the pursuit of certain leisure activities, cause harm to the countryside and wildlife, and
- how should conflicts of interest between conservation, agriculture, public access and local economic development be addressed ⁽⁵⁾

We are indeed fortunate that Roger Sidaway, a Specialist Adviser to the Select Committee, is here to start this workshop by giving us his views on 'Current Trends, Study and Practice', in this important area.

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SPORT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE : CURRENT TRENDS, STUDY AND PRACTICE

Roger Sidaway

Research and Policy Consultant

INTRODUCTION

Concerns about recreation pressures on the countryside have been with us since the 1960s, arguably since the middle of the last century. But the basis of these concerns are not always clear and they have varied from Dower's 'fourth wave' of recreational growth to more recent concerns about endangered wildlife. What really has changed in the last twenty to thirty years? Have demands increased, is there clear evidence of damage and disturbance or is it that people perceive change and hanker after the past? Meanwhile what has been the response of sport and recreation participants to rising environmental standards and the concerns of those who fear we are loving the countryside to death?

This paper cannot answer all these questions but it briefly reviews the recent evidence on sport and recreational impacts and the approaches to managing them. It recognises the changes in perception of the problem from initial concerns about damage to vegetation, then disturbance to birds and most recently widespread incremental cultural change. It raises the issue, that if the focus of concern has changed, whether the problems recognised by and the solutions adopted by managers have really altered, or have we merely come full circle? This paper also recognises that sport in the countryside challenges established notions of what is appropriate in the countryside. Young people with new equipment and bright clothes disturb the tranquillity of minds seeking to get away from it all. Do we have the right information and management skills to cope with these challenges?

REAL CONCERNS AND IMAGINED PRESSURES

Concern about visitor numbers and the resulting pressures on the countryside were a major theme of the "Countryside in 1970 Conference" and featured prominently in the House of Lords Select Committee Report on Sport and Leisure (the Cobham Report) in 1973. They are now part of the terms of reference of the current House of Commons Environment Committee inquiry.

Paragraphs of the Cobham Report have a very familiar ring, not only in their description of the problem:

"The Peak Park for instance with about 10 million visitors a year is in danger of being overused. In Cannock Chase the crowding has begun to produce soil erosion. Climbers on Snowdonia have to queue while waiting their turn at certain rock faces, and some crags, sand dune systems and footpaths are under great ecological pressure. Even in Scotland the countryside is beginning to come under pressure in places."(paragraph 221).

but also in suggested solutions:

"Deliberate acceptance of congestion may in itself be a mechanism which rations use. In order to assist traffic management, the Committee encourage county authorities to prepare maps showing those roads where congestion from recreation traffic is acute or is likely to become acute in the near future. For all stretches of road so delineated, a positive management plan for peak periods should be devised." (paragraph 270). [The Committee also identified public transport, road closure, one way restrictions, car park provision, signposting, new scenic routes and traffic segregation as elements to be considered in traffic management.].

But significantly the Cobham Committee found

"that in general the pressure on the countryside is not as serious as the foregoing paragraph might suggest....There are still large tracts of lonely and unspoiled land. The conflicts and crowding occur at peak times in the summer, i.e., at weekends and bank holidays and in given places such as access roads and footpaths, beauty spots, summits and water edges." (paragraph 222);

A later review of the evidence in 1978 was also sceptical of the extent of the problem. It suggested that:

- a) concern about rapid and inevitable recreational growth was not warranted;
- b) the then current thinking over-emphasised problems like carrying capacity; and
- c) that most of problems concerning recreation pressure in National Park Plans were as much to do with local social issues rather than ecological problems.

The authors suggested that the contribution of research and planning should be to sort out the confusion over objectives and capacity; to relate site plans in broader strategies and to question the policies which dispersed recreation activities (Sidaway and O'Connor, 1978).

Now, nearly twenty years later, the Environment Committee is considering:

"To what degree large numbers of visitors, and the pursuit of certain leisure activities, cause harm to the countryside and wildlife;

how conflicts of interest between conservation, agriculture, public access and local economic development should be addressed;

whether current planning controls and guidance notes form an adequate safeguard against excessive or inappropriate leisure development in environmentally sensitive areas; and

options for the development of more sustainable forms of leisure and tourism." (House of Commons Environment Committee, 1995).

GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION OF TRIPS

Departmental evidence to the current inquiry on recreational growth summarised the present situation:

"59. Although the overall total of leisure trips to the countryside has not grown as rapidly as forecast twenty years ago, the nature of countryside recreation is changing. A greater diversity of pursuits reflect increasing interest in active recreation, whilst changes in mobility and travel patterns are altering the distribution and thereby the impact of leisure activity. A constant, however, is the high value put upon the quality of the countryside and its importance in attracting visitors." (Department of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and Department of Transport, 1995)

In which case, the issue of whether to concentrate or to disperse recreational use to lessen its overall impact, remains as pertinent as ever. If the Countryside Commission's campaign to open up the whole of the public rights of way network in England by the year 2000 is successful, one might expect concerns to be expressed about increased pressure, but this will be based on a perception of change and not necessarily on evidence of increased damage.

RECREATIONAL IMPACTS IN PERSPECTIVE

Over recent years a broad consensus appears to have developed over the *biological* impacts of recreational activities in the countryside. This is reflected in evidence to the Environment Committee. For example, Department of Environment evidence stated that:

"63. In its as yet unpublished project on '*Changes in Key Habitats*', DOE has assessed recreational impacts alongside other pressures, in lowland heath, calcareous grassland, uplands, river landscapes and coasts. Recreation is generally seen as less important than other factors such as land management, pollution and development (although some development may be linked to leisure activity)." (Department of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and Department of Transport, 1995)

English Nature summarised the current situation in the following way:

"Leisure related impacts should be assessed in the context of other activities which have an impact on the countryside or coast. Leisure activities do not in themselves represent the greatest threat to nature conservation.

Direct impacts on nature conservation include disturbance, trampling and erosion but these are often localised or short-term in duration and can be managed. Impacts from associated development often represent a greater threat.

Potential benefits can accrue through improved awareness and understanding of nature conservation and the diversion of visitor income into managing and enhancing the natural resource." (English Nature, 1995).

Yet if the problem is localised and manageable, why is there continuing concern? Or could it be that the biological impacts are not the real issue?

BIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE

The seriousness of recreational impacts can be judged from different perspectives. Most research and reviews of research for government agencies, such as the Countryside Commission, the Sports Council or Scottish Natural Heritage, have concentrated on the biological impacts of specific activities or in particular habitats (e.g., Sidaway, 1988; Anderson and Radford, 1990; Sidaway, 1994). Evidence to the Environment Committee inquiry has taken a broader view and this is summarised in Table 1, which compares the impacts covered in the most recent research review (Sidaway 1994) and the evidence of DOE and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). In contrast to the research review, DOE listing of environmental effects considers local communities whilst CPRE extends its concerns into landscape and aesthetic issues, which are made even clearer in the Council's written evidence.

"4. The countryside is an increasingly important leisure resource. Yet there are growing environmental conflicts associated with a range of leisure activities and related developments in rural areas. CPRE believes the cumulative, long term implications of these pressures are ill-understood and the policies developed by the relevant public agencies are failing effectively to tackle the resulting conflicts. The quality and beauty of the countryside and its overall value for recreational purposes is, as a result, being constantly eroded. Significant improvements are required in the way conflicts between leisure and the environment are addressed if the environmental quality, character and peace of the countryside is to be safeguarded for the benefit of future generations. We do not share the view of the principal public agencies involved that the conflict between leisure and the environment can be resolved solely through visitor management and existing land use planning mechanisms." (CPRE, 1995).

Thus not only does the perception of the potential problem differ in its scope and extent but the competence of the agencies and the appropriateness of their solutions are being questioned. I suggest that the debate is as much about the rate of change in the countryside; whose values will predominate in that debate; and whose ideas will prevail in determining which changes are acceptable.

INFORMATION FOR ACTION

Although the emphasis has been on research, relatively few studies which specifically examine the relationship between a recreational activity and the habitat or species have been conducted in Britain. Although there has been a continuing interest in recreational impacts over the last 20 years, the number of studies on damage to vegetation has declined whilst that on disturbance to birds has remained roughly constant. Nevertheless, there has been a steady stream of research reviews with increasing emphasis on disturbance to birds over the last five years (Sidaway, 1994).

The recreation manager needs to know when impacts matter and whether it is possible to mitigate a harmful impact by taking appropriate action. Most research reviews have addressed the question of whether recreational impacts are harmful in a general way and very few have covered how those impacts can be managed. As damage to vegetation is usually evident

TABLE 1: POTENTIAL RECREATIONAL IMPACTS

BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS	ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS	PHYSICAL IMPACTS
<i>Damage to vegetation and soils</i>	<i>Wear and tear, vegetation loss and fires</i>	<i>Physical wear and tear on landscape and buildings (cumulative effects in most popular areas)</i>
Incremental Effects <i>Disturbance to fauna</i>	<i>Disturbance to wildlife and local communities</i>	<i>Physical damage, disturbance and intrusion from sports such as power boating, mountain biking and motorsports.</i>
<i>Removal of wildlife</i>	<i>Inappropriate development</i> <i>Overcrowding</i>	<i>Development of inappropriate infrastructure (e.g., golf courses, holiday villages)</i>
<i>Habitat loss from development</i>		
Recreational Traffic <i>Pollution</i> <i>Noise</i> <i>Wave formation and turbidity from fast moving boats</i>	<i>Traffic—noise, emission and nuisance in local communities</i>	<i>Recreational traffic growth</i>
<i>Habitat creation and improvement</i>		
Source: Sidaway, 1994.	Source: DOE et al, 1995.	Source: CPRE, 1995.

managers can take a pragmatic approach to categorising impacts, the primary contribution of research is likely to be towards developing and applying more efficient management techniques and not towards demonstrating the existence of the problem (Bayfield and Aitken, 1992). The potentially damaging impact of recreational disturbance on breeding or migratory bird populations is more problematic.

Perhaps more surprisingly, many management initiatives have been taken but few have been systematically evaluated so that good practice develops on an ad hoc basis, if at all. We are constantly in danger of re-inventing the wheel. To take some examples.

The current interest in recreational traffic management is commendable but as my quotation from the 1973 Cobham report suggested it is hardly new. That report commended the Goyt Valley traffic experiment and the introduction of a bus service which no longer operates. What lessons have been learnt from the Goyt which tell us when and where similar schemes might operate more successfully?

There are conflicts over the use of individual water bodies but where are the sub-regional strategies which ensure that is provision is made for motorised water sports?

There is a continuing emphasis on tinkering with mechanisms—such as planning regulations and bylaws—but little action to develop the processes of building long term relationships by the direct involvement of recreational user groups in management.

LACK OF RESOURCES OR LACK OF WILL?

The sense of *deja-vu*, that we are barely getting to grips with the problems that were identified at least twenty years ago, suggests a collective lack of determination. In general we know what we want from the countryside but as we find different ways to enjoy it we fail to manage for change. We recognise that recreational impacts may cause problems but we fail to invest in the research that will clarify the extent of the problem. But neither do we recognise that research may be expensive and/or inconclusive and therefore work out how to manage without it. There are many management initiatives but, without systematic review or evaluation, they amount to no more than constant improvisation. But the changes affecting wildlife may be relatively easy to manage compared to the problems of how to get people to tolerate each other's use of the countryside and mitigate their own demands. In which case we certainly seem to lack the institutions to manage change.

CONCLUSIONS

The questions I pose for the workshop today concern management, diversity and change.

- Are we prepared to be self-critical and ask hard questions—to monitor and evaluate good and bad practice in management—so that we know when management works and when does it not?
- Are we prepared to find the resources to work together and conduct research on biological and cultural impacts that provides a useful basis for management?
- Can we accommodate more diversity in the countryside? In some areas, it appears that attitudes to tourism, visitors and new leisure activities are changing. Can we find ways of working together for mutual benefit?
- What rate of change can be accommodated in the countryside and who determines what change is acceptable?

Roger Sidaway is a Research and Policy Consultant based in Edinburgh and is currently specialist adviser to the House of Commons Environment Committee.

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GOOD PRACTICE IN THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF SPORT AND ACTIVE RECREATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Sport and active recreation have been identified as some of the fastest growing areas of leisure. Literature on the relationship between sport and recreation and the environment generally focuses on the impact of individual activities, although there is a growing but selective range of case study evidence of good practice on particular sites, where lessons for sustainable use can be learnt. The joint Sports Council and Countryside Commission publication "Good Practice in the Planning and Management of Sport and Active Recreation in the Countryside" (1995) is the most recent study to address the relationship between the natural environment and sport.

THE FOCUS AND CENTRAL THEME OF THE STUDY

Much work has been done on the management of the natural environment for sport and recreation, in particular on specific areas, such as Heritage Coasts; on particular sports, especially the motorised air and water sports, and work on case studies of good practice. The work lies within a context of planning legislation and advice from PFG 17 Sport and Recreation, which states that adequate land for sport and recreation should be allocated in countryside locations, to the Government's Sustainable Development Strategy, which emphasises the importance of management and monitoring.

The new study focuses on case studies of sport and recreation on sensitive environmental sites and attempts to demonstrate good practice in accordance with principles of sustainable development, as advocated by the Government in its Sustainable Development Strategy, and by the Sports Council and the Countryside Commission in their documents "A Countryside for Sport and Sustainability" and "The English Countryside."

The central theme of the study is that conflict between conservation and sport and recreation interests, and between different sport and recreation interests can be resolved or prevented, in almost all cases, by good planning and management, even within designated areas.

THE FORMAT OF THE STUDY

"Good Practice in the Planning and Management of Sport and Active Recreation in the Countryside" presents 12 area and site based case studies where sport and recreation covering land, air and water-based activities are being planned and managed in sensitive environments around England. A number of criteria were used to select the specific case studies from a "long list" of potential sites created by a canvas of the Regional Offices of the two sponsoring agencies. The criteria were:

- **impact:** they should include situations where sport and recreational activities had clear impacts on the environment or surrounding populations;
- **habitat types:** the sites should cover a broad range of habitat types, including the coast, lowland heath, forests, water areas and the uplands;
- **environmental quality:** they should focus on areas with high scenic and wildlife value such as National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts, Ramsar Sites, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- **geographical spread:** the sites should be distributed around the regions of England;
- **major land interests:** major interests such as Forest Enterprise, the Regional Water Companies and the Ministry of Defence should be represented;

- **effective management:** some form of management of the identified impacts should have been in place for at least a year;
- **voluntary codes:** areas where a code of practice or other national, regional or local voluntary arrangement for management was successfully being operated, were preferred;
- **replication:** sites/areas covered in other recent research would be avoided.

The final 12 chosen sites covered 19 different sports and active recreations in eight different types of special designation, including National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Site of Special Scientific Interest. The sites range from an underwater trail at Kimmeridge Bay in Dorset to lowland and upland forest, as in the Forest of Dean and Grizedale Forest. Coastal sites include the Crouch Estuary in Essex, the Purbeck Heritage Coast in Dorset and the Sefton Coast in Merseyside. Inland sites include Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, Kingston Deverill in Wiltshire and Devil's Dyke in West Sussex.

Each case study covers:

- the pattern of participation in the sports and active recreations covered; what kind of numbers are involved, whether there are many one-off participants, and the membership of clubs and the governing body. On some sites only one activity is involved, whereas in others the planning and management issues relate to a range of activities. On most sites there is also informal recreation use, particularly walking;
- the nature of any likely environmental impacts on the resource and its surroundings by the sport and active recreation and whether impacts involve flora, fauna, local residents or other users;
- the physical planning and recreation management measures in operation, for example at many sites some form of spatial or temporal zoning is used; there may be some kind of access arrangement; or the involvement of a club, the governing body and/or landowners is often important;
- the general lessons for good practice at the time, there is variation between the case studies and not every site demonstrates good practice in every aspect. Also, situations change and planning and management evolve, hopefully for the better.

CONCLUSIONS FOR PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Six principles of good practice were identified from the study. These are discussed in turn:

State of the environment

Systematic knowledge of the state of the environment at sites is incomplete. There were few authoritative baseline studies from which environmental change due to sport and recreation impacts can be quantified. The best knowledge of baseline environmental conditions was found at single ownership sites where controls are "under one roof". Data quality improves where a site is designated, such as a National Nature Reserve or Site of Special Scientific Interest, where English Nature will have devoted resources to survey at the time of designation. The National Trust also surveys the environmental conditions of properties at the time they are acquired. Much of the data collected on environmental impacts are not systematically used for management purposes. Many results are obtained for ad hoc research and may not even be reported to site managers. While the collection of data on site and resource conditions is improving, and the need for regular and systematic auditing is acknowledged by site managers, the financial and staff resources to carry out surveys have been difficult to find.

An example of good practice over this point is Ashdown Forest in East Sussex where information on environmental conditions was databased over 12 years ago and is regularly updated with information on the condition of flora and fauna, the extent of sport and recreation activities, fire incidence and management work underway. Thus, information on the state of the environment is systematically collected to aid planning and management and monitoring of the forest environment.

Clarity of purpose

Establishing goals and objectives is an important stage in the process of site/resource management. This may not always be straightforward, for example where there is a need to define capacity but the relevant information is not forthcoming. Also, there may be dispute over the objectives for a site, over the extent and types of impacts being experienced, and over issues such as displacement effects. In this case there is a need to create a discourse with relevant interests. The need to consider trade-offs and capacity at the level of the resource (often at a strategic level) is clearly very important.

An example of good practice in this case is the widening of discussion at Dancing Ledge, a cliff climbing site on the Purbeck Coast, to include a range of climbing sites along the Dorset Coast within a new discussion forum, which can investigate the strategic impacts and trade-offs between sites rather than just focusing on one site.

Participatory management

Formal management plans did not exist for the majority of case study sites. Whilst a written management plan can assist in clarifying purposes and ordering priorities, it cannot have the level of detail or flexibility sufficient to guide day-to-day decisions. In most situations recreation management involves the management of uncertainty. This implies that less formal styles are likely to be more effective. The "tools" of recreation management may be seen as a continuum from those that are low key, to those that are intensive:

LOW KEY—INFORMAL
publicity, information from managers
voluntary agreements through liaison committees
formal multiple-use agreements, such as by-laws and zoning arrangements
partnerships between the public, private and voluntary sectors
INTENSIVE—FORMAL

More important than the tools of management is the style of management. Site management should be for multiple use as far as possible, i.e. it should not exclude any sports automatically, and it should be open to negotiation with new sports. The second key should be frequent and/or regular liaison between all interested parties at site level. Participatory management is that where liaison is taking place. However, the question of what forum is appropriate for the mediation of different objectives and views on site management remains difficult.

The voluntary approach

Management by agreement and encouragement appears desirable, particularly from the point of view of the users. The governing bodies of the sports and active recreations are keen to respect conservation values in the interests of sustainable resource use. Prominent among them are the British Mountaineering Council which, through its Access and Conservation Committee, resists payment for access. It is particularly keen to promote voluntary arrangements which are easier to "sell" to climbers. The British Mountain Bike Federation also has a wide network of voluntary access officers promoting improved access into the countryside for both traditional cycling and mountain biking.

Voluntary arrangements with governing bodies and clubs can allow "self-policing" and the application of peer pressure to sport and active recreation users. There is widespread evidence that voluntary methods of sport management can be effective. Lack of coercion elicits a positive response from member clubs and affiliated participants. The main problems emerge from non-affiliated participants, that is those who are not members of the appropriate governing body and therefore not bound by its codes of practice. Such persons may not even be aware of voluntary arrangements in place at the site.

Local involvement and consultation

A further principle in site management is that of ensuring local involvement and consultation. This should include local sports clubs, sports councils, parish councils and local residents. The need to have well organised liaison arrangements where sports activities can have impacts on nearby residents is well recognised. The support and understanding of locals is important to the continued use of countryside sites. Those clubs and governing bodies which take care to ensure this reap the benefits in more trouble-free site operation. Local involvement and consultation can manifest itself in particular local codes of practice for site use. These can be negotiated at club level and be designed to protect the environments in which the sports and active recreations take place. They can include, for example, site access and car parking and use arrangements negotiated with individual landowners as well as specific aspects of interest of the site.

A good example of this is the local code of practice at the hang gliding and paragliding site at Devil's Dyke in West Sussex, which contains information particular to the site in terms of access, and appropriate take-off, landing sites and environmental information.

Monitoring and review

Without effective monitoring and review it is difficult to see how managers can make informed decisions. However, the case studies show that procedures for monitoring visitor use and characteristics, and the state of the environment, are weak and unstructured on many sites. Monitoring is of most use where it can detect changes from baseline environmental conditions and values. It is important that these baseline data exist. The need then is to account for any changes found; it is here that applied research will be of greatest value. Such processes as these are vital for decisions about the carrying capacity of sites and for definition of LAC.

SUMMARY

The study also includes details on the environmental content of codes of practice that emerged from the case study work. These codes include those by local clubs, site owners and the Sports Council and the Countryside Commission, as well as those by the sports governing bodies. There is scope for the more active promotion of governing body codes of environmental good practice.

The study represents a position statement of where research is at present. It may therefore be an opportune time for the Countryside Commission and the Sports Council to consider a joint statement of intent on the sustainable use of the countryside for sport and active recreation. The study ends with nine principles for such a statement.

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the speaker.

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SPORT IN WOODLANDS

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1978, day visits to woodlands have nearly doubled in number from 18% of all visits in 1978 to 34% in 1993 (UK Day Visits Survey). An estimated 50 million visits are made to Forestry Commission woodlands and 250 million to private woodlands.

With the increasing popularity of woodlands and the range of grants available to woodland owners to allow public access to their land, sound planning and management of sport and recreation provision in woodlands and forests is becoming ever more important.

In 1992, the Forestry Authority published "Forest Recreation Guidelines" aimed at encouraging and advising private woodland owners on the practice and principles of providing for recreation in their woodlands, particularly those close to centres of population.

This study is designed to supplement that publication and to demonstrate and promote good practice in the planning and management of sport and recreation in woodlands by both public and private woodland owners.

The previous speaker has outlined the findings of the joint publication between the Countryside Commission and the Sports Council. My presentation will outline a similar publication, a joint venture between the Sports Council and the Forestry Authority, looking at a slightly more specific area, that of sport and recreation provision in woodland and forest areas.

I'd like to cover three main areas:

- background to the work
- methodology
- some of the findings emerging, using a few of the case studies to illustrate these—not exactly an "Analysis" as in the advertisement but more of a flavour.

BACKGROUND

The publication came about for a number of reasons—the popularity of woodland areas, lack of advice and information on this subject and the new woodlands which are being created around the country, including the Community and National Forests and increased access to private woodlands through the Woodland Grant Scheme and similar incentives. Publications like the Forestry Trust's "Woodland to Visit" are encouraging more people to explore the woodland resource. It was felt that there was a need to provide advice for woodland owners and managers on the provision for more formal sports, rather than informal access, and that there was very probably a lot of good work being done around the country on this, but that it had not been brought together before. Thus, as part of the soon to be discontinued National Development Officer project, the idea for this came about.

That's the background to the work and its *raison d'être*. I'd now like to set the context of the work itself and what we were aiming to bring out. First, why the need to advise woodland owners? Do they need advice and, if so, what?

If we look at the trends in visits to woodlands over the last 15 years, we can see that there has been quite a marked increase; nearly twice as many visits in 1993 as compared with 1978 (UK Day Visits Survey). Why? This is due to a number of factors, the most prominent of which is the increase in the number of facilities being provided by organisations like the Forestry Commission, the Woodland Trust and the National Trust, to say nothing of new initiatives such as the Community Forests. With new woodland walks, cycle trails and cabin holidays, woodlands are becoming much more accessible as the shift from pure commercial production to multi-purpose forestry occurs.

So why recreate in a woodland? What are the special features of forests which make them ideal for recreation and sporting activities and which attracts all these visitors?

Woodlands have a special attraction for visitors. The variety of tree species, shapes and leaf form, the light effects created beneath the canopy and the variety of landscape to be found within woodlands, where stands are interspersed with glades, rides, paths, water features and viewpoints all create an attractive backdrop to a wide range of activities, both informal and formal.

Woodlands have the capacity to absorb a large number of people and to create a sense of seclusion and privacy. The good surfacing to be found on most forest roads offers easy walking in a safe, traffic-free environment while specially created trails into forest stands can offer challenge to those who seek more than a quiet walk.

Glades offer space for picnics, barbecues, play areas and caravan sites, while denser stands offer cover and habitats for wildlife and wildlife study.

Walking, riding and cycling are the most popular activities in woodlands, making use of roads, rides and trails but, increasingly, more formal sports are making use of the woodland resource. Sports which are ideally suited to woodlands where the challenge of navigation can be made more difficult by the presence of stands of trees include orienteering and field archery, while others benefit greatly from the presence of trees as a backdrop or as a buffer to noise or visual intrusion, e.g. shooting and motorsports.

Ownership/management	% of resource	No. of visits p.a
Forestry Commission	40%	50 million
Non-Forestry Commission e.g. National Trust Local authorities Woodland Trust	60%	250 million

40% of the woodland resource in Britain is under the ownership or management of the Forestry Commission, which receives an estimated 50 million visitors per year and the Commission has extensive experience of providing recreation in its woodlands.

If you put this into context with non State-owned woodlands, including Local Authority woodlands, it is estimated that 250 million visits are made to these and this isn't even to the entire 60% under their ownership as there are many private woodlands which are not open to public access. It is to those woodland owners who do allow access and who may be considering providing opportunities for formal sport, as well as local authority planning, leisure and countryside management departments, Community Forest teams and educational establishments teaching landscape management, leisure, sport and recreation that advice on sports requirements and illustration of successful techniques employed elsewhere is aimed.

In 1992, the Forestry Authority published "Forest Recreation Guidelines" aimed at encouraging and advising private woodland owners on the practice and principles of providing for recreation in their woodlands, particularly those close to the centres of population.

This guide aims to supplement the "Forest Recreation Guidelines" and to demonstrate and promote good practice in the planning and management of sport and recreation in woodlands.

METHODOLOGY

The field research for the study was undertaken by Judith Higson of the Recreation Management Section at Loughborough University.

At the outset of the project, Forest Enterprise District offices, Forestry Authority Conservancies and Sports Council regional offices were asked to identify forests or woodlands which would be suitable as case studies in demonstrating good practice in provision for formal sports.

From initial responses, a short list was drawn up to cover the following criteria:

- geographical spread over Scotland, England and Wales;
- size of forest—to include small low budget sites and high expenditure sites;
- range of sports—particularly cycling, motorsports and watersports;
- access for all—to include provision for disabled users;
- type of management—to include State, local authority and private ownership;
- proximity to town—to include sites experiencing urban pressure and those in more remote areas.

The short list of sites was distributed for comment. The chosen final case studies were visited and the staff involved in recreation provision on site were interviewed using an open questionnaire. Sports bodies were consulted on sites and management techniques which they felt constituted good practice in provision for their sports.

In all of the chosen areas, a range of activities was provided for, including walking and cycling, but the activity which most represented good practice at each location was selected for illustration.

Some sites demonstrated good practice in more than one activity.

SPORTS SELECTED

- CLIMBING
- CYCLING
- FIELD ARCHERY
- MOTORSPORTS
- NORDIC SKIING
- ORIENTEERING
- RIDING
- SLED DOG RACING
- WATERSPORTS

STRUCTURE

The report presents the case studies on a sport by sport basis in the following format:

- description of the sport, including the governing body and participation rates
- requirements of the sport in woodland setting
- illustrative case studies outlining the site characteristics, ownership, other recreational activities available, management of the chosen sport and key points arising

Two additional sections on provision in new woodland and for disabled users are included.

FINDINGS AND LESSONS

LESSONS EMERGING

- Involve governing bodies in planning and management
- Match provision to demand
- Use of zoning
- Incorporate recreation into overall management of site
- Target information
- Monitor impact on woodland and visitors
- Involve local community in management

If we take one or two examples as illustrations to give a flavour of this:

- Match demand to market and site characteristics

Hopton Wood

- 338 ha wood managed by Forest Enterprise near Craven Arms in Shropshire
- particular emphasis on cycling
- relatively remote and little used by walkers or riders
- 25km of roads, rides and tracks
- contours offer both flat and hilly routes—cycling round hill i.e. flat, and across contours i.e. challenging
- self selection via numbered junctions shown on map—need only one map
- links to other woods
- Involving users and government bodies and community

Ashridge estate

- 1600 ha near Berkhamsted, Herts
- owned by National Trust since 1926
- 1000 ha mixed woodland, 3 tenanted farms, 75% SSSI
- self funding
- 12 staff
- no waymarked routes but numbered junctions
- separate maps for walking, cycling and riding
- 1970s—15 miles permitted bridleway to add to 9 miles definitive—only in woods and commons, foot access only in agricultural areas
- permit system did not work at first due to riders who felt that they had always had the right to ride there and objected to cyclists not requiring permits
- local, well-known rider appointed as warden in 1990 to administer new system—bridle tag and map showing allowed routes (£40 in 1994)
- warden represents rider on Local Bridleways Committee and in dealing with management, produces newsletter, organises fundraising and maintenance work.
- monies raised ploughed back into programme of route widening and repair
- Integrating recreation into overall management

Balkello Hill

- 115ha, few miles north of Dundee
- privately owned
- one of largest Community Woodlands in Britain—old quarry and farmland
- planting started 1993, principally with native broadleaves under FA Community Woodland Supplement grant scheme.
- local community involved from the beginning
- car park, ponds, barbecue
- designed with recreation in mind—zoned for mountain bikes
- long grassy avenues through planted area on lower slopes—easier terrain
- stony tracks in quarry area, very steep and challenging
- used for walking, cycling, orienteering, riding, running, cross country skiing
- recreational impact being monitored from the start, including events

CONCLUSIONS

Publication is not yet finished and, as with all good practice guides, it is never easy to uncover all the examples of good practice around the country. Perhaps it is because some managers do what they have always done and it turns out correctly, without realising that they are demonstrating good practice or perhaps some people like to keep it to themselves!!! Whatever it is, though, we are grateful to the site managers and owners and to the governing body representatives who took the time to answer Judith's questions and to show her around their sites. We hope that the publication, when it is produced in the summer, will help those who wish to provide recreation in their woodlands. We all know that mistakes have been made in countryside management in the past. Good practice guides like that by our previous speaker and this one can hopefully help to avoid these in future.

REFERENCES

Countryside Recreation Network (1995), U.K. Day Visits Survey 1993, Countryside Recreation Network

The Good Practice Guide will be available in Summer 1995.

'Woodlands To Visit in England and Wales, 1995' is available from the Forest Trust for Conservation and Education

MANAGING SPORT AND RECREATION

Case Studies from National Governing Bodies

CASE STUDY ONE:

MANAGING CLIMBING THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE

Jeremy Barlow

Access and Conservation Officer, British Mountaineering Council

There are three main benefits gained by managing climbing through good practice:

- to maintain the important qualities of the cliff and crag environment
- to maintain the quality of experience for participants and others enjoying the countryside
- to maintain the confidence of land owners and managers that there are effective channels of communication open to participants through governing or representative bodies through which problems can be addressed. This confidence is often all that is required to avoid unnecessary access problems to climbing sites and it is a key function of the BMC. Although the BMC has no sanction or formal authority against climbers (hence we regard ourselves as a representative body rather than a governing body) it is our role to try and develop a culture of good practice supported by peer pressure.

From the BMC's extensive experience of promoting good practice there are two clear messages. Firstly that good practice involves far more than codes of practice. Codes are important but their effect is limited and some problems don't have simple or standard solutions which can be summarised. Second, good practice requires the active involvement of participants from the outset. Active climbers are the key to ensuring that good practice is followed on the ground.

Despite its name, most of the British Mountaineering Council's concerns over access and conservation issues do not revolve around mountains but tend to focus on lowland outcrops and sea cliffs which may be near centres of population, are often climbed all year round because of their mild climate and are also often ecologically sensitive. For example, over half the climbing sites in Wales are on SSSIs. To promote good practice on sites throughout Britain and to resolve any difficulties which arise the BMC employs two full time staff and has developed a network of volunteers.

Britain is the birth place of rock climbing and there is an associated tradition and history stretching back over a hundred years. A concern for the beauty and unspoilt nature of climbing areas is part of that tradition. In recent years this concern has taken on a more formal aspect, for example the restrictions on access to over a hundred and fifty bird nesting sites throughout the country, which the BMC negotiates and promotes with a variety of conservation bodies. These restrictions, on some of the best cliffs in the country are supported without exception, a fact of which climbers are rightly proud.

However there are emerging problems which will place the traditional approach to good practice under strain.

Climbing is reportedly one of the fastest growing sports in the country and every climber has tales of crowded crags. The result is greater pressure on the crag, landowners and other users.

The many new and mostly young climbers who are coming to the sport are coming via less traditional routes and may not yet have developed a strong empathy with the countryside.

Also there is a rapidly expanding market in training and outdoor education which itself creates an opportunity for promoting good practice but there is also an increase in more commercially oriented activity centres which further add to the pressures. Difficulties are further increased by having an ever more disparate target group for ideas on good practice. The result of all this is the need for a new approach.

In South East England there is a group of small sandstone outcrops which have provided a much loved and well used climbing ground for two generations of climbers. Both very hard problems and easy training climbs appeal to a broad cross section of users and the proximity to London and lack of other crags results in very heavy levels of use. The soft nature of the rock means that climbers can only either climb solo or with a top rope.

Three serious problems have arisen which in recent years have accelerated rapidly:

- Some of the crags have lost as much as two or three feet of soil from their base, changing the character of many climbs as well as being a serious visual scar.
- The passage of many thousands of climbers has resulted in serious erosion of the rocks themselves. This has been greatly exacerbated by careless use and in some cases by the use of inappropriate footwear.
- Top ropes stretched over the edge of the rock face has on all the popular crags resulted in deep grooves being worn in the rock. With appropriate belaying techniques these could largely be avoided

For a long time local climbers were aware these problems were developing and some piecemeal action was taken. However two years ago a couple of concerned local climbers called an open meeting at one of the crags on a summer Sunday evening after many people would have enjoyed a day's climbing. The meeting attended by nearly a hundred climbers allowed a thorough airing of the problems and produced an agreed programme of action which many local climbers felt a part of. Site managers and centres who regularly used these crags were also closely involved. Since then two further, well attended open meetings have monitored progress.

A range of practical works on site were agreed but perhaps most importantly a plan was drawn up to communicate the essential ideas on good practice which are necessary to prevent further damage. The key to this was to ensure that all local climbers felt they had a stake in the future of the crags and the future of climbing. A logo and slogan were developed to create a sense of identity around the issue and positive signs and leaflets have been produced. All of this has been done by local climbers with the support of the BMC head office wherever possible. Local outdoor centres have contributed, financially as well as with advice, wherever possible. None of this has happened easily. Two years have passed since the first meeting and results are only now just appearing. There has also been controversy, with the logo and slogan having to be dropped because of an apparent similarity with that used by a local commercial operator, and the style chosen for the leaflet has not been to everyone's taste.

However perhaps the most important outcome of the whole effort has been the direct involvement and interest of a body of local climbers who now feel greater responsibility for seeing that good practice is followed. You can have a perfect code of practice and the most professionally produced leaflets and signs but without a body of participants urging others to act with greater sensitivity and demonstrating appropriate techniques, long term benefits will be limited. As this case study illustrates this can only be done by involving users from the outset and ensuring that local ideas based on local experience are at the fore.

In order to develop this style of working the BMC has employed an Access Liaison Officer with the support of the Countryside Commission and the Countryside Council for Wales among other sponsors. One result has been a greatly expanded network of Access Volunteers around the country who can promote the local involvement of climbers as well as being directly involved with individual negotiations. Another development from this approach has been the expansion of the BMC's Access Fund which is currently disbursing around £10,000 a year, much of which goes towards small scale, practical projects on the ground. All this money comes from individuals, climbing clubs, outdoor centres, equipment manufacturers and guidebook publishers.

To summarise, there are six important elements in the promotion of good practice.

1. Quality information—professionally presented
2. Local involvement—a good network of volunteers
3. Local funds—even small sums generated locally can help create a sense of ownership
4. Practical projects—involving participants in local conservation projects can also create a sense of responsibility
5. Continued liaison with land owners and managers, conservation bodies and other users is time consuming but vital
6. Provoking continued debate and discussion on contentious issues is important for future success

The process I have described only works if people feel positive about their involvement, e.g. in the way climbers feel about bird nesting restrictions.

There needs to be greater recognition of the achievements which many sports have made in the areas of good practice and what negative impacts do occur need to be placed in the context of other, far more serious threats to our countryside.

Finally we all need to start acknowledging the social, economic and environmental benefits, which flow from carefully managed sport and recreation in the countryside.

CASE STUDY TWO:

WATER SKIING; LANGSTONE HARBOUR

Ian Hamilton

Chairman, Southern Region British Water Ski Federation

I want to show how, through the formation of a Club, the sport of Water Skiing (which is often seen as a noisy, intrusive, elitist pastime for 'yobs' in speed boats) can coexist with other recreational water users in sensitive areas.

Langstone Harbour is one such example, where for over twenty years, water skiing has continued uninterrupted, despite the fact that it borders the Solent which is one of the busiest areas of water for recreational use in the world.

The Harbour itself has grown and has also become important with regard to Nature Conservation, and the R.S.P.B. are close allies to the Water Ski Club.

With the new "Statement of Purpose & Environmental Commitment" recently issued by the British Water Ski Federation, the Langstone Club are one of the forerunners in implementing the guidelines,

Langstone Harbour is a tidal basin lying between Portsmouth and Hayling Island in the South East corner of Hampshire. Two other harbours are connected to Langstone by water — to the west Portsmouth Harbour, to the east is Chichester Harbour. Langstone harbour is a S.S.S.I and a Ramsar site.

LANGSTONE HARBOUR WATER SKIERS ASSOCIATION

The Langstone Harbour Water Skiers Association has been co-ordinating the water-skiing in Langstone Harbour for the last twenty years at the request of the Langstone Harbour Board.

Most of the members own their own boats, although we welcome associate and family membership. The subs for 1995 are £60.00, of which £23.50 goes to the British Water Ski Federation, £15.00 goes back to the member if they do their patrol and the balance is for our admin. and running costs.

The 'Patrol' is the main factor that the Board allow us to ski in the harbour, each member does one four hour patrol each season. In this way the Harbour Master always has a fast boat at his disposal on the water at busy times such as weekends and Bank Holidays.

The ski season is from 1 April to 31 October, from sunrise to sunset. The designated area is marked out by yellow buoys, and is approximately 1.5 miles long and 800 yards wide at high tide. There is no club boat, no jump, no slalom or trick course, no showers; but there is use of the public slipways and toilets. Most slipways are available at all states of the tide although a 4-wheel drive tow vehicle is essential on a very low tide. The Association does have a large raft in the middle of the area, complete with barbecue and rubbish bin, and this proves to be the main focal point of the Association.

Since the Association joined the British Water Ski Federation in 1985, the Chairman has had the opportunity to sit on the Langstone Harbour Board's 'Advisory Committee' which is made up of the main water users, conservation bodies and officers of the Board. This has enabled the Association to represent itself against the high volume of flack usually encountered by speed boats on the South Coast, and to be able to put suggestions directly to the Board. Over the years this has enabled an excellent basis for co-operation and communication with the conservation bodies to be established. Langstone Harbour Water Skiers Association is often quoted as being an example of 'good practice' within a 'nature sensitive' area.

The chairman is a qualified water ski instructor and Ski Boat Driver Award Tutor and examiner. All boat owning members are encouraged to obtain their Ski Boat Driver Award.

HOW TO WATER-SKI IN LANGSTONE HARBOUR

1. Buy a boat or find a friend with a boat.
2. Insure it with a minimum 3rd party liability of £500,000.
3. Join the Langstone Harbour Water Skiers Association
4. Pay langstone harbour board fees
5. Do one 4 hour patrol of the harbour
6. New members have injections i.e. polio, tetanus, hepatitis etc.
7. Have use of 4-wheel drive for launch & recovery of boat
8. Have plenty of patience with:-
 - Bad weather
 - 3000 ton dredgers
 - Personal water craft (jet skiers)
 - Unlicensed boats
 - Canoeists
 - Fishermen in drifting dingies
 - Shell / dredging fishermen
 - Sub-aqua divers who 'pop up'
 - Wind surfers
 - Learner sailors
 - Moving mud and sand
 - Sewage and floating debris
9. Have care and respect for the wildlife and the environment i.e. take rubbish home, avoid oil & fuel leaks, pick up flotsam
10. Obtain ski boat driver award, or ensure that you drive with care with an observer on board and follow local and national safety guidelines for driving a speed boat for water-skiers
11. Participate in club activities and be pro-active
12. Advise all new-comers to the area of the rules
13. Respect that the water-ski area is in a 'nature sensitive' area, and that we do not own the area, which is open to other harbour users

L.H.W.S.A. / R.S.P.B.

"Thanks to the co-operation of harbour users, Langstone Harbour is rapidly becoming one of the most important sea bird breeding sites in Southern England. We are pleased to announce that since the introduction of restricted landing on the islands, several new breeding species including the common tern and black-headed gull are now well established. Other species are the oyster-catcher, ringed plover and sandwich tern, but the most impressive success story is one of Britain's rarest sea birds, the little tern. This very attractive bird first bred in Langstone Harbour in 1976 and by the late eighties one of Britain's largest and most successful colonies had established.

The R.S.P.B wish to thank all harbour users for their help in saving a place for the birds and to appeal for your continued support in the future. Thanks once again to the L.H.W.S.A. for making wardening the R.S.P.B reserve such a co-operative venture."

Average wintering of birds in the harbour often number 50,000 with over 30,000 dunlin and 7,000 Brent geese. Average summer figures are in excess of 5,000

The L.H.W.S.A. are in constant communication with the R.S.P.B. warden, Andy Polkey who generally states that his problems arise from visitors to the area who are ignorant about the Nature Reserve, and windsurfers who run out of puff and end up on the islands.

Much work is done by the L.H.W.S.A. to ensure that the birds are not disturbed and Andy sends frequent updates to the L.H.W.S.A. detailing the breeding results, human disturbance, other activities and plans for the forthcoming season.

THE FUTURE

The B.W.S.F. acknowledge that the Langstone Harbour Water Skiers Association operate as an area of good practice, and along with the Southern Region keep a finger on the pulse of all activity both on and off the water.

Water in the South of England is in short supply for recreational use so it is very important not to lose any that already has permission for water-skiing.

The local club:-

Monitors their Club behaviour
Keeps up an ongoing dialogue with the R.S.P.B.
Sends out regular newsletters to members to keep them advised
Encourages pro-active water-skiing
Charity work
Teaching of skiers and boat drivers
Encouraging the region's disabled Water-ski Club
Use the raft not the Islands
Registers all powered water ski craft
Insists on 3rd Party Insurance
Encourages the taking of the Ski Boat Driver Award
Promotes liaison with other local agencies
Actively communicates with the Southern Region of the B.W.S.F.

**COMMUNICATION
RATHER THAN
CONFRONTATION
PLAN DON'T BAN**

HIGHLIGHTS OF SPECIFIC PRACTICAL ISSUES AND EXPERIENCES, PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

A) THE SCOTTISH SPORTS COUNCIL

Marsailidh Chisholm

Planning Officer, Scottish Sports Council

POLICY

- The Scottish Sports Council's policy statement—"Sport 2000" which was published in 1990 was criticised for being weak in the area of natural resource based sports. The current review of the document will give a greater emphasis on countryside sports.
- In August 1994 the Council hosted a think-tank at Glenmore Lodge, Aviemore which identified a range of issues for the Council to address as policy statements. The first of these policy statements (on planning for natural resource based sports and physical recreations) is about to be published. It is a detailed document which, in addition to stating the Council's position, aims to give advice to local authorities on how to plan for, and include in development plans, resource based sport.

RESEARCH

- We are currently examining the possibility of commissioning research into information on water based sports. This topic was raised from the Glenmore Lodge workshop and by Scottish Natural Heritage in 'Enjoying the Outdoors'

PLANNING

- National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPG) on Sport and Physical Recreation, Skiing Developments, The Coast, Green Belts and Nature Conservation are awaited from the Scottish Office. Currently development plans are not obliged to include planning for countryside sports, it is hoped that the NPPG on Sport and Physical Recreation will include a statement that development plans should plan for sport and physical recreation.
- The Scottish Office Planning Advice Note on Golf makes clear reference to SCC and the Council's Facilities Planning Model which is available for urban based sport.
- As part of Local Government reorganisation the Scottish Office has commissioned a review of the organisation of Regional Parks in Scotland. The results of this study are unknown as yet.
- The Council is participating with all the estuary fora set up in Scotland to devise integrated management plans for the major estuaries. Estuary fora are currently underway for the Clyde, the Solway and the Firth of Forth with initiatives in the Moray Firth and the Minch.

DATABASES AND GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS

- The Council has recently purchased MapInfo GIS. This will utilise our database of countryside sports to develop and present policies and in conjunction with Ordnance Survey (OS) digital data. It will be used to transform the Countryside Sports database. Currently the database is held on an Informix database. The Scottish Sports Council is also currently involved in the Service Level Agreement with Ordnance Survey.
- We have commissioned the OS to undertake a pilot exercise whereby they will identify from their survey data information relating to sport from a 425 km² area (including rural and urban areas, lochs and coasts) north west of Glasgow. The data will then be compared to our data already held for that area. If this technique is successful it may provide a way of updating elements of our facilities database (but at an unknown cost).

SECRETARIES OF STATE WORKING PARTIES

- The Secretary of State has set up the Cairngorm Partnership to prepare a management strategy for the Cairngorms. The Council expects to be a partner agency advising the Board with no additional funds but greater co-ordination of existing resources.
- Following a fatal accident on Loch Lomond, but prior to the Secretary of State's decision on the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Working Party, the Regional Park Authority issued draft bylaws relating to licensing and speed limits. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 amended the existing legislation to enable bylaws to be promoted without the consent of all riparian owners, they need only be given notice. The bylaws are expected to be approved and there are now other District Councils promoting the application of bylaws for lochs in their areas as there is a perception that there will be some displacement from Loch Lomond if the bylaws proceed. The fear of displacement of motorised water sports from Windermere is seen as heightening the need for such bylaws.

ACCESS

Following Scottish Natural Heritage's review of access in Scotland, SNH instigated an Access Forum which is remitted to address problems relating to access across Scotland. The initial area of study is open hill land.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

The Council operates a Demonstration Programme which funds innovative projects. Current projects include:

- A multi-user path in Buchan along a former railway line. SSC has been funding the monitoring of a 12 mile stretch where horses are allowed in addition to walkers and cyclists although it was found that the most frequent issue raised is that of dog fouling rather than conflicts with horses. A code of conduct for users of the line has been prepared.
- Payrides where a riding club has negotiated access onto private land. Whilst the landowners are happy with the arrangement there have been problems with the roads authority who are concerned with the safety of horses crossing the road and have taken the term payrides to mean that it is a commercial concern and that monies are available to pay for road signs and the like.

Both of these projects will be written up and the projects disseminated to interested parties.

FUTURE PROJECTS

Possible sites for off road cycling are being put forward, these include a country park and an area of Forest Enterprise land. The Council is offering to cover the capital costs of constructing innovative facilities and the cost of monitoring the effectiveness of these new ideas.

CODES OF CONDUCT

- A revision of the Scottish Off Road Cycling Code of Conduct for individuals, jointly prepared with SNH, FA, CTC and SCU is planned. We intend to reprint a larger quantity of the previous print run of 10,000 which were distributed in a matter of months.
- A White Water Rafting Code recently produced by the Scottish Rafting Association has been accepted by the British Canoe Union and the Welsh Canoe Association for adoption and distribution in England and Wales respectively.

STANDARDS

- National Guidelines for Mountain Training have been finalised and were made available in March 1995 by the UK Mountain Training Board and distributed via the Mountain Leader Training Boards.
- The Scottish Activity Holidays Steering Group has been formed by Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Tourist Board for the marketing, promotion, safety, standards and accreditation of activity holiday providers in Scotland. SSC, SNH, COSLA, SAHA and HIE are all represented.

- SSC (via Glenmore Lodge National Outdoor Sports Centre) is in partnership with Grampian Enterprise, the Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Local Enterprise Councils in a new initiative within Grampian Highlands to improve access to training, to raise the standards of delivery and to develop tourism opportunities within the activities holiday sector.

MOUNTAIN SAFETY

- The Scottish Mountain Safety Group (serviced and funded by SSC) has continued its education remit by producing leaflets and posters on mountain safety aimed at all mountain users in Scotland. They are seeking wide distribution of the material out of Scotland in view of the many non-Scots enjoying the Scottish mountains.
- SMSG recently held a fact-finding seminar on the advantages and limitations of modern technological aids such as mobile phones, transceivers and GPS receivers in mountain safety.

B) THE SPORTS COUNCIL

Roger Orgill

Senior Development Officer, Countryside & Water, Sports Council for Great Britain

INTRODUCTION

The Sports Council's policy statement "A Countryside for Sport", published in 1992 sets out the Council's policies for those sporting or recreational activities recognised by the Sports Council which are dependent on access to the countryside. The broad policy guidance contained in the statement has since helped to shape the strategies of the Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation and has given clear guidance to partners and potential partners as to the Council's approach in the development of countryside and water sports.

RESTRUCTURING AND PRIORITIES

As an outcome of proposals put forward in July 1994 the National Heritage Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, recently announced the membership of the new English Sports Council which will be established from 1 January 1996. The focus of the English Sports Council will be towards programmes in support of sport for young people and the development of excellence.

Whilst advocating the continuity of its earlier Sport for All approach, the English Sports Council (ESC) will be concentrating its resources in future on key programme areas of young people and the development of pathways and opportunities for the achievement of excellence. The ESC will, however, continue to promote sport and active recreation in the countryside in respect of these priority objectives and to take a wide policy and strategic interest in countryside issues. The Council will also continue to provide grant aid support to those sports and activities based on the national resources of the countryside for land, air and water sports.

NATIONAL LOTTERY

Similar to other sporting activity, applications from local authorities and others for projects relating to countryside-based activities will be eligible for consideration for National Lottery funding. The Council's remit under the National Lottery will be to ensure all sports and all geographical areas achieve, overtime, a fair and equal distribution of National Lottery Funds. The Lottery therefore presents a new and exciting challenge and opportunity for countryside and water sports. This challenge is already being met by countryside and water sports with proposals for development of a national recreational cycle route from Dover to Inverness (based on route off main highways) development of countryside and water sports in the National and Community Forests, plus a significant number of project applications from sports such as sailing, sub aqua and our first application from hang-gliding!

ENVIRONMENT BILL

In its submission to consultation on the Environment Bill, the Sports Council has drawn attention to the importance of the countryside resource including the coastal belt for sport and active recreation in the achievement of the Council's objectives. In regard to National Parks, the Council's evidence states that a considerable proportion of the estimated 100 million countryside trips taken in 1993 by people pursuing sporting interests of those living in National Parks must also be fully considered.

The key issues emerging from the Bill and the draft guidance which could have major implications for sport and active recreation within National Parks are what the purposes of the

Parks should be? How the relative importance of these purposes should be weighted against one another? And how the needs of sport and recreation are addressed by the National Park Authorities (NPAs)?

The Sports Council has serious concerns with regard to the revised and subsequently amended second purpose of National Parks. Whilst the Council accepts that National Parks should primarily be places for quiet enjoyment, they are not places of complete tranquillity. We live on a densely populated island which offers few places of total peace and quiet. Within the boundaries of National Parks there is, for example considerable tourism, farming, quarrying and other industrial activity. Withdrawal from overseas bases is also likely to increase the use of National Parks for military activities.

The different characteristics of National Parks was recognised in the Dower Report which stated:

"there will have to be, from place to place, some sacrifice of those scenic delicacies which are only possible among the untrodden ways, and of the completely peaceful seclusion which cannot be enjoyed by more than a very few at a time."

The Sandford Report also recognised that "in some areas intensive recreational use would be appropriate Some parts of National Parks are capable of being used intensively and could with good management absorb great numbers of visitors".

LEGISLATION OR GUIDANCE

Whilst accepting that legislation should not be too prescriptive, the Sports Council is concerned that the current wording of Part III of the Environment Bill does not adequately protect the interests of sport and recreation. Although the draft guidance, in general, clarifies current Government policy on how the legislation should be interpreted, there is no statutory obligation for National Park Authorities (NPAs) and other public bodies to follow it. As the Council has found with Policy Planning Guidance Note 17 "Sport and Recreation", the quality of guidance is important and can be extremely useful. However, an NPA which does not support a particular sporting activity in a National Park could easily interpret the legislation in a different way to that set out in the Government's guidance in order to restrict the activity.

Recreation has always had a legitimate place in the countryside and in National Parks. The Dower, Sandford and Edwards Reports, all explicitly stated that National Parks can, and should, provide a wide range of sporting and recreational opportunities. It is very clear from all of these reports and subsequent Government statements that a wide range of activities should be permitted in National Parks, and although only the quieter ones should be promoted, there are places where motorised sports and other lively activities should be permitted. The Sports Council believes the interests of sport and recreation would be best served by enshrining within the Environmental Bill the Government's understanding of what the purposes of National Parks, and the duties of NPAs, should be in such a way that there can be no misinterpretation or ambiguity.

THE SANDFORD PRINCIPLE

The Sports Council welcomes the Government's continued commitment to the Sandford Principle in its draft guidance to the Bill. The Council, and many other sport and non-sport organisations, believe that most conflicts within National Parks can be initially avoided and ultimately resolved by good planning and management initiatives. The Council is, however, extremely concerned that current wording (Clause 59), would severely reduce the duty on NPAs and other bodies fully to attempt to resolve conflicts between the two purposes of National Parks.

Whilst the Council would, in general, agree that the interests of both recreation and conservation have been served in National Parks over the years, this is more a result of sensible management and application of the Sandford Principle by NPAs rather than the principle itself. By only needing to identify the appearance of conflict and having no obligation to attempt to reconcile any conflicts that may occur, NPAs could have saved themselves considerable financial and human resources. Bearing in mind the financial difficulties faced by some NPAs, the financial incentive that exists could tempt NPAs not to pursue management solutions in conflict resolution.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF SPORTING ACTIVITY

In its submission to the Environment Select Committee the Council has drawn attention to the minimal impact of sporting activity and to measures being taken by all national governing bodies of sport to develop and promote codes of practice aimed at safeguarding natural resources. The work of the Sports Council in the identification and promotion of good practice, particularly through its extensive publications on the subject, has been referred to by other agencies as being valuable in the good management of sporting activity and the reduction in environmental impact.

Within the context of PPG17: Planning for Sport, the Council has also reiterated its intention to work co-operatively in providing a range of opportunities for the pursuit of sport and active recreation close to centres of population. The Council's direct support in the achievement of opportunities in Community Forests for example, has been demonstrated by the appointment of a full-time National Sports Development Officer aimed at influencing Community Forest Plans in the early stages of their development. The Council believes that in support of the sustainable development principle greater use must be made of new opportunities in and around urban areas where the bulk of the population lives, with reduced or more considerate use of prime areas for what might be termed introductory or foundation experiences.

THE STATUTORY PLANNING PROCESS

The Council, in liaison with the Department of the Environment, is anxious to assist in monitoring and assessing the impact and effectiveness of PPGs and to suggest ways in which guidance can be strengthened and developed in providing for sport in land use planning. Since the publication of PPG17 the Sports Council has now published over 40 reports which seek to develop the national guidance and advice which will be of assistance to local authorities in "translating" the national guidance into how to plan for sport and recreation at the local level. These reports are contained in the Council's two factfile publications on "Countryside and Water Recreation and Planning and Provision" for Sport. This is also applicable in respect of coastal strategies currently under consideration.

PROMOTION OF GOOD PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

In the identification and promotion of good planning and management of sport and active recreation in the countryside, the Sports Council is committed to co-operative working with partners within the Countryside Recreation Network. Today sees the launch of a joint study with the Countryside Commission carried out by Oxford Brookes University Planning Department and later this year a similar study carried out by Loughborough University on behalf of the Sports Council and Forestry Commission will also be launched.

In conjunction with Losehill Hall, the Council within its Education and Training Programme is arranging a number of residential and day seminars aimed at all those concerned with planning, management and conservation resources. Greater attention will, in future, be given to influencing colleges and institutions offering professional training through the new network established to ensure better communication generally in matters relating to sports provision.

C) RECREATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Stephen Wilson

Countryside Sports Development Officer, Sports Council for Northern Ireland

This morning I aim to give you an overview of the current situation within Northern Ireland. You will of course be aware that Northern Ireland has recently taken a big step forward, after a number of months of eager anticipation the long-awaited framework document has been produced. Now, before you jump to the conclusion that I have picked up the wrong speech today, allow me, in true Northern Irish political speak, to provide some clarification.

I am not intending to talk about the government's framework document on political progress in Northern Ireland; rather, I am referring to the eagerly anticipated Sports Policy Framework on Countryside and Water Recreation. I realise that I am digressing somewhat from the title of this session, specific issues, but in true Celtic fashion I am adhering to a well-founded adage.

"A text without a context is but a mere pretext".

My objective therefore this morning is to examine very briefly the Northern Ireland context for the planning and management of Sport in the Countryside before explaining the role that the Sports Council plans to take over the next 4 years.

If we can turn quickly to the Northern Ireland context I would propose using the following framework to help us grasp the dynamics within the situation. The key issues that I want us to look at can be grouped under three headings: general, providers and resources, and lastly recreation groups and governing bodies.

GENERAL

The first point to make under the general heading is that of the scale of opportunities for countryside recreation. The 1994 Access to the Countryside Report, produced by Peter Scott Planning Services, confirmed that opportunities for informal recreation are severely restricted; Northern Ireland is indeed a classic example of the "honey pot" principle in action.

Secondly, whilst there is a shortage of good quality quantitative data on participation figures, recent studies have shown that there is a growing demand for Countryside and Water activities. However a lack of information has generated a low awareness of the opportunities which exist outside of the "honey pot" sites.

The third general point to make is that, in common with Great Britain, there has been a proliferation in the number of conservation groups, at both regional and local level in Northern Ireland. The growing awareness of green issues which prevails today has enabled some organisations to take on a higher political profile at the same time as increasing their ownership has heightened general awareness of environmental issues.

Finally it is against this background of limited countryside recreational opportunities compounded by poor information and general awareness of opportunities, that we need to view the lowly position that planning and the status of Countryside Recreation currently occupies on most agencies' agendas.

A good example of this is provided by the agency responsible for planning control, the DoE Planning service. Currently the DoE Planning service do not recognise sport and recreation as a strategic issue. Consequently, no equivalent of the Policy Planning Guidance Note is available within Northern Ireland.

PROVIDERS AND RESOURCES

This example leads us neatly onto the second of the headings, Providers and Resources and here I propose just to mention the Public agencies as time does not permit a fuller analysis.

The fact that Northern Ireland does not have a single national agency with Countryside Conservation and Recreation as its core purpose i.e. no Countryside Commission or Countryside Council for Wales which is well illustrated in terms of practical management tools such as landscape designations.

In essence those which exist currently are preservation-biased. Although a number of these designations do cater for informal recreation the recent Scott report highlighted the fact that more effort was placed on fulfilling conservation objectives rather than developing recreation objectives within these designations.

Consequently, in terms of policies, we have a situation where agencies have been operating, quite often in splendid isolation of each other which leads to duplication of effort, dissipation of resources and loss of synergys. This fragmented approach means that opportunities which currently exist under the headings of agricultural reforms, tourism and of course the development of a stable peace will inevitably be under-optimised. In such a rural based economy as Northern Ireland it is essential that these opportunities are seized when available. In real terms the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is promoting a rural based activity policy for products such as riding, walking, angling and golfing holidays which risk exploiting the limited opportunities available to local residents.

RECREATION GROUPS AND GOVERNING BODIES

I referred earlier to the fact that there was a perceived growth taking place in Countryside and Water sports within Northern Ireland. This has been aided and indeed encouraged by technological developments with the arrival of, for example mountain biking and jet skiing into the Province. These technological developments have consequently given rise to new conflicts of interest between user groups and this has in turn lead to a re-examination of the roles and responsibilities of governing bodies. It is understood that identified governing bodies are often held responsible for all users' actions. Whilst this may not have been of concern in the past given the low level occurrence of conflict situations it is proving to be much more relevant today. The fragmented hallmark which symbolises government agencies approaches is also reflected in the governing bodies within Northern Ireland. To date there has not been an effective lobby pressurising for new development in Countryside Recreation. External and internal pressures are however causing this situation to change.

SPORTS COUNCIL PROGRAMME

I will now move on to the Sports Council's programme. In response to the wide range of issues affecting the development of Countryside and Water Recreation, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland has drawn up a number of policy principles which will shape activities in this field.

These include, for example, a commitment to the principle of sustainable and responsible use of natural facilities for sport and recreation and responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting Countryside and Water Recreation sites.

These principles are not of course unique to Northern Ireland and indeed are endorsed by the other Home Country Councils. I will therefore move straight into a brief explanation of the programmes of activity which are being developed as a result of these policy principles as these will help provide specific examples of different approaches to managing and planning Sport in the Countryside.

We have established three main programmes:

Programme 1 has been designed with the objective of developing an effective network of agencies supporting and lobbying for Countryside and Water Recreation. This programme really hits the crux of the issue -- in other words, elevating the subject to a much higher position on both

public and voluntary agencies agendas and securing a commitment towards strategic planning for this field. The catalyst in achieving this objective is the production of a Northern Ireland-wide Countryside and Water Recreation Strategy. This strategy which will be commissioned within the current financial year, will involve the key stakeholders and will attempt to produce a joint working programme. Common ownership will be the key theme -- it will not be identified as the Sports Council's Strategy. Early soundings have produced very positive feedback from the potential key stakeholders. The Council's "Young People in Sport" strategy provides a successful precedent. Watch this space for details!

The second sub-objective relates to the need to develop an effective governing body lobby for Countryside and Water Recreation. This programme will involve the appointment of a Countryside and Water Activities Officer to be managed by the governing bodies. This proposal has again acted as a catalyst in pulling together governing bodies and breaking down stereotypes by encouraging them to discuss issues of common interest which are effecting their activities. In somewhere the size of Northern Ireland this is a realistic aim.

The second programme has been established with an objective of promoting and advising on sustainable use and management of natural resources for sport. Sub-objectives within this programme include for example identifying and disseminating good management practice and user agreements, ensuring representation of Countryside and Water Recreation interests in appropriate management fora, and that old "chestnut" of reconciling conflict situations involving recreation groups.

The third and final programme relates to the objective of increasing public awareness of and opportunities for participation in Countryside and Water Recreation Activities. This programme, it is hoped, will see the initiation of a Countryside Recreation Information Service within the Province and will help to increase opportunities by demonstrating the feasibility of increasing urban-based countryside recreational opportunities. Already the latter sub-objective is being met through such schemes as the development of a new Belfast Hills Regional Park and the development of water-based opportunities was within the Laganside re-development scheme.

D) RECREATION MANAGEMENT IN WALES

John Harrison

Planning Officer, Sports Council For Wales

Two examples in Wales illustrate how:

1. Control was achieved without statutory regulation;
2. An area was opened up by voluntary agreement.

SNOWDONIA

The 'Wales on Sunday' headline for 29 September 1991 read "Snowdon Mountain Bike Menace". Snowdonia National Park (SNP) had applied, without consulting users, to Gwynedd County Council for a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to ban cycles from a bridleway to the summit.

There were problems, with up to 100 cyclists and 1000 walkers reaching the summit on the busiest summer days. Cyclists can descend many parts swiftly and there were too many examples of them not giving way to walkers, although the only reliably reported injury at the time was to a cyclist.

After approaches from the Sports Council for Wales (SCW) and users, SNP agreed to a meeting which established that a voluntary agreement was possible provided everyone accepted that no solution would receive total compliance and the object was to achieve sufficient change to reduce risks to acceptable levels.

Cycling is under voluntary restriction from 1000-1700 hours between 1 June and 30 September (132 days). In the first year the numbers reaching the top fell from 630 to 157 and by 1994 was 86, two riders every three days. This is judged acceptable by all.

CASTLEMARTIN CLIFFS

This is an area of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP) which is exceptional for its coastal cliffs, nesting birds, and climbing of European interest. There had been managed access to the easterly of two firing ranges with prohibitions tailored to bird nesting locations and seasons.

In 1992 climbers summarily trespassed on a westerly range to force the Army to grant access. Conservation interests supported controlled access to an area where anything which could tolerate firing survived unmolested by people or livestock. The MOD agreed, despite great pressure not to yield, to discuss how much activity could be allowed without affecting MOD interests unacceptably.

There has been access each year since, under a permit issued after group leaders (for walkers) and all climbers, have attended a thorough briefing on the dangers. Compliance on both east and west ranges is very high and conservation interests have no serious concerns. The MOD remains concerned that access is not appropriate unless the very highest levels of control and compliance are exercised.

Access to sites of very special conservation, landscape, recreational and military value remains, but in a state of tension. Extensive liaison takes place each year and a partnership scheme funds a warden to help oversee management.

A SPORTING CHANCE FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

The Snowdon scheme, and other examples of good practice, is written up in a joint SCW/CCW publication, "A Sporting Chance for the Countryside" available from each agency.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND COUNTRYSIDE BILL

Robert Gillespie

Chapman Warren, Town Planning and Development Consultants

INTRODUCTION

May I thank you for being invited to give a planner's view of the implications for sport in the countryside arising from the Bill. As a planner, my paper will therefore address the land use planning implications which will reveal themselves through the development plans system and in the processing of planning applications by the planning authorities.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT Setting the scene

Sustainable development—a term which is littering many planning documents to varying degrees of effect. Sustainability as a concept, is however, with us to stay. I've heard lots of people try to explain the term, in all manner of situations. It is a fundamental principle and is being applied to all land use policy making. The most widely used definition is;

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

This is all very interesting but how is it being applied to active sport and recreation?

The Government in its 1994 publication “Sustainable Development—The UK strategy”, sees such activity (as part of leisure) as representing a strongly growing pressure on the environment. The impacts are seen as taking three forms;

- Direct—on site such as overcrowding, wear and tear, noise and disturbance.
- Indirect—such as off site consequences including traffic to and from attractions.
- Associated—demand for inappropriate development.

The Government has concluded that;

“Both the leisure industries and the public must become more aware of the consequences of their [leisure] activities and of the close relationship between the pursuit of leisure and conservation of the environment”.

Sustainable development also has significant implications for the future distribution and location of new housing, employment development, commercial and retail proposals. The objectives include the need to reduce energy consumption and, through reducing travel distance/time, CO2 emissions. Added to this are the long standing objectives of protecting the countryside “for its own sake” and the encouragement of the reuse and rehabilitation of vacant, derelict or redundant urban land.

So what is the future picture ? We know that at present around three quarters of the UK's population (about 43 million) live in the urban area. Sustainable development, as translated through new development plans, is to re-emphasise the concentration of future growth within and around the urban areas, in close proximity to major transport corridors. By the year 2030 our population will have risen from 58 million (1992) to 62 million. The increased provision for new housing and employment in the locations will place firstly, far greater pressure on available retained open space (such as parks and playing fields) in the urban areas but secondly, as an obvious and natural consequence (as is historically proven with the mass trespass movement of the 1930's and national parks response), an ever more heightened desire to find mental stimulus and release beyond the urban areas. Active recreation and sport will surely continue to increase in importance to society—the great outdoors will be even more regarded as a place to “let off steam”.

Such demand for leisure space will include the more active, adrenaline sports including physical challenge, speed, motorised and adventure pursuits.

The next question you have to ask is whether we have a system which can adequately respond to the present demand and, increasingly in the future, a process which can rationally provide adequate opportunities in a sustainable manner

What about the environmental constraints? Well, we have a great deal of countryside when viewed from the air but when examined in detail, we often find layers of constraint. Twenty five percent of England and Wales is within either Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Green Belt. Whilst outdoor sport and recreation is not necessarily precluded in these areas, such designations do restrict say the siting of facilities and scale of associated development. Nine percent of England and Wales is within designated National Parks. Some six and a half percent of England and Wales is designated SSSI.

Add to this;

- Areas of Great Landscape Value
- Heritage Coasts
- Nature Reserves
- Historic landscapes including battlefields
- Strategic gaps
- Wildlife corridors
- World Heritage sites
- Ancient monuments
- Archaeological sites
- Flood plains
- Ministry of defence training grounds
- Higher grade agricultural land
- Common lands etc. etc.

The list only ever gets longer—it rarely if ever shortens.

Each constraint has a land use implication. It will have varying degrees of sensitivity and in some instances designations may even overlap.

Such designations also bring with them the involvement of interest bodies ranging from statutory consultees such as English Nature and English Heritage and their Scottish and Welsh counterparts, through to the RSPB, CPRE, Ramblers' Association etc. All will have their own agendas, different perspectives and priorities and, importantly pursue their interest as a single issue. The aim is to achieve a balance, but who decides the terms?

Who carries out the weighing? Does "sustainable" development mean maintaining the status quo when the balancing is too great a task for those responsible? Whatever else, single issue objection in the planning system is, without doubt more likely to be sympathetically received by those administering the process when aired by environmental bodies than by sporting. This problem is increasingly apparent in a countryside which is regarded by so many as sacrosanct "for its own sake", yet will have remain capable of providing opportunities for sport and active recreation, both now and in the future.

The character of the landscape is a major influence on the types of activities which people want to pursue. Mountains are rugged terrain, providing opportunities for adventure and challenge. Places where skills can be tested, in an environment at its most basic. Mountainous landscapes are also however, valued for their tranquillity, remoteness and "unspoilt" naturalness.

Former man made gravel pits, in the unexceptional landscapes of major river floodplains on the other hand, are good locations for active watersports; they are also increasingly regarded as a valuable nature conservation resource for over wintering or breeding water fowl. In fewer and fewer instances will we find little potential for one form of conflict or another.

So how does the Environment Bill fit into this picture?

It is a Bill which is currently going through Parliament. It has recently been debated in the House of Commons (following various Lords amendments) and during which the Secretary of State for the Environment stated that the new national environment agencies would aim to look at the environment more "in the round" with balance "at the heart of sustainable development".

The core of the Bill will be the establishment of the Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, SEPA. These are new bodies—an unusual step for this government. The agencies are intended to bring about a more integrated approach to environmental regulation and management. This primarily relates to water resources, waste and pollution. The agencies are intended to foster good management, but will have strong back up powers. To a large extent their operation absorbs and merges the functions or powers currently with other bodies such as the NRA.

It will, as a process, lead to the more extensive use of cost benefit analysis in the assessment of all manner of proposals. It will include those proposals for sport and active recreation in areas regarded as sensitive and may sit alongside the informal and formal environmental impact assessments now in regular use in the planning system.

Those involved with the provision of sport must be prepared to demonstrate the benefits of sport activity in tangible, socio-economically quantifiable terms, if it is to be given its proper "weight" in future cost benefit analysis.

The Environment Agency will have the duty of establishing Regional Environment Protection Advisory Committees for England and Wales.

The duties of the agencies which are likely to be of relevance to sport and active recreation are:

- The promotion of conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of inland and coastal waters, associated land, flora and fauna.
- The promotion of the use of such waters and associated land for recreational purposes.

By far the most interesting area of the Bill however, is contained in Part III which deals with the National Parks. The Bill establishes independent administrative functions for all National Parks and also introduces revised purposes.

National Park purposes are currently defined in the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. Their twin purposes are defined in Sections 5(1) and (2). The Parks were designated for:

- their natural beauty and
- the opportunities they afford open air recreation, having regard both to their character and their position in relation to centres of population.

The aim of this legislation was the preservation and enhancement of the natural beauty whilst promoting such areas for enjoyment by the public. The twin purposes had equal status and, as a consequence, presented us from day one with a recipe for conflict where the purposes clashed. Which should have priority?

In the mid 1970's, the Sandford Committee examined this issue as part of its appraisal of the national parks. Even in the 1970's the national parks were under heavy pressure from visitors and finding it hard to cope.

Sandford contained important concepts. One is called the "Sandford Principle" and which was then placed in government guidance contained in Circular 4/76. The "original" wording of the "Principle", stated:

"12. By developing the capacity of suitable areas to absorb greater numbers of the more gregarious visitors, pressures may be diverted from the wilder and more sensitive areas. But where it is not possible to prevent excessive or unsuitable use by such means, so that conflict between the dual purposes becomes acute, the first one must prevail in order that the beauty and ecological qualities of the national parks may be maintained".

Sandford was not suggesting that any particular forms of activity were to be excluded from the Parks—he made that clear. What Sandford established was that only when the conflict became "irreconcilable" through such means, should the first purpose prevail over the second. This test became embodied in both Circular 4/76 (paragraph 4) and PPG17 (paragraph 3.8). It did detect and anticipate, continued pressure recommending the development of "counter attractions" both within and outside the Park's boundaries. This is particularly relevant to motorised water sports.

The second important concept was the recognition that (paragraph 14.11) in the treatment of noisy pursuits, there may be limited exceptions where noisy sports had been established with developed facilities or where they were temporarily tolerated before relocation. This advice was also embodied in Circular 4/76 (paragraph 52).

Clause 58 of the Bill concerns "Quiet Enjoyment". The clause has been amended during its course through Parliament. The amendment has its origins in the Edwards Panel report (which endorsed the Sandford Principle) of 1991. The government's response in 'Fit for the Future' was published a year later and embraced much of the Panel's findings. It alluded to the incorporation of the principle of "quiet enjoyment" within any redefined national parks purposes.

When the Bill was published however, the new twin purposes under clause 58 did not use the term: the purposes originally proposed:

- conserving and enhancing the national beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas specified.
- promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.

The House of Lords introduced the term "quiet enjoyment" into the second purpose. Both are to have equal status. The Commons has not rejected this amendment, however it is clear that the term will have to be very carefully defined in the legislation which finally emerges and in any subsequent government advice, (National Parks circular).

The phrase itself is open to many interpretations. This is why, I suspect, it didn't make the original draft of the Bill, particularly as its application by overzealous litigators could end up with some extremely severe implications for, say, established motorised sport and active recreation if taken through the courts.

From my experience at Windermere, retrospective application would cause major problems both directly as a consequence to the sports themselves and indirectly, as an impact on the local economy. What is quiet enjoyment? I was told that there were also moves to ban sailing from Lake Coniston, as the sails were too brightly coloured and looked out-of-place. Are they being considered as too loud?! The definition is to be the subject of further consideration by Parliamentary Committee.

Clause 59 of the Bill amends Section 11 of the 1949 Act. First, it requires the Park Authorities to have regard to the economic and social well-being of their local communities in exercising their functions. Second, it addresses the issue of conflict between the twin purposes. It states that if it appears that there is a conflict between those purposes, greater weight be attached to the first purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the designated area.

It looks, on the face of it as though the Sandford Principle, which it is claimed has been "enshrined" in the legislation, has been misapplied. The key is "irreconcilable conflict" i.e. that which cannot be overcome through visitor management methods or "such means".

I would like to be generous and put this down to sloppy drafting. It could potentially however, lead to those administering the parks deciding not to pursue management measures at the first sign of a conflict between the two purposes!

What does the Bill mean for sports and active recreation? Has it got an even wider application?

Firstly, the sports and active recreational pursuits which are likely to be perceived as out-of-place in national parks face an uncertain future. My response to those the subject of such concerns as there must be, is to get your "acts together". This means:

- Improving the image of the sport:
 - discipline
 - co-operation
 - behaviour towards other activities
- More direct involvement by the sports governing bodies
 - take the initiative—don't wait for something to go wrong so that the sport is placed on the defensive unreasonably.
- Liaison and co-operation with the responsible authorities.
- Codes of Practice/Codes of Conduct
 - Vital in demonstrating a genuine response.
 - back up powers through membership of the sports bodies.
- Management Plans for sensitive sites
 - wide consultation.
 - The wider implications the planning system.

Second, I have already detected "quiet enjoyment" policies being introduced into general countryside policies of local plans. This is the most obvious extension of the concept into the widest countryside application. Such a situation has developed in Mid Suffolk for example, (The Mid Suffolk Local Plan June 1994). This has been the subject of some extraordinary correspondence between Trevor Brooking on behalf of the Sports Council and the Chairman of the District Council.

The main point is that the planning system has now been fundamentally affected by the introduction of Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. It is a plan led system. All decisions on planning applications are to be primarily influenced by what the development plan says about particular proposals.

This means influencing the plan during its formulation. I have to report that sport and active recreation is not well represented in local plans. Despite PPG17, these issues are treated by the planning process as much less important than say housing, employment or retail. The lack of statutory consultee status amongst those who represent sport has much to do with this.

Those formulating local plans have, and I know because I've been there, have a tendency to treat sport alongside allotments, the need for playing pitches (NPFA standards) and footpaths.

Housing, employment and retail (shopping) policies are generally based on requirements quantified in County Structure Plans, which in turn base their content on regional guidance.

Sport and active recreation is rarely, if ever, the subject of a quantifiable requirement established in policy text in the Structure Plan. It is therefore entirely down to the discretion of the district authority, as to whether it makes the effort to proactively plan for, or allocate sites for sport and

active recreation. More often than not the approach is to simply put in place negative policy frameworks which start "Proposals for sport and recreation in the countryside will only be permitted where".

The list of tests through criteria which are then applied probably rule out the use of good sites, particularly water bodies where a nature conservation interest has been perceived for example.

Once the plan is in this mode it is difficult to avoid the traps of policies which can be hijacked by single issue objector groups, i.e. the opportunity for balancing has gone.

You are then faced with two decision taking stages:

- The planning officers—many of whom will see their duty as maintaining the status quo.
- The members of the planning committee who will wish to appear "green" and are sympathetically disposed towards the views of objectors—its usually political expediency that wins in the end! Reason for refusal? "We don't want it here we just don't want it!"

My recommendations are simple:

All those involved in sport and active recreation must take a far more direct and active involvement in the planning process. You must seek to influence the plans during their formulation.

Planning authorities should be pressed to make greater effort to identify sites for sport and active recreation in their plans. To do this they need to know:

- What the demand for such use is in their area.
- What potential sites they have.

The sports bodies should assist local authorities in identifying sites for specific use by noisy sports and also in the identification and development of counter attractions. This is a UK wide issue.

Planning authorities are often unlikely to want to recognise that they have sites of sometimes regional or national importance within their boundaries. Where such sites are being considered the fullest case needs to be made in order to make the authorities aware of the consequences of any attempts to impede the site's reasonable continued development.

The Sports Council—through its regions needs to achieve statutory consultee status so its views have the same status as say English Nature or English Heritage.

Planning authorities and others must be persuaded to make the effort needed to provide opportunities for sport and active recreation in the countryside. This must be seen as a complementary response to other consequences of the concept of sustainable development.

In conclusion we are a small island. We do not have much room in which to play unlike the national parks of say North America or even New Zealand.

The concept of sustainability is to going to reinforce urban living at higher densities. Open space in the countryside as a venue to "let off steam" through sport and active recreation is going to be even more essential in the future than it is now.

Future generations will want to know why we failed to plan ahead; by taking the initiative, sports must prove that they can be properly regarded as sustainable forms of activity in a sensitive environment.

WORKSHOP ONE:

RECREATION VERSUS CONSERVATION: CONFLICT OR CONSENSUS?

Workshop leader: Roger Sidaway

Roger Sidaway introduced the Workshop topic by referring to techniques of environmental mediation. He indicated that conflicts often arise from relationships which develop between two or more groups; often in a context of change and uncertainties about the future. Emphasis is given to conflicts arising between recreation and users and local communities—especially where new activities, noise or other disturbances, or competing priorities in respect of conservation versus development are concerned.

The resolution of conflict is about the exercise of power and often involves a series of “hidden agendas”. In this sense, conflict resolution is a political process. A key issue is how best to consult and involve interested parties in conflict resolution processes.

Roger Sidaway suggested that conflicts can often be resolved by;

- bringing people together at an early stage and encouraging/bestowing a sense of “joint ownership” of the problem situation
- developing a process of constructive negotiation—in the USA this often involves an external mediator, who adopts a neutral role in respect of the conflict situation
- striving to achieve a balance in the agendas and terms of reference of those involved in the (potential) conflict situation
- ensuring that relevant information is available to all parties, is objective and is neutral
- ensuring that all participants feel that they have a role to play and can exert influence, and ensuring that the representatives of interest groups are truly representative of the constituencies which they purport to represent.

Workshop participants expressed concerns about;

- inevitable conflicts between national interests and community interests in national parks and similar situations
- the lack of representation of some key conservation interests at the Conference (e.g. English Nature, National Park Authorities)
- the increasing politicisation of Government agencies
- apparent reductions in opportunities for consultations in the planning process and the more restrictive nature of some statutory plans.

Progress in resolving conflicts may be achieved through:

- the identification and involvement of all those involved in potential/actual conflict situations and identification of common ground amongst those concerned
- recognition that the livelihood or general welfare of some of those involved in conflict situations may be at risk (e.g. farmers, local communities)
- unitary development plans providing enabling policies for sport and recreation, rather than more prescriptive (often negative) statements
- use of more flexible planning and management tools and consensus-building approaches (e.g. countryside and water recreation strategies, “planning for real” approaches involving local communities, preparation of joint statements of intent between recreational interests, access forums)
- increased training and dissemination of good practice on confidence building and consensus building approaches to problem solving.

It was suggested that conflicts were often more the result of rhetoric than reality, and that the extent of many conflicts is often not as great as they are “hyped up” to be. Emphasis should be given to opportunities rather than issues.

WORKSHOP TWO:

A PEACEFUL COUNTRYSIDE: MYTH OR REALITY?

Workshop leader: Sue Glyptis

Sue Glyptis opened the session with four questions: What does it mean? Who determines it? How does sport disturb it? And how do you achieve a peaceful countryside?

The first point raised by the workshop was: peaceful to whom? An individual a group or an accord of users? Does peaceful mean empty or even derelict or could it mean low flying jets in the countryside?

Does peaceful = quiet = enjoyment = natural beauty? This point generated debate about how we perceive a quiet countryside today as a reflection of Victorian Britain based on Wordsworth and Ruskin and that in fact their Britain was a noisy dirty place.

Does peace always equate to external peace? It could mean inner peace or a peace which is found in art galleries and churches. It was agreed that peace is a subjective state of mind and that it was conflicts between users affecting the status quo which defined non peace.

Discussion then centred upon what is countryside. Again it could mean many things to many people depending what the norm was for that individual. This could mean that countryside dwellers have different concerns to town dwellers when it comes to peace in the countryside. Is peace a function of people being able to peruse their chosen activity? Is it societies' rules and constraints which define peace?

Demands on the countryside were identified as people, space, activity and time with users of the countryside identified as aesthiests activists and populists. Although space is needed for all three groups the first group have the greatest influence thought with no political control. Some argued that you can't categorise people so readily and are you dealing with people or states of mind? Do you monitor changing attitudes or attitudes imposed on the majority? In this scenario it is beyond the influence of sport and recreation. Conflicts might arise over perceptions and aspirations.

Debate then moved onto whether conflicts were really between differing sports and not between other users and sports. Reference was made to the Edwards Report which some had interpreted as the silent majority being in favour of silence. The Sports Council for Wales research had shown the most people were happy with most things in the National Parks. Is it the role of the Planning System to identify the right activity in the right location? But then there is no money for implementation. Is there a need for a National Planning Strategy for noisy sports?

WORKSHOP THREE

PROMOTION OF GOOD PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNING BODIES

Workshop leaders: Jeremy Barlow and Ian Hamilton

An interesting discussion took place between delegates, with the following main points coming through.

Throughout the outdoor sports it appears that there are more people pursuing each sport than are affiliated to a National Governing Body (NGB).

It was noted however that most NGBs are endeavouring to make headway into recruiting their non-affiliated participants, however much of their time is also spent fighting to protect areas where their sport is carried out; often leaving insufficient time and manpower to promote positive policies.

Most NGBs are pushing forward for better consultation at a very early stage by planners and conservationists: They are citing areas of good practice and model policies in "planners language" to ensure the continuity of their sport. This could also be done by the NGBs pushing local and district planners to attend training days through the CCPR.

One ideal way of promoting the existence of the NGBs is via the sale of relevant sports gear, this however has received great resistance from the sports gear manufacturers, which is a point that ought to be addressed at a very high level.