

# Opening up Access in and Around Towns

2002 Workshop Proceedings  
of the  
Countryside Recreation Network

Edited by Liz Davies  
CRN Manager

Formatted by Christine Heywood  
Network Assistant



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Countryside Recreation Network

Department of City and Regional Planning

Cardiff University

Glamorgan Building

King Edward VII Avenue

Cardiff, CF10 3WA

Tel: 029 2087 4970

Fax: 029 2087 4728

e-mail: [HeywoodCA@Cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:HeywoodCA@Cardiff.ac.uk)

web: [www.CountrysideRecreation.org.uk](http://www.CountrysideRecreation.org.uk)

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## Countryside Recreation Network

CRN is a network which:

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

The Network helps the work of agencies and individuals in three areas:

### Research:

to encourage co-operation between members in identifying and promoting the need for research related to countryside recreation, to encourage joint ventures in undertaking research, and to disseminate information about members' recreation programmes.

### Liaison:

to promote information exchange relating to countryside recreation, and to foster general debate about relevant trends and issues.

### Good Practice:

to spread information to develop best practice through training and professional development in provision for and management of countryside recreation.

### Chair:

John Thomson, Scottish Natural Heritage

### Vice-chair:

Geoff Hughes Sport England

Countryside Recreation Network  
 Department of City & Regional Planning  
 Cardiff University  
 Glamorgan Building,  
 King Edward VII Avenue,  
 Cardiff, CF10 3WA  
 Tel: 029 20 874970  
 Fax: 029 20 874728  
 e-mail: [crn@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:crn@cardiff.ac.uk)

Editor: Liz Davies

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## OPENING UP ACCESS IN AND AROUND TOWNS

*Geoff Hughes*

*Senior Development Manager, Sport England*

Countryside Recreation Network (CRN), is a network of 23 national agencies in the UK and Ireland, its purpose is:

- to encourage co-operation between members, particularly on research/sharing information/joint projects
- to develop and promote good practice in the provision and management of countryside recreation
- to share information on trends

### **Background To The Workshop**

It was explained that this was the second workshop of 2002 which had been organised to explore the key role that the urban fringe and the countryside in and around towns can provide as a recreation resource. The location in the urban fringe of Teesside was chosen because it demonstrated the key role of green space and water space as a way of improving people's lives, and for its contribution particularly to:

- healthy living
- regenerating communities
- addressing social inclusion

In Teesside particularly, urban open space, the urban fringe and the close proximity of the National Park in the North Yorkshire Moors mean that many of the issues discussed in the workshop are particularly focused in this area.

The seminar was organised to hear initially the government perspective from Susan Carter, Head of the Countryside and Landscape Division of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This presentation was followed by Zoe Power, Assistant Director Environment of Sport England, who examined the role of urban countryside which had been the subject of the Urban Task Force Report on Parks and Green Spaces. The bulk of the day enabled those present to split into four groups to explore the issues in more detail.



## THE GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

*Susan Carter*

*Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)*

### **Introduction**

When I took over my present job in 1996, my predecessor told me that it was pleasant enough but that he had not left me anything exciting to do. There might be a little policy development on access to open countryside if there were a change of government, but that was all. It just shows how wrong you can be: in the five and a half years since, there have been major policy developments in every area with which I deal, and more besides. In this talk, I am going to focus first on my own responsibilities for informal countryside recreation. I will then do a swift round-up of what others have been doing.

**Guiding principle: opportunities for the many, not just the few, in perpetuity**

### **Access to open countryside**

When this government was elected in 1997, one of its guiding principles was to look after the many, not just the few. This principle has made informal countryside recreation more important because it is something which very many people enjoy. It has produced policies to give more people, especially those living in towns, access to areas which the government regards as part of our heritage. And the government wishes to make sure this access will, as far as possible, be permanent.

One of the government's first flagship manifesto commitments was to give 'greater freedom for people to explore our open countryside'. Despite fierce opposition, it has honoured this commitment in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW Act) which provides for a statutory right of access.

Much of this open country lies very close to major urban centres, particularly in the north of England where access to it has been much sought after for many years. Michael Meacher joined a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the mass trespasses on Kinder Scout recently.



### **National Parks**

The government's concern for the many, not the few, has been evident too in its policy on National Parks. Designation is a matter for the Countryside Agency, formerly the Countryside Commission. Statutorily, the Agency has always been required to take account of the proximity of potential National Parks to centres of population, as well as their natural beauty and the opportunities for recreation. The Commission, supported by expert advisors, placed emphasis on selecting areas that were rugged and wild. In response to pressures for a new National Park, in the South Downs, the government asked the Agency to look again at its approach suggesting that more account should be taken of the need to provide for improved opportunities for open air recreation for the population at large, including providing recreational opportunities close to where people live. The Agency subsequently decided that the key issues to be considered - other than natural beauty - were potential for an area to provide a superior recreational experience and whether it should benefit from the special management that designation as a National Park would bring.

The government also asked the Agency to consider designating a National Park in the New Forest. If designated, these will be the first new National Parks for 50 years, and the first close to the large urban centres in the South East.

### **Principle into practice: the Countryside and Rights of Way Act and the Rural White Paper**

In putting this guiding principle - the many, not the few - into practice, two major landmarks towards the end of the year 2000 have dominated our work: first, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and, second, the Rural White Paper.

### **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act**

As well as the right of access to open countryside, the CROW Act, as it is popularly known, contains a host of other measures on countryside recreation. Linked to the right of access, but expected to range more widely, it provides for local access forums to be established across the country. Changes to the rights of way system, include a requirement to produce rights of way improvement plans. The Act introduces requirements for management plans for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and provides for the establishment of Conservation Boards to manage them if wanted. It also clarifies the registration requirements for town and village greens.

## Rural White Paper

The Rural White Paper or, to give it its full name, '*Our countryside: the future. A fair deal for rural England*' contains a chapter on increasing enjoyment of the countryside. One of the main issues identified is how to make it easier for, in particular, urban dwellers to visit the countryside and it contains a section on the countryside around towns.

The White Paper made plain that the government wanted the countryside to be a source of enjoyment for all sections of society, not just the white, middle-aged, middle-class and able bodied. It promised that the government would be looking for ways to spread the benefits of countryside recreation more equally. It stressed that it would expect local authorities to give priority to links between town and country and promised to improve the information available to those visiting the countryside. It proposed a review of how under-represented groups might be encouraged to visit the countryside, together with pilot projects.

The White Paper recognised the value of the countryside for active pursuits and stressed that with careful planning and management there should be a place for *all* activities. It asked local authorities to investigate demands and promised that the Government would commission research on access to water for sport and recreation. It noted the importance of the National Cycle Network for linking town and country.

## Subsequent Developments

### *Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs*

Since 2000, many of my division's efforts have been focused on implementing both the CROW Act and the Rural White Paper. The creation of DEFRA last year through a merger of parts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, has raised our profile. Our work is now the subject of a whole departmental objective, instead of only part of one. The objective is '*To improve enjoyment of an attractive and well-managed countryside for all*'.

Part of our enhanced status is attributable to the impact of foot and mouth disease which showed the value of countryside recreation, not only for those in rural areas but also for those elsewhere who were deprived of the ability to visit them. In Bristol we quickly tired of walking round the docks.

*The Countryside and Rights of Way Act*

On the CROW Act, we have produced umpteen consultation documents. As a result, regulations will soon be in place requiring local authorities to establish access forums and there will be final guidance on the production of rights of way improvement plans. The Countryside Agency has issued guidance on AONB Management Plans and there should be a Conservation Board in the Chilterns next year. We aim to have all areas of open country and registered common land accessible to the public by 2005. Local authorities have received millions of pounds for their new work on rights of way.

*Rural White Paper*

As for the White Paper, we have published research on access to water and Andrew Church will be talking more about that. We have asked the Countryside Agency to undertake a review of how we might encourage people who rarely or never visit the countryside to do so. We have also given the Agency £4.5m spread over three years to spend on the countryside around towns. They are preparing new policy advice on realising the full benefits of the urban fringe, especially about maximising the potential for recreation and regeneration through environmental improvement. This will include building on the success of the 12 Community Forests.

The Countryside Agency is also undertaking a Renaissance Programme to raise the profile of country parks. Country Parks, often right on the urban doorstep, have enormous potential for enhancing people's quality of life. They include formal parks and gardens with significant historic value, rich wildlife habitats and extensive recreational spaces. The Renaissance Programme aims to ensure their potential is realised. It includes: a review of the philosophy underpinning the development of the parks; case study reports to identify beacon country parks; a national data base; best practice guidance and a national learning network for country park managers.

On other White Paper commitments, we have encouraged National Park Authorities to do more to provide for different types of recreation and to attract a wider range of visitors, especially from towns. We have completed our review of the legislation on the protection and management of common land and expect to make an announcement on that shortly.

### **Working with Others**

We do not work alone, which is just as well as there are fewer than 40 in my division, working on the policy framework, secondary legislation and a range of casework. We depend for the execution of our policies on other organisations which we fund: the Countryside Agency, the National Park Authorities and local authorities in particular. We work closely with others in our own Department and with the bodies they fund, such as the Environment Agency and British Waterways. The Forestry Commission reports to a DEFRA Minister.

Then there are links with our old Department, both in the new Department of Transport and in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. There are ties too with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) whose responsibilities for tourism, as well as sport, blend in with ours on recreation. We have forged especially productive links with the bodies with which DCMS is associated, especially those controlling Lottery funds. Sport England, the New Opportunities Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund have all been keen to work with us.

The government's commitment to improving the quality of life for most people by enabling them to enjoy themselves in areas accessible to all has influenced the policies of all these bodies too. The Forestry Commission has resolved to use provisions in the CROW Act to dedicate its estate for access in perpetuity; we hope others will follow this example. 'Waterways for Tomorrow' set out a policy for British Waterways which emphasised the importance of leisure use. The Urban White Paper contained commitments on improving public space and the next speaker will say more about how that is being put into practice.

The final report of the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce – 'Green Spaces, Better Places' - has now been published and the Government will respond in July. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is also revising Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 on sport and recreation: this is likely to emphasise the importance of informal activities. DCMS is promoting regional and local cultural strategies. Sport England lottery funding has supported a range of countryside recreation projects including cycle networks, footpaths, bridleways, climbing centres, slipways and mooring. It is likely to include reference to 'active recreation' in its new mission statement. The New Opportunities Fund is putting £125 million into its Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities programme, three quarters of this for Green Spaces, while the Heritage Lottery Fund ensures that the public has access to projects it pays for.

And there are some attempts to join it all up, such as the current cross-cutting review on the public space.

### **What You Can Do**

I could go on ..... but I hope I have already said enough to convince you that there are plenty of Government initiatives intended to improve people's enjoyment of the countryside in and around towns.

I want to end by asking you to make sure that these opportunities are used to the full. Their success depends on local initiatives. Please make sure that your local authorities are putting additional funds into rights of way and the production of management plans. Make local access forums energetic and constructive. Tell your local National Park what it can do for you, and collaborate with the Countryside Agency in its projects and research. Ask local public and private bodies to dedicate land for access. Make sure people are aware of the latest guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Encourage people to apply for Lottery funds - modest grants are not hard to obtain and can make a real difference. Join together to put more ambitious projects together.

The government's perspective can be summed up in a statement by Michael Meacher in which he said he wanted open countryside to be the delight of the many, not the preserve of the few. Our objective should be to make the countryside in and around towns a delight for us all.

## WORKSHOP 1

### RECREATION ISSUES FOR THE URBAN FRINGE – THE COMMUNITY FOREST EXPERIENCE

#### THE COMMUNITY FOREST PROGRAMME

*Simon Blenkinsop*

*Recreation Officer, Tees Forest*

#### Community Forests' Objectives

- Providing high quality environments for people to live work and relax in.
- Providing people with access to wide range of sport and recreation facilities which can help to improve their quality of life.
- Managing new and existing woodland to encourage enterprise jobs and training.
- Maintaining and creating new habitats for protection and enhancement of flora and fauna for generations to come.
- Encouraging people to participate in new skills such as community arts that create a sense of place and pride.
- Helping people to understand the natural world and giving children an outdoor classroom.

Over 26 million people live within 20km of the twelve Community Forests and one million on Teesside.

Recreation in the urban fringe is a valuable focus for regeneration in urban areas and, as a result, can provide a vehicle for inward investment into deprived areas which are in dire need of support and landscape amelioration.

Greening the urban grey space - the bits between buildings - is just as important if not more so than the buildings themselves. This can help to improve what is loosely described as the liveability of a city, and is a key focus of our agenda - greening the cityscape making it an attractive setting to live, work and play.

### **How We Aim to Achieve These Goals in The Tees Forest**

- The Tees Forest Development Company, set up to provide project funding through Landfill tax, has been instrumental in acquiring our first piece of land - a total of 18 hectares of farm land on the urban fringe of Stockton.
- Dedicated recreation officers work to develop and promote access working with partners to develop and promote new and improved opportunities for recreation provision. Also to provide opportunities for participation in active sports as well as an events programme.
- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) acts as a key player delivering a conservation and access remit in The Tees Forest and undertakes work with a task group in community based programme of habitat creation and urban green spaces regeneration.
- With a dedicated woodland officer we have the capability to provide advice in the delivery of the Forestry Commission's woodland grant scheme. Working with the Forestry Commission we can create prevailing conditions to be able to put into place the capacity to purchase new blocks of farmland for woodland creation through the community wood supplement creating new access opportunities.
- By means of a farm projects officer we can create new recreational access through farm stewardship. Approximately 20% of all agreements allow for new farm access through six metre field margins.
- We deliver a programme of lifelong learning through a dedicated project officer who provides environmental education to schools - promoting the use of gateway sites. We also administer green bus grants to promote the use of countryside access funded via landfill tax credits.

### **Developing the Recreation Role in The Tees Forest**

Delivery through the Countryside Sport and recreation Strategy which outlines how we intend to deliver recreation. Our vision for the Forest is to maximise access to new and existing areas of woodland, the creation of new and interesting routes for walking cycling and riding and to generate other opportunities for sport and leisure.

In addition to the provision of facilities there will be a programmes for participation, especially targeting those with little previous experience of countryside recreation or who, due to poor health or social circumstances, have previously been excluded from involvement. Sustainable development principles will underlie our approach in the creation of new facilities and participation programme.

### **Greenways**

Now a widely adopted concept across the country, with many routes up and running. According to The Countryside Agency's own statistics in England there already exist 17000km of routes used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders and many more are planned.

As much as the term greenway is widely used there is still no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a greenway, but the Countryside Agency's definition is as follows

*'A network of largely car free off-road routes connecting people to facilities and open spaces in and around towns and cities and to the countryside, for shared use by people of all abilities on foot, bike or horseback for commuting, play or leisure.'*

With demand from local communities to develop a network of safe attractive routes, it is apparent that the resources are not available to match this demand. However these are now finding their way on to local transport plan agendas and through the government's commitment to deliver a sustainable integrated transport system in its programme 'Transport 2010'

There is a need to develop alternative methods of transport and travel and new non-motorised routes can help promote improved health and well-being in line with government health policy by minimising the build up of road traffic, reducing accident statistics improving air quality and creating safe, attractive recreational opportunities close to home. Additionally such networks can assist community regeneration, aid visitor management and stimulate tourism and local development.

The Countryside Agency has long championed the cause of these routes and plans to deliver these objectives through its 'Countryside on your Doorstep' programme.

Also it pioneers standard setting approach of greenway management and design through its Greenways Accreditation Scheme



We would advocate that local authorities take on board this concept of a quality scheme for greenways as proposed by the Agency along the lines of its accreditation scheme to ensure that routes are safe and of good quality so that people will want to enjoy using them.

The scheme sets minimum standards for the creation of shared routes and their physical condition using the acronym PACE:

Plan

Action

Check

Enable

By using this formula in the future it is hoped that problems that often beset such routes will be avoided, these include: inadequate way-marking; poor maintenance; inaccessibility to those with disabilities; often only open legally to foot traffic, and a fragmented network - going nowhere.

Our view is that greenways do not just provide transport links, but we need to ensure that these routes are attractive appealing and well marked. In addition we would propose that the landscaping aspect of any route is the most important, and tied in with this the interpretation and artistic features which serve to make greenways more appealing not only for local use but as day visit destinations. In this way greenways can become destinations in their own right.

Only in this way will greenways become a serious proposition for commuting and for leisure opportunities with proper recognition and backed by the funding they deserve.

The Countryside Agency has piloted six trial projects around the country - Barrow, Swindon, Norfolk, Mersey Forest and Watling Chase

The Mersey Forest is a three year pilot project - it is difficult to establish whether this has been a success, early indications suggest that within a large conurbation it will not be easy to differentiate quality commuter routes that would be traffic free when demand is such that people's destinations vary greatly and they wish to travel on the shortest possible route.

What have been identified as requirements are traffic surveys, which are prohibitively expensive and would need to be flexible to be worthwhile and to succeed.

It is now apparent that the term greenway is now widely recognised and sits quite comfortably on local authority's transport agenda with a plethora of 'greenway' officers coming forward to support this. This at the same time as The Countryside Agency is uncertain of its position on greenways, and struggles to identify resources to back one of its declared strategies.

Another key role for the Community Forest programme is the health agenda and particularly walking for health (WHI) schemes, a five year programme delivering 200 schemes nationwide by the Countryside Agency and looking at encouraging more than a million people in poor neighbourhoods to walk more.

The Tees Forest participates in this concept by sitting on a regional network forum and supporting key posts by securing funding for such as a Countryside Sport and Health Officer for Hartlepool, aimed at delivering a diverse programme of activity using Hartlepool's local countryside and parks to promote both health and recreational activity on behalf of the project partners.

We also help deliver a programme of Green Gym through our BTCV partners working at a local mental health hospital to improve their well-being and the appearance of the grounds

What may become an even more participative form of leisure is the concept of leisure cycling as a means of improving health with greater appeal to the whole family as a fun activity. New projects are being trialed by Sustrans, Stockton and Durham County Council.

As health will obviously dominate the agenda in the future and the WHI funding draws to a close in 2003 there will no doubt be other similar worthwhile schemes to replace it. If backed by funding through either central government, Health Action Zones or other mechanisms then we can be assured that health and leisure will be intricately linked in the future especially in the context of the urban fringe.

## WORKSHOP 1

### RECREATION ISSUES FOR THE URBAN FRINGE – THE COMMUNITY FOREST EXPERIENCE

#### SUMMERHILL

*Tony Davidson*

*Summerhill Manager*

Summerhill is 100-acre council run site on the edge of Hartlepool. Since 1997 the site has been transformed for the benefit of conservation and outdoor sports. Today the range and extent of facilities and features found at Summerhill make it a unique example of recreational provision on the edge of town.

The idea for Summerhill was developed in the mid 1990s. Hartlepool Borough Council along with The Tees Forest, The Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency recognised the potential in developing the Summerhill site as a Primary Gateway within The Tees Forest. During the planning stage a great deal of background work was undertaken including producing a consultancy report. The background work guided the vision and funding for Summerhill involving the key partner organisations and bringing on new partners, in particular the Sport England Lottery Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund, DEFRA and the European Regional Development Fund.

In terms of conservation over 26 hectares of new woodland has been established, areas of meadows identified, ponds and wetlands created and the existing network of hedgerows managed. In addition to wildlife conservation human conservation has been important. Summerhill includes several sites of archaeological interest most notably the remains of an Iron Age/Romano British settlement known as Catcote Village. Over the past four years this site, although not visible at ground level, has been excavated to allow temporary research.

The range and provision of outdoor sports gives Summerhill an angle not commonly found in this sort of urban fringe country park site. In total eight key sports have been identified for Summerhill, they are walking, horse riding, cycling, cross-country running, exercise and

fitness, orienteering, archery and rock climbing. Each of these sports has been provided for at Summerhill in some way. Key features include:

- A groundbreaking outdoor 'natural' Boulder Park with eight boulders designed for bouldering style climbing.
- Two play areas including a Junior Adventure and Fitness Area.
- A 2km trim-trail.
- A cycling course to Bicycle Super-Cross (BSX) standard. The course is 400m long with associated jumps and curves.
- A 2.2km shared multi-user route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, totally traffic and obstacle free.
- The whole site has been mapped for orienteering and a variety of permanent and temporary courses have been set including a Trail O course.
- Routes established from cross-country running.
- Indoor archery facilities in the visitor centre.
- The development of a High Performance Initiative to help identify and support young athletes with the potential to excel in the sports of orienteering and, possibly in the future, cycling.

In addition to the items above associated features have been developed including a new access road and car park, a visitor centre that includes changing rooms, a kitchen, exhibition and activity rooms and sculptural features including on-site interpretation.

The work at Summerhill has not just been about physical development. Hand in hand with the works to 'create' the site the team based at the visitor centre have carried out extensive community involvement programmes involving schools, play-schemes, activity groups and the general public. There is a regular programme of events from indoor craft sessions to large-scale show jumping and cross-country competitions. There is also a Friends of Summerhill group open to anyone with an interest in the site. The 'Friends' meet monthly. An offshoot from the 'Friends', the Summerhill Bird Club is a thriving community interest group with over 70 members. Finally, guiding the sports development on site there is the Summerhill Sports Partnership, a group made up of local, regional and national representatives from the eight key sports.

In considering opportunities for wider access the team at Summerhill have worked closely with the Hartlepool Access group, a group of people with disabilities based in Hartlepool, to develop a Forest Mobility Initiative. Forest Mobility aims to provide facilities and features to enable people with disabilities enjoy Summerhill.

Summerhill has a team of nine staff with seasonal staff appointed during the summer period. The visitor centre is open seven days a week with extended opening until 8 o'clock during the summer.

*For further information contact*

Summerhill Visitor Centre

Summerhill Lane

Hartlepool

TS25 4LL

## WORKSHOP 1

### RECREATION ISSUES FOR THE URBAN FRINGE – THE COMMUNITY FOREST EXPERIENCE

#### THE SUSTRANS EXPERIENCE

*Owen Wilson*

*Cycling Initiatives Officer, Tees Valley*

Sustrans is a registered charity that works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic and its adverse effects. Its main activities include the National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools (and Stations), Community Volunteer Rangers Programme, TravelSmart, rural travel initiatives and Home Zones. Sustrans is active throughout the UK and mainland Europe, and has a number of regional offices co-ordinated from its headquarters in Bristol. It draws on the active participation of over 40,000 supporters throughout the UK, and enjoys close links with similar organisations across Europe and in North America.

In 1995 Sustrans set out to develop the National Cycle Network (NCN), an ambitious project to develop 2,500 miles of cycle routes by June 2000.

Supported by a £43.5 million Millennium Commission grant and over two hundred partner organisations by June 2000 the NCN had grown to 5000 miles, with a new target of 10,000 miles by the summer of 2005.

Developed as a flagship project, Sustrans has set high standards for the NCN, seeking to create routes that are safe, attractive, easy to follow and direct, as well as providing the foundation for a local route network, serving local communities.

As an organisation Sustrans maintain a focus on the practical delivery of projects, facilitated through the work of regional staff with technical, fundraising, media and publicity support from head office.

Although Sustrans owns many miles of the National Cycle Network, the majority of routes are in public ownership, principally local authorities; with a small percentage owned privately and opened up to public access through long-term lease agreements.

Within the urban environment Sustrans has sought to develop strong partnerships with local authorities to develop routes that traverse areas of public open space and public highway. In building partnerships Sustrans has been able to offer funding (in the form of grant aid), expertise and the additional status of being linked to a high profile National project.

In the most successful partnerships Sustrans and the local authority have combined resources to identify routes, raise funds, consult with local communities and tackle the obstacles that often arise. Good partnerships often include officers from several local authority departments (planning, economic development, countryside and highway) working with Sustrans regional officers.

Aside from funding many other barriers can prevent or delay the development of good urban cycle routes. Common issues surrounding traffic free routes are the fear of improving access for criminal activity and conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.

Sustrans can demonstrate that increased use of previously neglected urban corridors results in reduced crime and anti-social behaviour including illegal use by motorcyclists. Pedestrian/cycle conflict can be minimised through well-designed routes, of adequate width (recommended three metres or greater).

Within the context of the Tees Valley Sustrans are working in partnership with the five Tees Valley local authorities on the continued development of both the National Cycle Network and other local routes and cycling initiatives. NCN projects currently being developed include a 14 mile route linking Darlington to Stockton on Tees, and a 35 mile route from Middlesbrough to Whitby, via Redcar, Saltburn and Staithes.

Local initiatives include the provision of secure cycle parking at all Tees Valley rail stations and a 'Linking Communities in East Cleveland' project funded through ONE-NE and Redcar & Cleveland BC.

The cost of all of this infrastructure and initiatives to encourage cycling and walking is clearly substantial, but what effect has it had? Are people actually using these routes?

Through the work of Dr. Andy Cope, Sustrans Research and Monitoring Officer, Sustrans can show significant and increasing levels of use on the National Cycle Network. During the late summer of 2001 Sustrans surveyed 22 sites on the NCN, (including three repeat surveys from 1998). 3,429 interviews were completed over four 12-hour periods, with 30,504 users counted. At the repeat sites in Newcastle, Devon and Lancashire increased levels of use by cyclists and walkers ranged from +50% to + 30%.

Aggregated findings from the 22 sites show that:

- 60% of journeys were for a recreational purposes;
- factors which most influenced people to use the route were pleasant surroundings, convenience, personal fitness and safety;
- there was an even spread of age groups; and
- the majority of users were male (63%).

A summary report of the survey findings has been distributed to all local authority partners, for further information contact Andy Cope. Tel: 0191 261 6160.

In the Autumn of 2000 Sustrans was chosen as an award partner for the New Opportunities Fund 'Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities' programme. This will involve administering £7.4 million to a range of projects, under a three-year umbrella programme.

With this new funding stream Sustrans is continuing to develop new projects to create green and safe routes, promote community involvement in sustainable transport initiatives and to enable children to walk and cycle to school.





## WORKSHOP 2

### LINKING TOWN AND COUNTRY

#### **INTEGRATED ACCESS DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS: MAKING LOGICAL LINKS AND PARTNERSHIPS, PROVIDING MORE AND BETTER ACCESS TO THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE.**

*Bruce Cutts*

*Countryside Officer, Countryside Agency*

The key area of interface between town and country comes when those living in urban and suburban areas visit the rural environment. These visits can often be seen as a negative influence by many in rural communities. There are some benefits to such visits but these benefits are not always easy to perceive.

Recreational visits made to rural areas can often be crucial in supporting the local economy. The local multiplier from hotel nights, pub visits and gift shop purchases can have a major impact on the viability of many small rural communities. This can be seen most in areas where the traditional farming systems are under severe stress through foot and mouth and the decline in the viability of upland farming.

The Lake District National Park perhaps typifies the situation. The income generated by tourism supports a large recreational sector, from hotels and guesthouses to outdoor equipment shops, pubs and tea-rooms. Amidst this visitor spend the farming community continues to suffer falling farm incomes and what is seen as increasing pressure and little benefit from expanding recreational use of the countryside.

#### **What is the Role of the Countryside Agency and the Integrated Access Demonstration Projects ?**

Integrated Access Demonstration Projects (IADPs) have been designed to tackle a set of issues that relate to many aspects of management of the rural economy and its interface with visitors. The six projects that we are running all share certain core elements. The projects, in combination, aim to answer a set of questions which relate to a diverse set of issues.

The IADP projects are looking to achieve several objectives in relation to the needs of recreational visitors and the needs of local people, including a greater emphasis on the use of local facilities and services, a move towards more sustainable patterns of transport, and the derivation of economic benefit to the farming community through more and better access provision. A list of IADP objectives can be found below.

*The creation and early implementation of an integrated access strategy or plan for a large area*

This will develop and test effective and efficient mechanisms for the development and implementation of access strategies that can be applied in a wide range of conditions. The aim is to show how access can be integrated with other areas such as local development plans, local transport plans, walking strategies and greenways.

*The development and testing of effective means of evaluating access demand and supply to guide resources where demand is greatest*

This will investigate a wide range of demand and supply issues, in particular how to effectively assess supply over a wide range of different geographical areas, from a large shire county to a village.

We are looking at how to assess demand and evaluate the needs of different user groups, in particular groups who are disadvantaged through a lack of access opportunities, for example people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

Another key aim is to assess the potential for the rationalisation of the access resource so that staff and financial resources can be used where demand is greatest.

*The investigation of how wider partnerships can deliver integrated access*

- Explore how a wide range of partnerships from a local community to a large organisation can, when co-ordinated play an effective role in facilitating changes and improvements in the access resource.
- Develop new approaches to the resolution of conflicts such as mediation, voluntary codes of conduct, voluntary constraint: the aim being to foster co-operation and not confrontation.
- Encourage wider inclusion in improving the network, users and owners working in closer co-operation.

*The capture of funds from a wide range of sources to deliver integrated access*

- Investigate of a wide range of funding opportunities for the access authority (local authority) from local communities to bids to larger external funding bodies such as the National Lottery and European funds. Also to investigate commercial sponsorship opportunities for example the support of web sites through advertising.
- Investigate the development of new community and user group partnerships, to develop more pro-active roles for organisations such as the Ramblers, British Horse Society and the British Mountaineering Council. This may involve the development of local charitable trusts to raise funds to provide additional access.
- Investigate and show how different elements of an integrated access strategy can be funded by different departments within the access authority such as green routes and Local Transport Plans.

*The effective delivery of advice and information to the public*

- Investigate and demonstrate a wide range of methods of information provision to the public as to the access opportunities available. - information from web sites and local press to inform and educate.
- Develop ways of communicating information on closures and restrictions relating to the new access rights on open country.

*The explicit social and economic benefits derived through access provision*

- Investigate the value and economic links of access to the countryside and show how they can deliver economic benefits over a broad range, from local communities, landowners and farmers to other rural businesses and the access authority.
- Explore the other wider social benefits of access including health, social inclusion and community participation.

**Project Summaries**

Below is a brief summary of two of the IADP projects running in the North West of England. One of them, the Lancashire project is county wide; the other, the Lake District National Park is a sub county project. For information on the other IADPs please see the contact list at the end of this paper.

*Lancashire summary*

Analysis of completed sections of the audit against demand study information has identified one practical early implementation project and several more possibilities. The latter is a scheme to dedicate a right of way along an existing permissive path in the Rivington area. The analysis has shown this to be an extremely popular recreation area, at present poorly served by safe pedestrian links to a nearby urban district. The completed path will be upgraded to Millennium Miles standards, providing access for all abilities.

The allied research project, into the demand for off-road cycling in the county of Lancashire, is now complete. The results of this study are being interpreted alongside the other information gathered by the project team.

The output of the project as a whole will form a major contribution to the expected Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Lancashire, as required under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This will form one of the important areas of work for the local access forum in Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen.

Meanwhile, Lancashire Countryside Service officers are starting to investigate the integration of access with conservation and land management. This area of work is an important step in developing working agreements with farmers and landowners, and in managing the right of access when it becomes available. Initially, the work will concentrate on some of the larger land holdings in the Forest of Bowland area, but it may be subsequently possible to extend the study area to include smallholdings as well.

The local access forum for Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen is now well established and taking a keen interest in the various aspects of the IADP research, in addition to the English Tourism Council (ETC) pilot project, 'Increasing Access to the Wider Countryside for Disabled People', that is also underway with Lancashire County Council. There is a substantial crossover between the two projects and information from each project may prove beneficial to the other.

It is hoped that work will begin in the near future on the development of a new web-based information provision service for all countryside visitors in the county. Once again, this represents one of the main objectives for the IADP.

In addition, it is intended that the issue of transport links will be investigated in greater depth in the next phase of the project. Various Countryside Agency backed transport projects in the county may feed into the IADP.

### *Lake District Integrated Access Demonstration Projects*

The level of recreational opportunity within the Lake District National Park Authority is such that the first stage of the project is to audit existing access provision. This is being done by the IADP project officer, Mark Eccles. His approach is to map all of the available access information, including public rights of way, permissive routes and national park owned properties. In addition, the project officer is working with partner organisations to map other access opportunities such as National Trust land, Forestry Commission land, commons and land owned by United Utilities. The end product will be a definitive record of all identified access opportunities within the national park boundary.

The information gathered during the access supply audit will be recorded onto a geographical information system (GIS) database. Extensive use of GIS will enable the information to be interrogated and overlaid with the information gathered as part of the needs and preferences, or demand study.

The needs and preferences study is now complete. The work was carried out by consultants employed by Countryside Agency. The consultants - The Bowles Green Partnership - looked at what users and potential users of the Lake District National Park want from the National Park in terms of access provision and recreational opportunity. They are also investigating latent demand, seeking to find out what stops visitors coming into the park. Is it a lack of information or are there barriers to prevent them, either socio-economic or physical. This work has been done through a review of existing data and subsequent primary research through face to face interviews and focus group meetings.

### **Information Provision**

One of the key areas for the Lake District project to investigate is the provision of easy to access, high quality information for users. It is envisaged that a web based information system will allow easy access to information for visitors planning a visit to the national park. This information should become more widely available as access to the Internet grows.

It should be remembered that the aim is not increase the overall number of visitors, but to plan more strategically and target resources to where demand is highest.

The analysis of the supply and demand audits should reveal areas where the need for recreational opportunity is not satisfied. As an example, the needs study may reveal a need for a public transport link that would mean that walkers doing a popular route would be able to leave their cars elsewhere and use the local bus.

The audit process will also look at transport links to local towns and visitor facilities. The overall aim is to produce a logical network of recreational opportunity within the national park, that allows access via public transport for as many local people as possible as well as the existing high volume of day visitors and holidaymakers.

One of the more difficult challenges within this IADP is to investigate a mechanism that will be able to return some financial benefit, derived from access and recreation, to the landowners and farmers within the national park. At present the only common approach taken has been through farm diversification schemes such as bunk barns or holiday lets. Although this has been a successful route for some, the income from these ventures is often sporadic and limited by season. A more reliable benefit is needed to support the rural economy and hard-pressed farming communities.

The Lake District National Park Integrated Access Demonstration Project seeks to draw together many strands of access provision into an access strategy. This will enable the National Park Authority to plan and use resources more effectively. Overall the information gained from the IADP programme will be used by the Countryside Agency to advise and assist the principal organisations responsible for access, such as local authorities. The information will also be valuable for a range of other bodies from large landowners to utility companies and the Forestry Commission.

For more information on the family of Integrated Access Demonstration Projects please visit the Countryside Agency web site at [www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk) or contact the project officers at the following email addresses.

**Barney Hill**

Lake district National Park  
[barneyhill@lake-district.gov.uk](mailto:barneyhill@lake-district.gov.uk)

**David Greenwood**

Surrey County Council  
[david.greenwood@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:david.greenwood@surreycc.gov.uk)

**Jo Hale**

Hampshire County Council  
[jo.hale@hants.gov.uk](mailto:jo.hale@hants.gov.uk)

**James Littlewood**

Chilterns AONB  
[jlittlewood@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:jlittlewood@chilternsaonb.org)

**Hillary Scott**

Yorkshire Water  
[hillary.scott@countryside.gov.uk](mailto:hillary.scott@countryside.gov.uk)



## WORKSHOP 2

### LINKING TOWN AND COUNTRY

#### THE NATIONAL TRUST: WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

*Liz Fisher*

*Area Manager, Tyne & Wear and Country Division, The National Trust*

##### **Introduction**

The National Trust was set up more than 100 years ago to preserve places of natural beauty or historic interest for all people to enjoy forever

The National Trust is a registered charity and Britain's largest conservation charity, completely independent of government and supported by 2.7 million members.

The Trust relies on the generosity of its supporters, through membership subscriptions, gifts, legacies and the contribution of many thousands of volunteers.

All the Trust's income is spent on the care and maintenance of the land and buildings in its protection and in making special places accessible to the public.

##### **Coast**

The Trust protects a sixth of the coastline of England, Wales and Northern Ireland - some 600 miles.

##### **Countryside**

The charity cares for a diverse range of wildlife and countryside as the UK's largest private landowner. It now owns more than 248,000 hectares of countryside, including nature reserves, archaeological remains, forests, moorland, fens and farmland.

##### **Farming**

The Trust supports over 700 farm tenants, through schemes to help market their produce and by helping them to develop sustainable and environmentally friendly farming.

## **Historic Heritage**

The Trust protects and opens to the public over 200 historic houses and gardens and 49 industrial monuments and mills, containing important collections of paintings, sculpture, furniture, textiles, books and other important contents.

## **Gardens and Parks**

The Trust cares for the largest and more important collection of historic gardens and cultivated plants in the world. Over 200 gardens and landscape parks are open to the public.

## **Volunteers**

Nearly 40,000 volunteers assist the Trust in its conservation work- they outnumber regular staff 12:1.

The National Trust runs 400 working holidays each year, where people can spend a few days assisting the Trust in conservation activities as diverse as goat herding, surveying dragonflies, gardening and dry stone walling.

## **New Vision for the Future**

In January 2001, Fiona Reynolds took over as the Trust's new Director-General and has subsequently set out a new vision for the future of the Trust:

- To provide leadership in the regeneration of the countryside, and also our towns where we have yet to demonstrate the full significance of our presence.
- To put life-long learning and education at the heart of everything we do.
- To humanise the way we present and explain our landscapes, built and cultural heritage, to reach new audiences and to deepen understanding of what we do.

I am Liz Fisher, Area Manager for Tyne & Wear and County Durham, I have worked for the National Trust for 13 years. I started the pioneering National Trust Inner City Project in 1988, became the Regional Volunteer and Community Affairs Manager in 1996 and was appointed to Area Manager in 1999. I am a qualified Youth and Community Worker and have a vast amount of experience of developing informal education opportunities in some of the worst inner city areas in the Northeast.

As Area Manager, I have overall responsibility for the operational and strategic development of the properties in my area. The area of Tyne and Wear and County Durham is very divers.

The northern end of the area is very affluent and people's disposable income is very high but there are pockets of severe deprivation and a number of wards with lower than national average GDP.

In the UK The National Trust is viewed as a middle class organisation by a number of people and within the Northumbria Region, where I work we try to reach out to the wider community in a proactive way, to make our properties accessible to everyone, forever.

### **Community Development in the Northumbria Region**

#### *The National Trust Inner City Project*

Octavia Hill ( one of the Trusts founders) believed that the countryside was not only a source of beauty and healthier than a town, but it was spiritually healing. People with money and leisure-time had easy access to it but her concern was for those who did not. Her work in inner city areas focused on providing opportunities for the people there to improve their lifestyle through better housing, education and recreation.

In her time Octavia Hill organised days out to the countryside for inner city dwellers. The Trust could do the same today, but recognised that this could only be a short-term solution to the problem, because many people living in inner city areas have **never** visited anywhere outside of their area and did not have the knowledge, confidence and resources required to do so. The Trust also recognised that a number of statutory and voluntary sector organisations provide similar activities.

The work of The National Trust Inner City Project (ICP) is unique because it employs suitably qualified Youth & Community Workers to develop education programmes to meet the needs of the individual, and facilitates their learning through the use of the countryside and Trust properties.

#### **Location**

The areas within Tyne & Wear are very territorial and many of the ICP members would not associate themselves with the Project if it had a base in either the east or west of the city. The Project has a city centre base that can offer:

- a focus point for the Trust's work in the city, making it more accessible to people without transport;

- a base large enough for ICP office accommodation, meeting space and equipment storage; and
- opportunities to network with other voluntary sector organisations.

The ICP has never been based at a Trust property, although it uses Gibside (a 18th century landscape on the outskirts of Newcastle) on a regular basis. The main focus of the Projects is working **with the people**. Through informal education programmes the people decide which Trust property best meets their needs. As a result of this the ICP has a clear focus on the areas it will concentrate its efforts to draw its membership from and work predominately in areas with:

- above average unemployment figures;
- low car ownership;
- poor education results;
- poor health statistics.; and
- low home ownership.

### **Community Development**

The confidence and skills members develop during their time with the ICP are transferable and it is common for members to move into other groups or organisation. In this way the benefit the ICP can bring to Tyneside is multiplied.

### **Networking**

Project staff work with organisations promoting the work of the Trust and helping groups identify what they want from a visit to a Trust property. The ICP also assists where possible with transport and organises the occasional one-off trip to Trust properties for other voluntary sector organisations.

### **Education**

The ICP staff require a Diploma in Informal Education because this is the main emphasis of the work and it is also important that the staff fully understand the concept of informal education and how to develop the appropriate curriculum. As the Project uses the 'outdoors' as its classroom staff also have experience of conservation and outdoor activities.

## Volunteering

Volunteering is an important development for Project members and it offers three vital elements:

- As members develop an understanding of the work of the Trust and feel real benefit from visiting a property or exploring the countryside, they want to give something back to the organisation. That is normally the gift of their time.
- For a large number of young people, including single parents involved with the Project, volunteering offers them the opportunity to gain experience and confidence to go on to further education and employment.
- The vast majority of older people feel that they are not recognised by society and volunteering with the Trust helps to develop their confidence.

## Work On the Durham Coast

The National Trust has been involved on the Durham Coast since 1987. It owns 214.5 ha of land, comprising farmland, cliffs and dunes. The area is known for its magnesian limestone and varied wildlife.

Since the demise of the coal mining industry in the early 1980s the area has suffered in all respects: high unemployment; poor housing and education statistics; high crime rates and poor levels of investment.

The Trust recognises it has an important role to play in the area because it owns a large proportion of the land. It also recognises that it needs to become relevant to the local population.

The Trust purchased White Lea Farm in 1999, with a grant from 'Turning the Tide'. Rather than let the farm to a tenant farmer, the Trust has decided to develop the facility as a community resource and use it as a focal point for its work on the Durham Coast.

The Trust aims to use White Lea Farm to encourage local people to learn about nature conservation and the environment, as well as using the coast for recreational activities and where appropriate develop activities to benefit and improve the economics of the area.

### Souter Lighthouse and the Leas

Souter Lighthouse and the Leas are situated in South Shields, which is a heavily populated area of Tyneside. Souter is a Victorian Lighthouse and the Leas is a three mile stretch of coastline.

It is estimated that the Leas attracts over 250,000 people on an annual basis (no data because we do not charge people to visit this property). It provides peace and tranquillity for people living in a heavily urban area.

The Lighthouse is heavily involved in community activities, it welcomes over 4000 school children per annum as well as developing allotments for local community groups to adopt and a sensory garden for the visually impaired.

### Conclusion

Some of the work in the Northumbria Regional of the National Trust is true to the philosophy of the Trust's founders, especially Octavia Hill. She believed that inner city people needed the opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and self-confidence to break out of the cycles of deprivation and depression. That belief is still relevant today and the work of the ICP, on the Durham Coast and at Souter Lighthouse and the Leas offers an opportunity to people to improve their life using the countryside and Trust properties.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP LINKING TOWN AND COUNTRY

*Bruce Cutts*

*The Countryside Agency*

There was a general feeling that this integrated approach (IADP) to access management was the way forward, the integration of access supply and users needs and preferences was seen by delegates as a common sense approach to the future management of access in both the urban fringe and the more rural areas of popular informal and more formal recreation such as the Lake District National Park Authority.

The IADP approach was seen as an important means of assisting in the development of the Rights of way improvement plans (ROWIP). Delegates were keen to take away elements of the IADP approach.



## WORKSHOP 3

## SOCIAL INCLUSION: INITIAL THOUGHTS

*Bill Slee**University of Aberdeen*

Social inclusion represents a real challenge in relation to the countryside in general and the countryside around towns in particular. Evidence shows the lack of use of the countryside by many groups which could be described as excluded. In many ways, exclusion is designed into much countryside that is used for recreation, for example by the rather strong education interpretive ethos that prevails in much public sector and Non Governmental Organisation provision, and by the explicit prohibition of certain activities at some sites.

Although social inclusion and exclusion have great salience in government thinking, they are not unproblematic concepts. A forthcoming book by Hills, Le Grand and Piachaud (referred to in the Guardian 10/6/02) argues that 'social exclusion is a ploy to take attention away from the fact that wages in employment are often insufficient to lift individuals and families above the poverty line.'

Isobel Emmett has written about the 'social filter' in countryside recreation design. This implies that certain groups shape the countryside in their particular interest and use exclusionary tactics (design of sites, policy etc) to keep out those whom they do not want. Carolyn Harrison has written about the aesthetic imperative which, as a result of an alliance between land-owning and NGO (and public sector?) interests, placed the protection of the countryside and its aesthetic appearance above its use by a broader cross-section of society.

How do we challenge the social filter and the aesthetic imperative? How do those whom we describe as excluded experience exclusion? How do they and others work to create a more inclusive countryside? In a post-modern countryside of conflicting interests and multiple stakeholders, how can the interests of the excluded be incorporated effectively into countryside recreational planning?

What is the role of the urban fringe and the countryside around towns in providing recreational opportunity? Is it a suitable 'environmental bantustan' (Howard Newby's



description of country parks in the 1970s) into which to deposit the excluded, without fear of polluting the real countryside? Or does its accessibility offer real opportunities to engage with excluded groups in ways that are simply not possible in the deeper countryside?

The social inclusion agenda is a central part of government policy. On its coat-tails will ride public-sector funding. The case for including social inclusion in policy and practice in countryside recreation is therefore compelling. But how do we turn the rhetoric into practice, what challenges are thrown up and how can they be resolved?

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL EXCLUSION

*Bill Slee*

*University of Aberdeen*

The two workshops are considered separately.

A similar format was adopted, with both groups given a brief presentation based on the 'Initial Thoughts' paper. After a discussion, an attempt was made to identify the core issues.

### **Workshop Session (am)**

1. There was a recognition that insufficient is known about demand. It was felt that it was not really known what use currently excluded individuals/groups might make of green space, or what factors would lead to increased use by excluded groups. The notion of demand should be treated with caution, as it was recognised that it is not simply lack of resources that limits use.

2. The excluded are designed out of the countryside in various ways. Historically, this can be seen to be a function of top-down planning (perhaps with shades of Harrison's aesthetic imperative). More recently, a range of factors may have contributed to exclusion: the dominance of conservation-centred thinking and the unwillingness of conservationists to accommodate activity which might threaten the biophysical resource; paradoxically, the use of participatory approaches may encourage the more articulate and powerful and weaken the position of less powerful and articulate groups; and finally, projectisation of initiatives may again not allow the interests of the weak and powerless to be effectively included.

3. There is a need to empower groups and stakeholders who are excluded. Those who experience the multiple forms of disadvantage for which exclusion is a shorthand term can potentially use recreation as a platform to acquire a range of skills which will reduce exclusion. The organisation of groups may require skills in writing proposals, skills in financial management. These skills cannot be acquired without assistance. Consequently there is a need for people to work with excluded communities to help them articulate their needs and develop skills which will give them a voice and the ability to seek funding.

4. Those working with excluded groups face uncomfortable choices. Should they chase funding and be driven by opportunism to chase the 'hot' issue of the moment or should they build capacity and root their activities in a more bottom-up approach? The search for funding may be antagonistic to the strengthening of capacity of excluded groups: outsiders or those with extensive networks to funding agencies may end up working on behalf of the excluded rather than with them to tackle the causes of exclusion.

5. One group member argued strongly for the need for a strategic overview of need and demand. Excluded groups are in danger of being pushed out of individual sites if a site-level approach is adopted. A more accommodating approach may be found if there is a strategic overview of need and demand.

#### **Workshop Session (pm)**

1. There was a strongly articulated view that suggested that providers should not feel bound to respond to a single orthodoxy on the types of use that should be made of the countryside or the intrinsic desirability on particular forms of use. If people do not wish to use the countryside they should not automatically be considered as excluded. Preferences as well as exclusion can drive leisure behaviour.

2. (see 3 above) There is a need to better understand perceptions and find out the nature of demands of excluded groups and what they want. An example was given disabled people's use of the Dartmoor National Park which had been much enhanced by working more closely with the disabled groups. Whilst prior initiatives to engage the disabled groups had been costly and largely ineffective, working with a transport provider to bring disabled people to the park had been very successful.

3. Many people present felt very strongly that many quantitative indicator-based approaches to assessing effectiveness of provision for disadvantaged groups were inadequate. Value for money could not be measured in simple terms but required consideration of factors such as social capital building, wider acquisition of life skills etc.

4. It was suggested that the provision of a basic path network which was well way-marked, appropriately designed and safe could go a long way to providing a basic infrastructure of opportunity.

5. It was seen as crucial to find out what factors were limiting the use of greenspace by excluded groups. Without this information any policy to decrease social exclusion can be seen as a shot in the dark.

6. One member of the group asked whether combating social exclusion was a real driver of recreational policy and practice. Is a social exclusion agenda really driving the enhancement of access, or is the rhetoric of exclusion acknowledged but effectively ignored.

#### **Workshop Facilitator's Comments**

In both groups, the debate about social exclusion/inclusion and access was lively. Those present were not always clear about the distinction between non-participation and exclusion. In other words, is non-participation a cause for concern? If there are hidden exclusionary forces operating, non-participation may be a real problem. If relatively well-off groups choose not to use available access opportunities, it is difficult to make a case for exclusion. However, the lack of prior opportunity to engage in particular forms of activity may make groups cautious about participation, but once initiated, considerable enjoyment and benefit may ensue.

A combination of providing a basic level of opportunity in terms of provision and adequate information about it and engaging with particular excluded groups to identify constraints and barriers to participation and how they might be eased provide a good starting point.

Access enhancement to excluded or any other group provides benefits that are extremely difficult to measure. Although there are pleas for evidence-based policy, the evidence to support policies for social inclusion in access enhancement for recreation can be found in enjoyment, physical and mental health, social and human capital enhancement etc.

We do not know where to best spend resources to enhance inclusion. We cannot assume the transferability of good practice from one place to another or from one group to another. Individuals and the social chemistry in one situation may deliver real gains in inclusiveness, but not work elsewhere.



**WORKSHOP 4****ACCESS TO WATER – ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS****OPPORTUNITY LOCKS!**

*Roger Butler*

*Strategic Initiatives Manager, British Waterways*

Britain's canal network currently extends over approximately 2000 miles - from Inverness in the north to Taunton in the south, and from Llangollen in Wales to the Ripon Canal in North Yorkshire. It offers a unique heritage with distinctive traditions and more than ten million people now visit our canals each year. Aggregated, this equates to more than 160 million visits per annum. 25,000 boats are currently registered, 100,000 anglers fish the canals and many more visitors make use of the improving facilities for cycling. Given this growth in leisure and tourism, it is important that programmes are put in place to ensure safe access to canals and their surroundings, and British Waterways has therefore developed a number of innovative projects to help progress this work.

The Government's paper entitled 'Waterways for Tomorrow', published in June 2000, was the first policy document aimed specifically at the UK's inland waterways for more than thirty years. This outlined the wide-ranging opportunities which canals and waterways offer, and outlined new policies which inland navigation authorities and their partners were to follow. These address issues such as urban and rural regeneration, freight by water, leisure and tourism, and the current drive towards further canal restoration work.

'Waterways for Tomorrow' also stressed the importance of canal corridors in enabling the public to benefit from enhanced access to countryside and green-space in and around towns and cities. Canals form an important visual amenity and a much valued community resource around which a range of activities can take place. They can cater for active sport or informal recreation and provide linear greenways for both people and wildlife. They are also, in the main, safe, accessible and traffic-free routes, though undoubtedly there are still further improvements to be made. Local perceptions of danger linger and there is a recognised need to carry out educational work as well as continued physical improvements, linked to provision of high quality information and interpretation.

In addition to such work, a major programme of canal restoration continues apace and in March 2002 British Waterways announced a new wave of projects under the banner of 'Unlocked and Unlimited'. This will build upon the successfully completed restoration work on the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Millennium Link between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Projects announced which will now need to generate the necessary funding include the Cotswold Canals, the Droitwich Canal and the Northern Reaches of the Lancaster Canal. New canals are also proposed, including the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway, which will create a ten-mile recreational corridor for the 21st century. All these projects will help meet local, regional and national agendas for urban and rural regeneration and will contribute to the strategic programmes run and supported by the Regional Development Agencies and others. They will also help develop a range of environmental and recreational initiatives in and around towns with the Countryside Agency and organisations promoting leisure and tourism.

In developing such initiatives, British Waterways supports the need for strategic studies to help analyse and guide the ways in which canals can help to deliver access in and around towns. The studies are frequently carried out in partnership with other agencies, local authorities, commercial interests, landowners and others, and examine the wide ranging context of a waterway and its corridor. History and current planning background are reviewed, and detailed survey work carried out.

A recent study of the Tees Navigation between Stockton-on-Tees and the market town of Yarm showed that a number of key themes could be promoted to help encourage better use of, and better access to, the riverside and all it can offer the large local population. Themes identified included sport, cultural associations, tourism and the need for continued management and operational maintenance. The ways in which the river navigation is linked to the local and sub-regional landscape were also analysed, and actions based around three strategic riverside zones were recommended. These were the Town Riverside, the River Forest, and the Rural Tees. The River Forest was recommended as a means of linking to the work of the Tees Community Forest, whilst the Rural Tees links to the wider hinterland of the North Yorks Moors National Park. Visionary plans helped describe these principles, and were followed by detailed maps showing proposals for recreation and access, use of the water-space, and heritage and culture. In turn, these cross-reference to action plans which schedule projects, costs, funding and anticipated partners. The strategic study therefore

becomes the means by which all interested parties can help to promote access, recreation and regeneration, both in Stockton itself and in the urban fringe and attractive rural areas beyond.

Once such strategic projects reach the stage where major implementation works are planned, it becomes necessary to guide works in the best possible way. In the case of waterway projects, this includes both high quality design within the historic environment as well as managing the impacts of increased numbers of visitors and recreational groups. On the Kennet & Avon Canal, where a £25 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant has been spent over the last four years, it was recognised at the outset of the works that without careful planning the waterway could lose some of its character as a result of growing day visits, boating and tourism. The Kennet & Avon links Bristol and Bath with Newbury and Reading and has a high catchment population who value the straightforward access the canal gives to open space around these conurbations. It also serves as a cycleway which is supported by the various local authorities along the length of the canal. Whilst all these uses bring potential benefits to the local economy, it is important that improved access does not result in a diminished visitor experience.

A Visitor Management and Public Transport Strategy was therefore prepared, together with a detailed Conservation Plan, to help guide the HLF expenditure. This seeks to promote the use of public transport, avoid the creation of many new car parks, and identifies the need for interpretation and facilities offering 'access for all' where reasonably possible. The Strategy was prepared following evening consultation meetings with key user groups, and liaison with public transport providers. Following on from the Strategy, British Waterways is now progressing a Rural Transport Partnership for the canal with support and funding from the Countryside Agency. This will run for two years and develop ways of encouraging access to the canal, particularly around the towns, using public transport and, where feasible, travel by boat.

'Access for All' projects are increasingly being carried out by British Waterways, not just on the Kennet & Avon Canal, but in a range of schemes throughout the UK. Four years ago British Waterways entered into a partnership with the Fieldfare Trust, who promote access for the disabled in the countryside. Training days were arranged for staff and a national guidance document prepared and issued to all offices. Widespread support was gained across the organisation and a full day seminar was arranged for British Waterways staff. Pilot projects are now progressing, including work on the Grantham Canal towpath and



improvements along the Regents Canal in the centre of London. Accessibility audits are being carried out on canals and new restoration projects are increasingly using criteria established by the Fieldfare Trust to ensure that works on the ground cater for all users. Angling facilities for disabled persons can also be created, and a number of cruising narrowboats can now cater for handicapped visitors who wish to explore and experience the canal network. The work of the Seagull Trust on the Forth & Clyde Canal in Scotland is particularly well known and it operates from a couple of locations on the edges of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Canal towpaths are ideally placed to help increase the national network of greenways. These are traffic free shared use routes which are particularly popular on the continent. British Waterways is a member of the European Greenways Association and is working with Sustrans and the Countryside Agency to develop ways of creating, maintaining and promoting extensions to the UK's greenway network. Currently this includes reclaimed railway lines as well as towpaths and new cycleways. The National Cycle Network already uses sections of canal towpath and British Waterways carries out environmental audits to ensure that cycleway provision can be successfully accommodated whilst not compromising other canal-side users. Greenways can link to other routes and there is scope to connect towpaths to regional or national trails. Already the Oxford, Grand Union and Kennet & Avon Canals are promoted as national waterways walks which encourage as many people as possible to use towpaths for recreational use. The Grand Union Canal Walk initially gained sponsorship from Gore-tex.

Public art can be another way to encourage greater use of the towpath network. In Coventry, a partnership between British Waterways, the City Council and Groundwork enabled a successful Arts Lottery bid to be made, based around the five and a half miles of the canal in Coventry itself. This runs directly into the city centre and passes a range of urban and urban fringe landscapes, as well as linking to green belt on the edge of Coventry and Nuneaton. The Arts Lottery work is now complete and has created an attractive trail alongside the towpath. Local industries were invited to contribute ideas and staff time to the project and arts officers from the City Council and the University of Warwick were also involved.

The result has been around thirty pieces of public art or interpretation, together with access improvements and new signage. Local communities were consulted and schools inducted as appropriate. Some of the art-work arose as a result of school holiday workshops with local

children and to date there has been little vandalism - possibly the result of strong local input. A positive spin-off has been the establishment of a canal ranger service, who now hold regular events as well as talks and walks. A guidebook to the arts installations has been produced and local tourist information centres are made aware of the canal trail. Such innovative schemes undoubtedly lead to a better and safer waterway environment, and increased access to the towpath and surrounding areas. Other public art projects are now being progressed and all aim to deliver improvements to quality of life in urban areas.

The range of opportunities related to waterway access in and around towns is immense, and the above examples give a flavour of some of the possibilities. Partnership and a strong vision are key to much of the work and it is important to ensure that initial strategies and plans have the support of a wide range of organisations.

What else is planned? British Waterways are progressing Memorandums of Understanding with Sport England, Groundwork and the Environment Agency and each of these is designed to cement working relationships and lead to improved delivery of improvements on the ground. Pilot projects are under way with the Country, Land and Business Association (CLA) and National Farmers Union (NFU) in relation to countryside access, and workshops with their members are being arranged. The Rural Regeneration Strategy for British Waterways promotes such work and identifies ways in which rural or urban fringe canals can support new initiatives including access projects. The rural agenda is increasingly important and waterways are ideally placed to ensure that linkages between urban and rural areas are carefully considered.

Looking to the future, a number of issues deserve consideration. How will the regional agenda influence canal regeneration and opportunities for further access improvements? What will be the role of the revised PPG 17? Will it promote the concept of water as public open space in its own right? It is worth remembering that visual access to water can be just as important as physical access to water. How can waterways help meet the Government's social inclusion agenda? British Waterways has just published a document entitled 'Waterways for People' which outlines work in this field, but there is more to be done. Who will be the new partners in this work? Will volunteer wardens and canal adoption schemes increase as community projects continue to grow in scale and number? Such work has brought benefits in the larger towns and cities in recent years and certainly encourages greater access onto the towpath network.

Waterways can therefore play a key role in helping to create better access in and around towns and the examples discussed in this paper give an introduction to some of the work currently under way. British Waterways encourages other organisations to consider the opportunities offered by the canal network, and jointly promoted access projects will be welcomed whether they be at a strategic or local level. In time, maybe their importance will be recognised by a new designation which would promote access, environment, recreation and sympathetic regeneration -- 'Blue Belts'.

*Roger Butler is based in the Waterway Conservation and Regeneration Group, which is British Waterways design, planning, environment and heritage team.*

## WORKSHOP 4

## ACCESS TO WATER - ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

IMPROVING ACCESS TO WATER IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND  
STRATEGIC ACTION FOR OUTDOOR WATER-BASED SPORT AND  
RECREATION

*Professor Andrew Church*

*Division of Geography, School of the Environment, University of Brighton*

**The Value of Water in the Countryside**

In December 2001 a consortium of researchers led by the University of Brighton completed an intensive research project into water-based sport and recreation on inland waters in England and Wales. The final report is available on the website for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (<http://www.defra.gov.uk>) This major one year project had been funded by DEFRA as part of their Countryside Research Programme and was also sponsored by British Waterways, the Countryside Agency, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency and Sport England. The final report brings together for the first time a wide array of factual information and stakeholder opinion relating to the recreational use of inland waters.

The report presented evidence that inland water and watersides are valued components of outdoor leisure activity, most often as a backdrop to other activities such as walking. In 1998 approximately 14% of all countryside visits involved access to inland water and watersides, about half of these made direct use of the water. These visits included about five million people, which is 12% of the adult population. Other sources of data suggest that 10-12 million people a year visit the Thames for recreational purposes, many will be overseas tourists.

Future demand is hard to assess but existing evidence suggests that the public desire to access water and watersides may grow stronger in particular locations. Recent predictions have suggested that the total demand for outdoor recreation, including the overall use of watersides, will remain stable in the near future due to consumer time and cost constraints. A study for the Countryside Agency\* suggested, however, that there are important structural

changes occurring within the overall picture of demand. In particular, outdoor recreation 'close to home' is becoming relatively more popular, especially where watersides and woodlands are available.

### **Participation in Water-based Sport and Recreation**

Watersides 'close to home' maybe very popular but a more mixed picture emerges from the facts concerning the popularity of activities actually taking place on inland waters. 3% of the population regularly participate in outdoor water-based sport and recreation. Participation seems to have been static since 1995 and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. The most popular water-based recreational activity is angling and with perhaps as many as two million anglers in the UK it is in relative terms a major participation sport. Some water-based sports including rowing, dinghy sailing, informal canoeing and water-skiing seem to be experiencing a growth in popularity. Others such as windsurfing, power boating and coarse fishing have witnessed recent declines. Overall, the University of Brighton study found limited evidence of widespread unmet demand for inland water-based sport and recreation but did identify localised shortages and the potential of new facilities to generate new demand.

This general picture might suggest that water-based sport and recreation would not be a priority area for countryside policy action. Static participation will not create major new demand and the public desire for access to watersides close to home might be addressed by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000. There are, however, a number of problems associated with access to watersides and water-based recreation that are longstanding and will not be solved by the CROW Act. Many stakeholders feel that strategic policy action is required by national government and that planning guidance should be improved to ensure local authorities are required to plan more fully for the needs of water-based recreation.

### **The Problems of Access to Water**

The University of Brighton study examined the law and wider regulatory structures for access to inland waters in some detail and concluded that they are both complex and uncertain. Many navigators, especially canoeists, have long desired access to more rivers for navigation to add to 4,700km of inland canals and major rivers in England and Wales that have current public rights of navigation. The CROW Act will not add to this total since inland water is exempt from the Act. Furthermore, the study found that confusion over accessibility deterred

some groups of people from using inland water resources. The current legal structures, however, have been successfully utilised by angling organisations that have used private property rights to secure relatively good levels of access to water. Nevertheless, angling bodies still highlight their own legal bone of contention that they are the only users to pay both a license fee and a charge for using the water resource.

Anglers have long argued that other users could similarly secure wider access under the current legal system through formal agreements and payments. Canoeing bodies have adopted this approach by negotiating Formal Access Agreements with landowners to secure access to rivers not subject to a public right of navigation. After many years of negotiations only 812km of river are covered by Formal Access Agreements. This is just 5% of the major inland rivers with no current public rights of navigations in England and Wales. Only five of the 51 Formal Access Agreements provide all year access and 70% of them relate to periods of five months or less. It is perhaps not surprising that canoeing guidebooks and websites promote informal canoeing on 7,000km (46%) of the major rivers where there are currently no public rights of navigation or access agreements.

Informal and illegal use of water is one of the causes of some of the conflicts that occur between water-sport participants and with landowners. The University of Brighton study found that whilst there are many claims about the nature of conflicts these were only occasionally supported by independent evidence. Indeed, users reported conflicts were avoided by well-managed spatial and temporal zoning on many enclosed waters (lakes, gravel pits and reservoirs). Also many users were involved in conflict mediation. 252 water recreation clubs completed a questionnaire for the study and a third had participated in conflict resolution with other users in the last three years. When conflict did occur it tended to be at particular locations and arise from competition between users with different aims such as at white-water sites. Anglers, boaters and canoeists, however, all reported a recent increase in conflicts with bank-side users, especially mountain bikers.

Despite the static levels of participation in many water-based sports a number of users felt they lacked access to sufficient water spaces. For canoeists a particular problem is access to white-water and river networks that allow canoe-touring. Water-skiing has regional deficiencies especially in the West Midlands and the West Country, which could be alleviated by access to enclosed waters of four hectares or more in size. Water-skiing bodies claim that negative attitudes amongst local authorities are a key cause of these deficiencies.

Water-skiers and other powered water-sports are also concerned about maintaining access to some existing sites. Local space shortages affect windsurfing and rowing especially in locations on the fringe of London. Also certain specific pursuits are constrained in parts of England and Wales by a shortage of space of the right quality. These include multi-lane rowing, sailing racing, game angling near centres of population and dive training

Changes to the environmental designation process arising from the European habitats directive and the CROW Act are also seen as potential threats to the some users. The University of Brighton study examined the relationship between water-based recreation and environmental designation in some detail. 8% of the rivers with public navigation rights and 3% of the canal network are currently included within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Over 25% of all the enclosed waters used for recreation are partly covered by an SSSI and this figure rises to 40% of the waters used for power-boating. Clearly some enclosed waters with conservation designations can accommodate a range of water-based recreation. Equally, there are examples of individual cases where recreation on water is prevented by conservation concerns. The study found there was no available and reliable evidence regarding the overall degree to which environmental considerations restrict water-based recreation on inland waters. The existing data collated by the study could be used to explore the detailed recreation-conservation relationship on a region by region basis.

#### **The Potential of Inland Water and Unused Countryside Assets**

The concerns arising from water-based recreation on inland waters are well known, but can obscure the social and economic potential of inland water spaces. The University of Brighton study identified 2,000 enclosed waters in England and Wales over one hectare in size. Just over half are used for water-based recreation and of these 88% are used for angling, 28% for sailing, 19% for windsurfing and 14% for canoeing. All other water-based sport activities occur on less than 10% of the lakes. Clearly some activities, such as sailing, have gained access to a significant number of enclosed waters.

The 984 enclosed waters not used for sport or recreation may offer considerable opportunities for strategic countryside policy. One initial myth encountered by the study's researchers was that many of these unused enclosed waters were either too small or were in remote rural areas. The study identified in England and Wales nine urban conurbations and a series of free-standing cities with populations of more than 200,000 people. Collectively these major urban areas contain 22 million people and the researchers were able to identify which

enclosed waters lay within these urban areas or in a 5km and 15km surrounding zone. The reality is that a quarter of the unused enclosed waters are within these major urban areas or the surrounding 5km zone. Just over 40% are within the urban areas and the 15km zone. Furthermore of the 238 unused enclosed waters within urban areas and the 5km surrounding zone, 171 are greater than six hectares in size which would allow a range of activities such as dinghy sailing or water-skiing. The data compiled by the University of Brighton could be used to undertake a regional analysis to identify which enclosed waters might be most suitable for future water-based recreation.

These unused countryside assets in and around major urban areas provide an opportunity for strategic action to meet the demand for 'closer to home' outdoor recreation which will also improve urban quality of life and encourage sustainable transport for recreation. Existing clubs can meet some of this demand but a considerable proportion of the demand is likely to be for pay and play facilities that are safe and of a high quality. Usually, such facilities can only be provided effectively at key strategic sites.

A number of water-based recreation activities can also fulfil a socially inclusive role. For example angling is a relatively inclusive sport in terms of age and social background, although well-known angling guides suggest only about 10% of key fisheries have any facilities for people with disabilities. The governing bodies of most water-based sports have developed initiatives to encourage more participation by young people and women. These include the Royal Yachting Association's Youth Training Initiative and the Amateur Rowing Association's Project 'Oarsome'. Also the study found that many young people aspire to 'high octane' recreation activities such as water and jet skiing.

It is important to recognise, however, that many barriers still exist to widening participation in water-based recreation including skill requirements, cost and time limitations, social elitism and a fear amongst many people over water quality. Also many public, voluntary and private sector organisations feel increasingly constrained by health and safety issues. The University of Brighton study argued that some of these participation barriers and the more general concerns over access to water could be addressed in the short term by improved information on the existing resource, a clearer emphasis on water-based recreation in planning guidance and better co-ordination between central government bodies. Many stakeholders feel that some of the problems of the existing situation stem in part from the administrative division of responsibilities between The Department for Environment, Food



and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department of Local Government and the Regions.

In order to advise on longer term solutions for improving access to water the final report from the University of Brighton study considered the eight following policy scenarios:

- minor development of current planning policy and strategies;
- targetted purchase of services and revised funding arrangements;
- targetted acquisition of land and water rights;
- voluntary agreements;
- voluntary agreements with dedication;
- compulsory access orders;
- a selective increase in statutory rights of navigation; and
- statutory rights of navigation to all major rivers, canals and water bodies.

Each of these approaches has their advantages but no single approach is likely to meet the need of all the different stakeholders. Dealing with current concerns requires a hybrid approach involving particular elements of these different scenarios

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP

### ACCESS TO WATER – ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS

*Professor Roger Butler and Andrew Church*

*British Waterways*

After the papers given by Roger Butler and Andrew Church, workshop discussions focused on the steps required to develop a successful strategic approach for improving access to water and watersides, and harnessing the economic and social potential of water-based sport and recreation. The two workshops agreed that water was a valuable countryside asset that can be central to the development of new open spaces, especially through water's amenity role for informal land-based recreation. The discussants confirmed that new strategic facilities for activities on water need to be high quality, safe and able to create their own demand. New facilities could also lessen the constraints faced by certain sports such as canoeing and water-skiing.

Landownership was seen as the key issue to be addressed for improving access. Many organisations noted how negotiating with landowners could be a very time consuming process producing limited results. Discussants differed in their views over the potential of the new Local Access Fora stemming from the CROW Act 2000. Some felt these might provide lobbying opportunities for improving access to water but others were sceptical about their effectiveness since bodies representing water recreation will usually be a minority voice.

The majority of the workshop participants claimed action on access to water was required. A key question was *who should show leadership?* The general view was that DEFRA should lead policy development, possibly through the Environment Agency, since the latter could provide resources under the recreation budget. Successful action by DEFRA and the Environment Agency would require contributions from a range of countryside bodies. In particular, discussants noted that water-based recreation initiatives designed to promote social inclusion will require partnerships and public resources.

A further question was *if action is taken how can co-ordination between agencies be best achieved?* Memoranda of Understanding were seen as useful but only part of the answer. At the national level the workshops considered the potential of using a forum such as the Standing Committee on Conservation, Access and Recreation established under the

Environment Act 1995. A number of discussants felt that regional co-ordinating organisations could be valuable because if carefully managed they can avoid being talking shops and become key bodies for building consensus and identifying priorities.

There was general agreement that developing policy initiatives, leadership and co-ordination would be assisted by high profile demonstration projects. These could show how water resources could be used and improved for outdoor recreation to create social and economic benefits. Demonstration projects would also provide an opportunity to obtain evidence to make the case for further access to water and to illustrate how strategic water-based recreation facilities can contribute to improvements in the quality of life, sustainable transport and social inclusion. Some of the canals managed by British Waterways and the unused enclosed waters around Britain's cities may provide potential locations for quick strategic actions using limited resources to highlight the benefits of water-based recreation. Improving access on rivers currently lacking public rights of navigation will require longer-term initiatives due to landownership issues.

The University of Brighton Consortium also included  
Independent Research Services,  
Peter Scott Planning Consultants,  
Underline Marketing,  
University of Gloucestershire.

The Consortium's final report 'Water-based sport and recreation: the facts' can be obtained from Professor Andrew Church,  
School of the Environment, University of Brighton, BN2 4GJ (Price £15)  
or from <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/resporq/findings/watersport.pdfm>

Copies of the Executive Summary are also available from this website.

\* University of Surrey Consortium (1999) *Access to other open countryside: advice to the Countryside Agency*. School of Management Studies, University of Surrey.

## ALL WORKSHOPS - REPORT BACK ON KEY ISSUES

In concluding the workshop the Chairman referred to some of the key issues which appeared to have emerged, as follows:

### Workshop 1

#### Recreation Issues for the Urban Fringe - A Community Forest Experience

- the importance of the maintenance of cycle routes and issues around whether it was always appropriate to maintain to highway standards
- the need for guidance on the construction of cycle routes/greenways
- issues of anti-social behaviour and a strategy for addressing these issues
- the need for more focus on health and safety and public liability issues

### Workshop 2

#### Linking Town and Country

- the issue of sustainability of projects was considered a key issue with a three year life of funding too short
- a need to examine and manage expectations of why people do use/don't use open space and the countryside in and around towns

### Workshop 3

#### Social Inclusion

- a key need to understand demand better in order to secure more use
- the question of whether socially excluded groups are 'designed out' and that only articulate groups have their voices heard
- do foresters/conservationists design out specific types of user?
- the issue of projectisation rather than dealing with areas in a holistic way
- a concern to empower people (skills banking) and for a people focus approach in order to build capacity
- is there a sufficiently bottom up approach or do providers chase funding?
- the need to accommodate diversity and not have preconceived notions of countryside
- the need to unlock the potential and understand the constraints and opportunities
- the need to measure and assess resource effectiveness to ensure value for money
- basic infrastructure in urban areas and the urban fringe is the key
- is social inclusion a political term which is not new?

## Workshop 4

### Access to Water - Issues and Solutions

- water is at the heart of public open space
- safe/good facilities are available in some areas but is not always utilized, are there other barriers to use by particular groups?
- DEFRA and Environment Agency need to deploy more resources to address the issues
- the issues of joining up agencies is a key to success
- whilst there is good practice, there is a need for further consideration of how this can be shared
- memoranda of understanding only take you so far unless there is a real commitment
- the Standing Committee on Conservation and Recreation associated with the 1995 Environment Act needs to meet to address the issues
- there is a need for a strategic approach to build consensus
- is there a role for local access forums in addressing issues of access to water
- leadership/joined up working needs to be established via demonstration projects
- there is a need to bring together evidence that providing opportunities for access to water is worthwhile
- land ownership is a key issue, particularly for linear access where there is no public right of navigation. Perhaps an easier option is to look at lakes and gravel pits

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

*Geoff Hughes. Sport England*

The Chairman gave a number of thanks to those individuals and organisations who had supported the workshop. Particular thanks were given to the Countryside Recreation Network Secretariat for the organisational arrangements. Thanks also to Simon Blenkinsop, who organised a field trip to Summerhill the following day. Thanks were also given to the sponsors ONE North East and to the speakers and workshop leaders.



## ANNEX 1. OPENING UP ACCESS IN AND AROUND TOWNS PROGRAMME

### Programme

- |       |  |
|-------|--|
| 10.00 | Registration and coffee  |
| 10.30 | <b>Welcome</b><br><i>Chair - Geoff Hughes, Sport England</i>   |
| 10.35 | <b>The Government Perspective</b><br><i>Susan Carter, Head of Countryside (Recreation and Landscape) Division, DEFRA</i>   |
| 11.05 | <b>The Work of the Urban Task Force on Parks and Green Spaces</b><br><i>Zoe Power, Head of Community Facilities (Environment), Sport England<br/>(Paper not submitted)</i>   |
| 11.35 | <b>WORKSHOP 1</b><br><b>Recreation Issues for the Urban Fringe</b><br><b>– The Community Forest Experience</b><br><i>Simon Blenkinsop, Recreation Officer, Tees Forest</i><br><i>Tony Davidson, Summerhill Manager</i><br><i>Owen Wilson, Cycling Initiatives Officer, Tees Valley</i> |
|       | <b>WORKSHOP 2</b><br><b>Linking Town and Country</b><br><i>Bruce Cutts, Countryside Officer, Countryside Agency</i><br><i>Liz Fisher, Area Manager Tyne &amp; Wear and County Division, The National Trust</i>   |
|       | <b>WORKSHOP 3</b><br><b>Social Inclusion</b><br><i>Dr Bill Slee, University of Aberdeen</i>  |
|       | <b>WORKSHOP 4</b><br><b>Access to Water – Issues and Solutions</b><br><i>Roger Butler, Strategic Initiatives Manager, British Waterways</i><br><i>Professor Andrew Church, University of Brighton</i>  |
| 13.00 | Lunch  |
| 14.00 | <b>WORKSHOPS 1 – 4 (Repeat)</b>  |
| 15.30 | <b>Report back on key issues arising from workshop sessions</b>  |
| 16.00 | <b>The Way Forward, Panel of Workshop Leaders</b>  |
| 16.30 | Closing remarks and depart   |



**ANNEX 2. SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP LEADER BIOGRAPHIES****Roger Butler***Initiatives Manager, British Waterways*

Roger Butler works as Strategic Initiatives Manager for British Waterways, based in their Conservation and Regeneration Group. He holds degrees from Durham and Manchester University in Geography and Landscape Design respectively.

During the 1980s he worked on the master planning and design of the UK's National Garden Festivals and also carried out a range of urban fringe projects.

His work at British Waterways involves creating and developing new partnerships to promote, enhance, conserve and regenerate our canals and rivers and their surroundings. This work involves the preparation and management of waterway corridor studies and strategies, feasibility work for canal restorations, generating opportunities for new funding programmes and a range of policy work. Recent examples include strategies for both Rural Regeneration and Sustainable Development, access and cycling studies and work in connection with RDAs and market towns.

The inland waterways link our conurbations with the countryside, and are well placed to open up access in and around towns and cities. The strategy work carried out aims to ensure that waterway corridors feature highly on the agenda of many agencies and authorities, in line with the Government's 'Waterways for Tomorrow' policy document.

Roger has worked for British Waterways since 1989 and manages a team of landscape architects, architects, planners and marketing staff. With the support of British Waterways, his team frequently carries out consultancy work, and last year he was commissioned to prepare the master plan for the proposed International River Festival in Malaysia.

**ANNEX 2. SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP LEADER BIOGRAPHIES****Simon Blenkinsop***Recreation Officer, The Tees Forest*

Simon has worked in the recreation field for most of his career, graduating from Northumbria University with a degree in Environmental Science. Since then he has mainly been employed in site-based management at a number of country parks and in North East England. For the last 10 years, he has been employed as a Recreation Ranger by the Forestry Commission at Hamsterley Forest in Co.Durham. He now works as the Recreation Officer for The Tees Forest, the community forest based in the Tees Valley.

**Susan Carter***Countryside (Recreation And Landscape) Division, DEFRA*

Susan Carter has headed DEFRA's Countryside (Recreation and Landscape) Division (formerly part of the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions) since 1996. The division leads within central government on policy on informal countryside recreation. Its responsibilities include implementation of the recreation provisions of the Rural White Paper and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It finances the National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority, and works closely with the Countryside Agency and others, both inside and outside Government.

**Professor Andrew Church***Human Geography, University of Brighton*

Andrew Church is Professor of Human Geography at the University of Brighton. He was the team leader on the recent project 'Water-based Sport and Recreation: The Facts'. A team from the University of Brighton, the University of Gloucestershire and Peter Scott Planning Consultants carried out the project. It was funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, British Waterways, the Countryside Agency, Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency and Sport England. His talk will expand on the findings of the project and consider possible strategies for tackling some of the problems facing water-based sport and recreation in areas around towns and cities.

**ANNEX 2. SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP LEADER BIOGRAPHIES****Bruce Cutts**

*Countryside Officer, Countryside Agency*

Bruce has worked in countryside management for ten years, firstly at Bestwood Country Park, a Nottingham urban fringe site before completing a degree in Environmental Management. During his Degree course he worked with Calderdale Countryside service focusing on environmental education and volunteer co-ordination work on local access projects.

Bruce then moved onto National Trail management, working with the Pennine Way Co-ordination project undertaking monitoring, surveys and general National Trail management.

Continuing with the National Trail theme he moved to mid Wales to work with the Offa's Dyke Path management service, then after two years in Wales which included a full condition survey of the National Trail he moved to Northumberland National Park to run a Countryside Agency funded research project on upland path management.

In May 2001 Bruce took up his current employment with the Countryside Agency based in Manchester. There he works primarily on CROW Act related work and the integrated access demonstration projects.

**Tony Davidson**

*Summerhill Manager*

Tony's background is essentially in conservation and environmental work. After graduating with a degree in Town and Country Planning he undertook voluntary work with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and paid work as a Rights of Way ranger under the Manpower Services Commission. After this he joined Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale as a volunteer group leader. From this Tony went to work for Groundwork in Wakefield and East Durham as a Community Projects Officer undertaking a wide range of community/environmental work. Tony joined Hartlepool Borough Council in 1996 as a Rights of Way Officer. He moved from there to his present position in late 1997 taking on the development of Summerhill from the beginning.

**ANNEX 2. SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP LEADER BIOGRAPHIES**

Geoff Hughes

*Senior Development Manager, Sport England*

Geoff Hughes is based in the North East office in Durham. Geoff combines a role of More Places Team Leader in the regional office along with co-ordinating Sport England's role in Countryside and water recreation at national level.

After graduating with a B.Sc Joint Honours in Geography and Biology in 1972 from the University of Salford, Geoff gained a Post Graduate Diploma in Town and Country Planning from Leeds Metropolitan University. He also holds a Diploma in Management Studies from the University of Teesside, gaining an distinction and the British Institute of Management Award.

Geoff joined Sport England in 1984 as the Regional Planning Officer in the North East region following 11 years in his local government. In his local government career he held a variety of posts including Recreation Officer in the former West Yorkshire Metropolitan County Council and as a Landscape Assistant in Teesside County Borough Council.

As the co-ordinator of facilities work in the North East region he is responsible for Sport England's two statutory responsibilities which embrace the distribution of Sport England Lottery funding and as consultees on planning applications which have implications for playing fields. In any national capacity he has been involved in a variety of projects including the presentation of evidence at the House of Commons Environment Select Committee on the Environmental Impact of Leisure Activities, co-ordination of the case at the Windermere 10 mph Speed Limit Inquiry and preparation of advice to potential lottery applicants based on the Use of Natural Resources in Urban and Rural areas. Geoff is currently co-ordinating joint working with the Countryside Agency and Environment Agency as part of a Memorandum of Understanding and liaising closely with DEFRA on the Access to Water Research and By-laws for the Coast. Emerging initiatives with the Countryside Agency include proposed work on the diversity review and links with the Market Towns and Vital Villages initiatives. Geoff is currently Vice Chairman of the Countryside Recreation Network.

## **ANNEX 2. SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP LEADER BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Zoe Power**

*Assistant Director – Environment, Sport England*

Zoe is the Head of Community Facilities (Environment) at Sport England. Her responsibilities include overseeing Sport England's statutory and non-statutory land use planning work, leading on delivery of the 'Green Spaces' Programme, funded by the New Opportunities Fund and providing leadership for Sport England's work with rural agencies to promote sport in the countryside.

Zoe has been with Sport England for just nine months. Before that she worked as a local authority town planner in the east end of London for over 10 years. More recently she was responsible for project management of a £25 million park redevelopment scheme at Mile End Park, a project which is commended in the Urban Green Spaces Task Force report.

Since December 2001, Zoe has been a member of Taskforce Working Group 4, looking at Planning, Design, Management and Maintenance of Green Spaces

### **Dr Bill Slee**

*University Of Aberdeen*

Bill Slee is a graduate of Cambridge and Aberdeen Universities. He is senior lecturer in rural economics in the University of Aberdeen, in which post he has been actively involved in research and consultancy on a range of countryside topics, including a recent contract for The Countryside Recreation Network on social exclusion and countryside recreation.

**ANNEX 2. SPEAKER AND WORKSHOP LEADER BIOGRAPHIES**

Owen Wilson

*Cycling Initiatives Officer, Sustrans*

Owen has been employed as Sustrans Tees Valley Officer since July 2000, a remit that includes fund raising, identification and development of new cycle routes, work with schools on encouraging walking and cycling and the commissioning of artists. Prior to moving to Sustrans he managed Stockton Borough Councils Countryside Team, including 3 Country Parks and a Community Farm. Other posts have included works as a Countryside Ranger, a volunteer officer with BTCV and a Development Chemist.

Owen graduated in 1987 with a BSc Hons. in Chemistry, and returned to study in the 1990s completing a postgraduate diploma in Countryside Management in 1993 and an Open University BSc in 1997.

### ANNEX 3. OPENING UP ACCESS IN AND AROUND TOWNS DELEGATE LIST

Mr	Atkins	Geoff	Area Access Officer	Scottish Natural Heritage
	Bainbridge	Michelle		City of York Council
Miss	Baness	Anna	Access and Visitor Management Officer	National Parks Association
Mrs	Beard	Amanda	Property Manager	The National Trust
Mr	Beatty	James	Active Recreation Officer	Groundwork Wakefield
Ms	Benson	Jayne	Strategic Routes Officer	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Mr	Benson	Neil		The National Trust
	Blavins	Kim		City of York Council
	Blenkinsop	Simon	Recreation Officer	The Tees Forest
Miss	Brown	Audrey	Land Use Officer	National Forest Company
Ms	Brown	Jackie	Countryside Management Assistant	Durham County Council
	Butler	Roger	Strategic Initiatives Manager	British Waterways
	Carter	Susan	Head, Countryside (Recreation and Landscape) Division	DEFRA
Prof.	Church	Andrew		University of Brighton
Mrs	Cooke	Cathy	Assistant Area Manager	Derbyshire County Council
	Cutts	Bruce	Countryside Officer	The Countryside Agency
	Davidson	Tony	Summerhill Manager	Summerhill
	Davies	Liz	Network Manager	Countryside Recreation Network
Mr	Dickin	Phil	Community and Education Manager	Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
Mrs	Earnshaw	Amanda	Senior Countryside Officer	Countryside Agency (North East Region)
Mr	Ellison	Mark	Sustainable Travel Co-ordinator	Cumbria Tourist Board
	Fisher	Liz	Area Manager, Tyne & Wear and County Durham	The National Trust
Miss	Gauler	Judith	Area Forester - Exeter	Forestry Commission
Mr	Gorton	Tim	Landscape Architect	British Waterways
Mr	Hanson	Bruce	Head of Recreation and Tourism Strategy	Broads Authority
Miss	Heywood	Christine	Network Assistant	Countryside Recreation Network
Mr	James	Martin	Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Officer	Environment Agency
	Jordan	Peter		Groundwork, Rossendale

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Mr	Kempson	Colin	Chairman, Access Management Committee	British Canoe Union
Mr	Kendall	Ian	Senior Countryside and Forestry Officer	Calderdale MBC
	King	Sarah	PhD Student	University of Durham
Mr	Lloyd	David		Environment Agency
Mr	McCraw	Ron	Access Projects Leader	Scottish Natural Heritage
Ms	Mullinger	Sue	Planning and Projects Officer	Great North Forest
Mr	Odell	Barry	Development Officer	British Water Ski
Mr	Palmer	Colin		The Offroad Cycling Association
	Powell	Lindsey		Environment Agency
	Power	Zoe	Assistant Director, Environment	Sport England
Mr	Roberts	Michael	Countryside Officer	Groundwork, Mersey Valley
Mr	Scoffin	Steve	Countryside Recreation Officer	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Mr	Scott	Peter	Director	Peter Scott Planning Services
Mr	Slater	Peter	Co-ordinator	North East Sport
Dr	Slee	Bill	Senior Lecturer in Rural Economics	Aberdeen University
Mr	Smith	Paul	Map Development Manager	Ordnance Survey
Ms	Stewart	Caroline	Project Officer	Greening for Growth
Ms	Thompson	Wendy	Senior Countryside Adviser	The Countryside Agency
	Valentine	Roger		Environment Agency
Mrs	Vaughan	Sue	Grants Officer	Northern Rock Foundation
Ms	Walters	Liz	Area Countryside Officer	Northumberland County Council
Mr	Watts	Jason	Recreation Officer	Environment Agency
	Williams	Bryan		City of York Council
Mr	Williams	Godfrey	Recreation Officer	Environment Agency
	Wilson	Owen	Cycling Initiatives Officer	Sustrans
Ms	Woodfield	Valerie	Countryside Officer, Countryside on Your Doorstep	The Countryside Agency