



Outdoor Recreation Network

21st Century Outdoor Recreation



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About the Outdoor Recreation Network (ORN)

ORN is a membership organisation comprising representatives from government departments, agencies and other organisations with a role in outdoor recreation.

The Network's members meet quarterly to discuss outdoor recreation matters and share best practise, as well as working collaboratively on research and other projects.

To communicate with its wider subscriber-based audience, ORN publishes journals, hosts conferences and seminars, and issues e-newsletters. This is coordinated by the Network's management team and secretariat, the latter of which is staffed on a part-time basis.

The Network's key aims are to:

1. Encourage cooperation between members in identifying and promoting the need for research related to outdoor recreation, to encourage joint ventures in undertaking research and to disseminate information about members' recreation programmes.
2. Promote information exchange relating to outdoor recreation and to foster general debate about relevant trends and issues.
3. Share information to develop best practice through training and professional development in provision for and management of outdoor recreation.

Write for the ORN Journal

If your organisation is doing something innovative, inspiring or groundbreaking in the field of outdoor recreation, we'd love to chat to you about becoming an author for our journal.

To discuss writing for a future edition of the ORN journal please contact our secretariat.

Author guidance and the Network's editorial policy is available on our website at www.outdoorrecreation.org.uk/publications.

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 Research OfficerAlison Darlow, Natural England
 Communications Officer and Scotland repJames Ogilvie, Forestry Commission Scotland

Contact

www.outdoorrecreation.org.uk
kathryn@outdoorrecreation.org.uk
 0044 (0)28 9030 3937

Staff (part-time)

SecretariatKathryn Callaghan, ORN
 AccountsSylvia Watson, ORN

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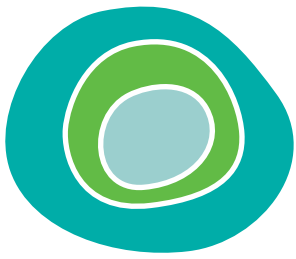
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Outdoor Recreation Network

Welcome and Introduction By Guest Editor Mike McClure, Sport NI

Perhaps it's my age – but time seems to be moving much faster than ever. Could it be that the earth and everything else in the solar system is rotating at a more rapid rate and that time therefore actually is going faster and nobody (apart from me) has noticed? I'm sure someone could do a PhD on that (or maybe on me!)

However, while the rate at which time is moving may be perceptual on my part, society is definitely changing in a myriad of ways at an astonishing rate. Technology and the bombardment of information including the ever-present marketing strategies that are encouraging us all to buy more, do more, say more, be more... is an ever pervasive force in our lives. The expression "tired but still wired" seems to be cropping up a lot. Our lives are increasingly sedentary as we rely extensively on machines to do the work for us – just how many people send emails across the desk to a colleague instead of going and having a chat? Despite great events like the Olympics, the Commonwealth Games and the recent Giro d'Italia in Northern Ireland, participation in traditional sport and leisure is not increasing at the same rate as the problems associated with obesity and lack of exercise. Yet there is an increasing body of evidence that highlights that participation in informal activities, often associated with outdoor recreation, are not declining but continuing to grow.

This edition of our Outdoor Recreation Network journal is dedicated to sussing out the changes and the opportunities for outdoor recreation in the 21st Century. We have 2 articles that are the result of research into trends in participation and engagement with nature from TNS and AFBI in Northern Ireland. These articles highlight not just that change is happening in society and in relation to outdoor recreation but what are the key drivers of these changes. While organisations such as TNS and AFBI have been commissioned to monitor and examine such trends – others are forging ahead with ideas, initiatives and projects that seek to engage people with outdoor places whether these are National Parks or local facilities. Tom Jones has provided great insight into how the Peak district National Park is seeking to engage effectively with young people through the establishment of a proactive youth forum. This project clearly seeks to engage effectively with young people to ensure that the Park can meet their desires and needs effectively. The report highlights the need for community engagement but also shows that this cannot be done overnight and can also be seen as a luxury to be cut in times of austerity.

Practical community engagement is at the heart of Gail Smith's article on a Diverse Countryside and also Karl Prince's article on Activate Coast and Countryside. Both of these articles highlight the effectiveness of relationship building between providers of outdoor recreation and the potential users to ensure that they provide what people want and need in a given area.

Kenny Auld from the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority has highlighted the use of digital technology to develop and publish the new National Park Development Plan. Again consultation with communities was an integral part of the development of this plan although this was primarily done on-line.

In Denbighshire there has been significant efforts to embrace the technical age and to improve online information and apps which help both walkers and cyclists find out more about where they can go and whether the chosen route will be appropriate. Innovative digital approaches to making the outdoors more accessible is reaping good rewards now in North Wales.

Verity Comley from the Sport and Recreation Alliance has been working on the "Reconomics" report and has provided an overview of this on page 41. This report highlights that the benefits of outdoor recreation are significant in economic terms and therefore this needs to be communicated accurately and succinctly at a political level.

There are key themes emerging from these articles that we need to take cognisance of as we seek to develop outdoor recreation in the 21st Century. These include but are in no way limited to issues and concerns about:

1. Financing – whether from a personal or corporate/management point of view
2. The use of digital technology and keeping abreast of trends.
3. An ageing and increasingly sedentary society
4. Engagement with under-represented groups including Black and Asian Ethnic Minorities, people who are socio-economically disadvantaged
5. The importance of engagement and building relationships with potential users when developing plans and projects
6. The value being placed on "close to home" accessible green-space/ infrastructure

Those of us involved in ORN (and probably most of you reading this journal) are really passionate about the UK and Irish Natural Environment and the myriad of activities that we can enjoy in it. There are also clear messages underlying these articles that many people throughout these small islands share that enthusiasm and there is a need to ensure that the genuine value of outdoor recreation is not lost among all the other agendas and issues that Governments face..

Contact

Mike McClure, Outdoor Recreation Development Officer, Sport Northern Ireland
c/o Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, Hilltown Road, Bryansford, BT33 0PZ
T: 028 9038 3855 | M: 07976 468914
E: mikemcclure@sportni.net | w: www.sportni.net

Recent trends in outdoor recreation in the UK and drivers of change

Duncan Stewart, TNS UK

This article reviews trends in outdoor recreation in the UK in recent years and some of the factors likely to influence how people participate in the future and our views on the implications of these changes for outdoor recreation providers.

Recent outdoor recreation trends

A number of major surveys have recorded the UK population's levels of participation in outdoor recreation in recent years. In the five years since Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) started, there has been little change in the proportion of the English population who tend to visit the outdoors for leisure and their general frequency of visits. However the total volumes of visits taken each year have varied (Table 1). Notably, the volume of visits taken in the 12 months from June 2013 to May 2014 was higher than recorded for the equivalent 12 month period during any of the preceding years.

Table 1 – Annual visits to the natural environment June 2009 – May 2014 (MENE)
Proportion of population taking visits more than once a week and total visits taken in 12 month periods

	June 2009 to May 2010	June 2010 to May 2011	June 2011 to May 2012	June 2012 to May 2013	June 2013 to May 2014
Proportion of English adults who normally visit natural environment more than once a week	33%	34%	33%	33%	35%
Total visits to natural environment by English adult population	2,731m	2,461m	2,768m	2,834m	2,999m

During the same five year period, MENE has recorded a number of changes in the characteristics of visits taken to the outdoors by the English population. There have been significant increases in the volumes of visits taken to places close to home and urban green spaces – particularly parks in towns and cities, country parks and paths, cycleways and bridleways. In contrast, while there have been seasonal variations in the volumes of visits taken to the countryside and coast, there has been no significant upward or downward trend over the five year period.

The average distances travelled to reach the main destination of the visit have also decreased and an increasing proportion of visits have involved walking to the destination rather than driving.

Table 2 – Largest growth areas in outdoor recreation visits – comparing June 2009 to May 2010 with June 2013 to May 2014 (MENE)

Overall volume of visits taken to the natural environment:	+10%
Places visited:	
• Any urban green spaces	+32%
• Playing fields/ other recreation areas	+44%
• Parks in town or city	+28%
• Paths, cycleways, bridleways	+26%
• Other open space in town	+35%
Distance Travelled:	
• Less than 1 mile from home	+16%
Transport used:	
• Walked to destination	+14%

In terms of the activities undertaken on visits to the outdoors, the highest percentage increases over the five year period from June 2009 to May 2014 have been recorded for running, road cycling and outdoor swimming, while more modest increases have been recorded for walking, including dog walking.

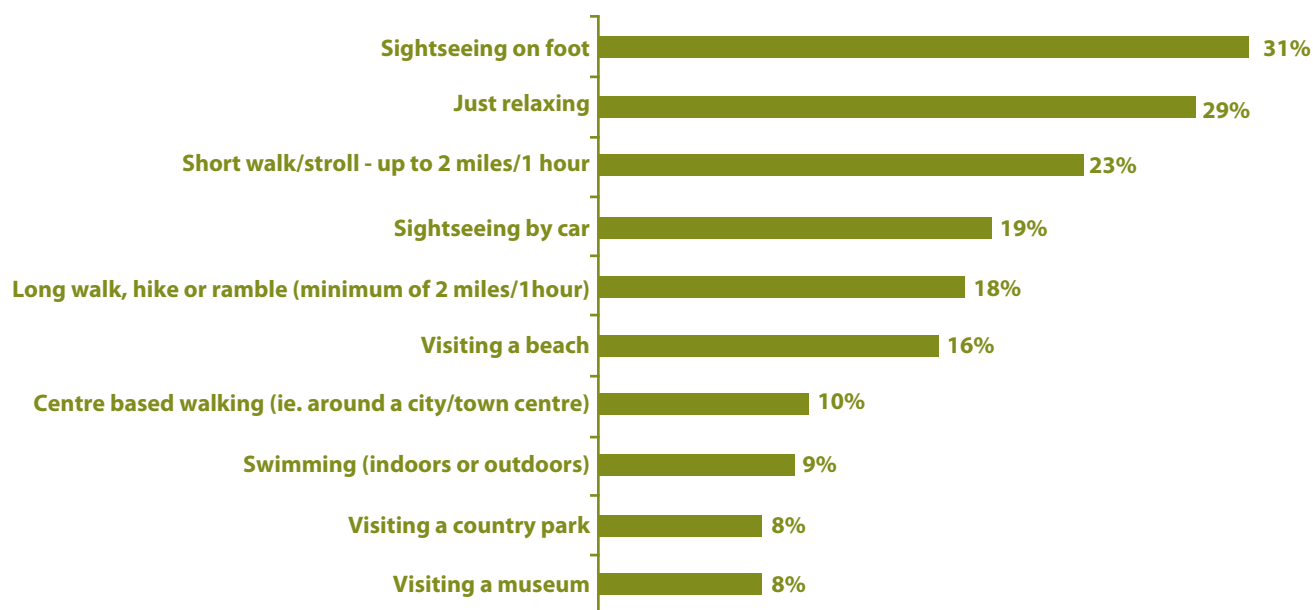
The changing profile of outdoor recreation recorded in England over this five year period reflects the trends recorded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in their Scottish Recreation Survey between 2002 and 2012.

While this study recorded no significant changes in the proportion of Scots taking part in regular outdoor recreation, the average distances travelled on visits decreased significantly (from 16 miles in 2004 to 9 in 2012) and there was an overall increase in the share of visits taken to urban locations, while the proportion of visits taken to the countryside declined. Also, in common with the trends recorded in England, visits were increasingly likely to be taken on foot rather than by car and average visit durations decreased.

Rise of the staycation

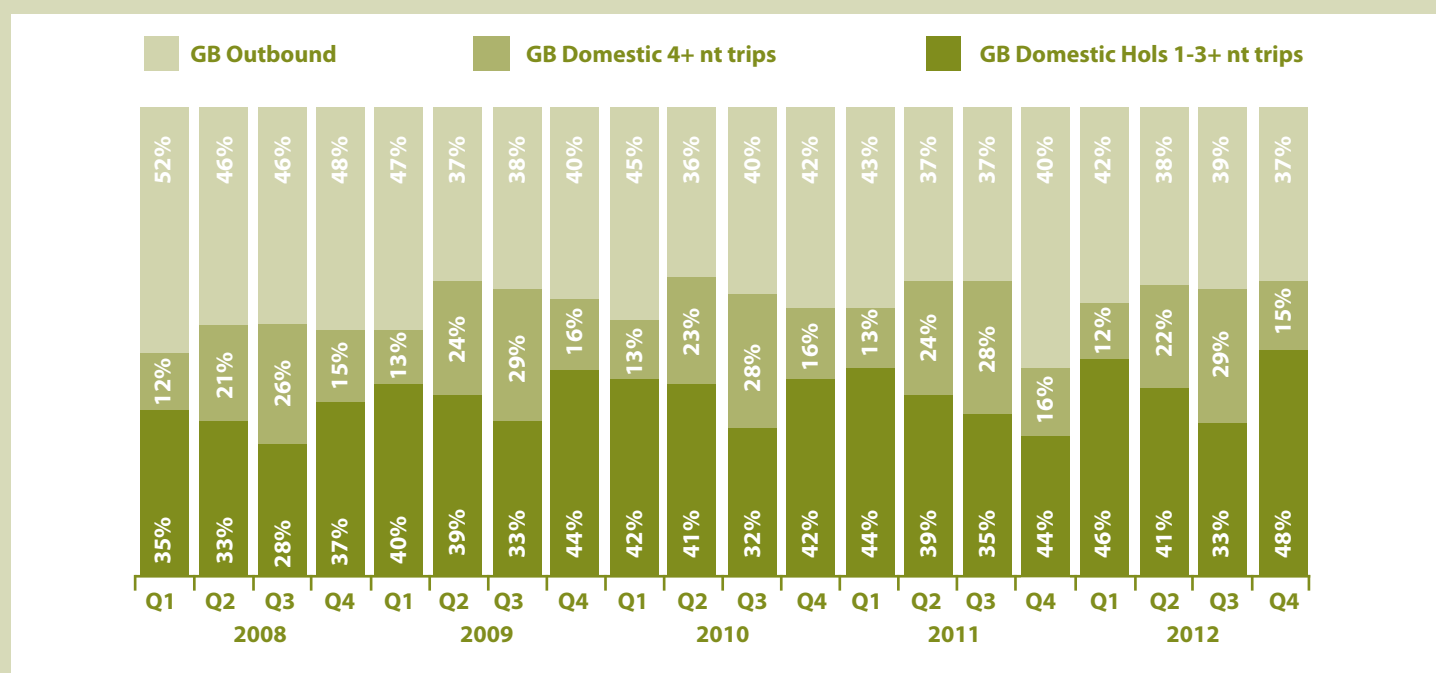
It is also useful to consider changes in holiday taking behaviour in recent years. The Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS), undertaken by TNS for Britain's national tourism organisations, has provided a consistent measure of domestic holiday taking since 2005. Over this period, questions have periodically been included regarding activities undertaken during holidays. As shown below (Figure 1), the activities most frequently undertaken on domestic holidays include sightseeing (on foot or by car), walking and visits to beaches and country parks.

Figure 1 Top 10 activities undertaken on holidays taken in Britain by GB residents - % of all holidays taken (GBTS 2012)



This study recorded an increase in the volume of domestic holidays and short breaks taken by UK residents since 2008, while the volume of visits to overseas destinations decreased. As shown in Figure 2, the proportion of holidays taken by UK residents with a domestic destination increased between 2008 and 2012 (from an annual total of 54% in 2008 to 61% in 2012) with this 'shift' in behaviour first occurring in 2008, coinciding with the start of the economic recession. An increased volume of domestic short breaks (1-3 nights) has been the primary driver of this change.

Figure 2 Distribution of holidays taken by UK residents 2008 to 2012 – domestic short breaks v domestic longer holidays v international (GBTS 2012)



Drivers of change

While the surveys outlined above have recorded changes in participation in outdoor recreation and holiday taking in recent years, understanding the factors which have caused these changes and which continue to influence behaviour is less straightforward.

A number of broad themes that are likely to influence leisure taking trends are relevant to this discussion are as follows:

- The economic downturn
- Growing population and changing characteristics
- The health and wellbeing 'gap'
- Consumer demand for control and simplicity.
- The connected consumer

The economic downturn

The United Kingdom was technically in recession for a year and a half from the second quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2009. However, the impact of the downturn has lasted much longer - while projections for economic growth during 2014 and 2015 have recently been upgraded, forecasts for pay growth have worsened and continue to be below inflation².

UK consumers continue to 'feel the pinch', as highlighted in the recent TNS Public Opinion Monitor undertaken in July³. This research found that 34% of the population felt that the economy in UK was doing better than a year ago while 14% thought that it was in a poorer state. However, in contrast, a minority (17%) of the working population expected their income to increase in the next 12 months and around 1 in 10 stated that they found it easier to budget than a year ago.

As described in the previous section, the staycation trend with UK consumers taking more short breaks in Britain but fewer overseas visits has been sustained since the start of the downturn in 2008. Research undertaken by VisitEngland⁴ suggests that this trend will continue for some time to come. Indeed this research also suggests that even when consumers start to feel better off many are likely to continue with the cost cutting measures they have become used to during the economic decline.

A changing population

Population growth and urbanisation

The UK population has grown at an accelerating pace during the last 30 years. Between 2001 and 2011, the population grew by 7 per cent, an increase of around 4 million people, with most of this growth taking place in urban areas. London saw the greatest net growth with its population increasing by almost a million (938,500)⁵.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) predicts a continuation of this trend, expecting that by 2021, 5 million more people will live in the UK⁶ with the greatest rate of population growth being in London (a 14 per cent increase is anticipated over this period, equating to 1.1 million more people)⁷.

In the longer term, by 2035, the UK population is predicted to grow to over 73 million - an increase of around 14% from current levels.

Ageing population

While the overall UK population is predicted to increase over the next 20 years, the scale of the increase will be most significant amongst the oldest age groups. ONS predictions suggest that by 2035, the number of people in the 65 to 74 age group will increase by 49% and the number aged 75 and over will increase by 82%.

However, people are also expected to remain active until they are much older, with many staying in work beyond pensionable age.⁸ People feel young for longer⁹ and are increasingly willing and able to take part in active leisure pursuits until an older age.

The health and wellbeing 'gap'

Between 1993 and 2012, the proportion of adults living in England classified as obese increased from 13% to 24% amongst men and from 16% to 25% amongst woman¹⁰. A recent study suggested that these proportions will increase significantly by 2030 to 48% of men and 43% of women¹¹.

However, research undertaken in 2013¹² suggested that consumers considered "being fit and in good health" to be a sign of success in life, and increasingly more important than "having lots of money" (93% and 81% respectively). Yet only 44% are satisfied with their physical health, a decrease from 50% in 2010.

These findings suggest a growing gap between how healthy people want to feel and how they actually feel in their everyday lives. Consumers seek ways to close this 'health gap' and many products and services have arisen, promising better health and wellbeing. This is illustrated by the huge number of health and fitness apps available in Apple's App Store (over 300,000 at time of writing),¹³ and the growth in popularity of wearable technology which allows people to monitor and manage their physical activity and health.

Demand for control and simplicity

Qualitative research undertaken by TNS for Natural England in 2012¹⁴ explored the motivations and barriers influencing leisure decisions. This research, which focused on families living in London and the South East, found that many parents and guardians sought leisure experiences for their children that were 'commoditised' into a defined, clear product. These types of leisure experiences such as those offered in a soft play centre, were perceived as familiar and certain to keep their children entertained. In contrast, many parents were unclear of how an unstructured, less predictable visit to a natural environment such as a woodland, could guarantee to entertain the children, and they lacked confidence in how they might facilitate these sorts of experiences themselves.

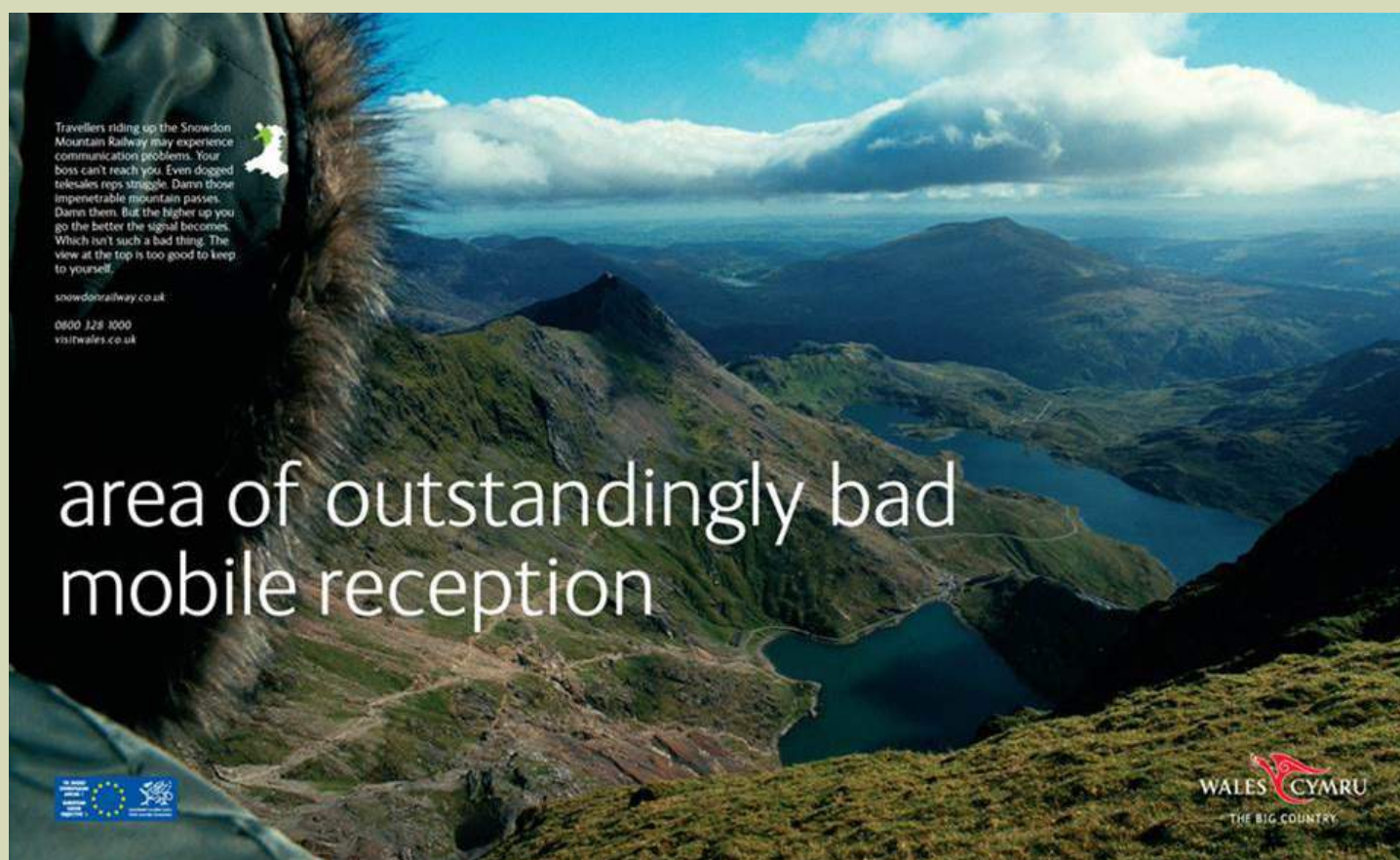
Related to this finding, other studies suggest that parents are becoming increasingly risk averse¹⁵, reluctant to 'allow' children to play unaccompanied or to visit less managed, natural places where there is a perceived safety risk.

The connected consumer

In 2013 three-quarters of the UK population used the Internet every day (73%) and over half accessed the Internet using a mobile phone (53%)¹⁶. With the increased penetration of smart phones and other portable devices and the rapid growth of Wifi availability¹⁷, more and more consumers expect to be able to go online at any time and in any location.

Organisations in the travel, tourism and leisure sector have embraced the growth of digital, providing information to assist consumers throughout their leisure 'journey' from the idea generation stages, through trip planning and increasingly during and following the visit. Social media has opened up new ways to communicate with customers and promote facilities and services. For example the National Trust have over 250,000 followers on Twitter and 220,000 brand friends on Facebook.

However, while digital is clearly very relevant to outdoor recreation providers with opportunities to develop the use of new technologies to enhance experiences, there are also opportunities to promote the natural environment as a place to enjoy some 'digital downtime', to escape some of the pressures which tend to be associated with being online (for example work emails!).



The recent Connected Life study undertaken by TNS¹⁸ could provide a further understanding of how to address this potential conflict by helping providers to identify how and when digital should be embraced as a tool that can make a visit to the outdoors easier and more enjoyable, and when the natural environment should be promoted as a place to escape.

The Connected Life study has provided a segmentation of the online population reflecting how individuals use and feel about being connected. This segmentation approach can help to identify the types of consumers who want to be connected constantly and those who see the Internet as a 'necessary evil' and would love to spend some time off-line.

Observers

I'm having a digital detox month. There's too much information on Social Media. I need to unplug myself



Leaders

I have 1000 Twitter followers. Its my favourite way to communicate with everyone. Its quick, easy and free



Functionals

I use Facebook mainly to keep up to date with my friends' birthdays. It's a necessary evil



Connectors

I always forward offers that brands have on Facebook and Twitter to my friends. It's an easy way to save money



Use of Social Media across the segments

Implications for outdoor recreation providers

The recent trends in outdoor recreation and tourism described in this article and the various factors likely to influence how people participate have many implications for organisations that provide outdoor recreation opportunities:

- With an increased share of outdoor visits taken close to home in urban green spaces and a fast growing urban population, the supply of high quality, accessible town and city parks and country parks on urban fringes will become increasingly important.
- The ageing population will impact on the profile of activities undertaken by visitors to the outdoors and the composition of visiting groups. For example, it is likely that visiting groups will increasingly include three generations, influencing how providers cater for 'families' (e.g. overnight holiday accommodation).
- While there are concerns about the growing rate of obesity within the population, there does appear to be an increasing desire for many people to take positive action to improve their health and wellbeing. This change may be one of the factors behind the growth of visits to close to home urban and urban fringe green spaces such as parks in towns and country parks and participation in running and road cycling. Outdoor recreation providers should consider these consumer trends when presenting the 'product' they offer to customers.



References

- ¹ The major surveys used in this article are Natural England's Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE), SNH's Scottish Recreation Survey (ScRS), the Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) which is jointly commissioned by Britain's National Tourist Boards and the International Passenger Survey (IPS) which is undertaken by ONS.
- ² <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/aug/17/uk-economy-recovery-bank-governor-mark-carney>
- ³ <http://www.tnsglobal.com/uk/public-opinion-monitor>
- ⁴ http://www.visitengland.org/insight-statistics/market-research/Economic_Downturn_and_the-Staycation/
- ⁵ http://www.centreforcities.org/assets/files/census/12-07-17_City_Census_snapshot.pdf
- ⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/npp/national-population-projections/2010-based-projections/sum-2010-based-national-population-projections.html>
- ⁷ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/snpp/sub-national-population-projections/Interim-2011-based/stb-2011-based-snpp.html#tab-Results>
- ⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/18/ageing-population-key-to-economic-prosperity>
- ⁹ E.g. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2402732/Middle-age-begins-53-says-new-survey.html>
- ¹⁰ <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB13648>
- ¹¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2011/08August/Pages/half-of-uk-predicted-to-be-obese-by-2030.aspx>
- ¹² Global Monitor research undertaken by Futures Company in 2013
- ¹³ <http://www.statista.com/statistics/270291/popular-categories-in-the-app-store/>
- ¹⁴ Families, children and the Natural Environment, Natural England 2012 research unpublished
- ¹⁵ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/children-brought-up-in-captivity-by-risk-averse-parents-says-leading-child-psychologist-8457534.html>
- ¹⁶ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access-quarterly-update/q1-2014/stb-ia-q1-2014.html>
- ¹⁷ <http://www.thecloud.net/blog/number-of-public-wi-fi-hotspots-to-double-in-four-years>
- ¹⁸ <http://connectedlife.tnsglobal.com/>

Contact

Duncan Stewart, TNS UK
duncan.stewart@tnsglobal.com



Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation: assessing current demand and the impact of the recession

Diane Burgess, Grahan Finney, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

In order to explore future demand for outdoor recreation, it is essential to understand how the countryside is currently used and whether this has been affected by the recession.

This paper draws from three studies conducted in 2008, 2010 and 2012, in which nearly two and a half thousand members of the general population of Northern Ireland were interviewed. These studies explored how members of the public use the countryside in terms of activities, motivations, frequency, location and expenditure.

The impact of the recession on respondents is clear. In the 2008 survey, which was undertaken immediately prior to the onset of the recession, only 37% of respondents considered “employment” to be their key concern. Unsurprisingly, subsequent surveys undertaken during the recession recorded increased rates of concern for employment (50% and 55% of respondents in 2010 and 2012 respectively).

Following the recession, the use of the countryside declined from 88% in 2008 to 82%, recovering to 89% in 2012. This paper reports the findings of these studies, providing evidence to support the future development of outdoor recreation within Northern Ireland.

Introduction

In recent years outdoor recreation within Northern Ireland has seen significant changes with the development of trails for walking, canoeing, mountain bike and horse riding (Outdoor Recreation, 2012). In order to explore future demand for outdoor recreation, it is essential to understand how the countryside is currently used and whether this has been affected by the recession. This paper draws from three studies conducted in 2008, 2010 and 2012, in which nearly two and a half thousand members of the general population of Northern Ireland were interviewed. These studies explored how members of the public use the countryside in terms of activities, motivations, frequency, location and expenditure.

This paper focuses on the use of the countryside and how it has been affected by the recession of 2008 and considerations for future development.

The surveys

Three surveys were undertaken in 2008, 2010 and 2012 to explore how members of the public used the countryside. These surveys interviewed members of the general public in their homes, rather than targeting countryside and outdoor recreation users. This has ensured that we can report participation rates for the population of Northern Ireland. The sample sizes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample sizes of the three surveys

	Feb - March 2008	Feb - March 2010	July - Aug 2012	Total
Sample Size	931	890	617	2,438

In obtaining the sample for each of the studies, care was taken to ensure that the respondents were representative of the over 18 population of Northern Ireland.

The results

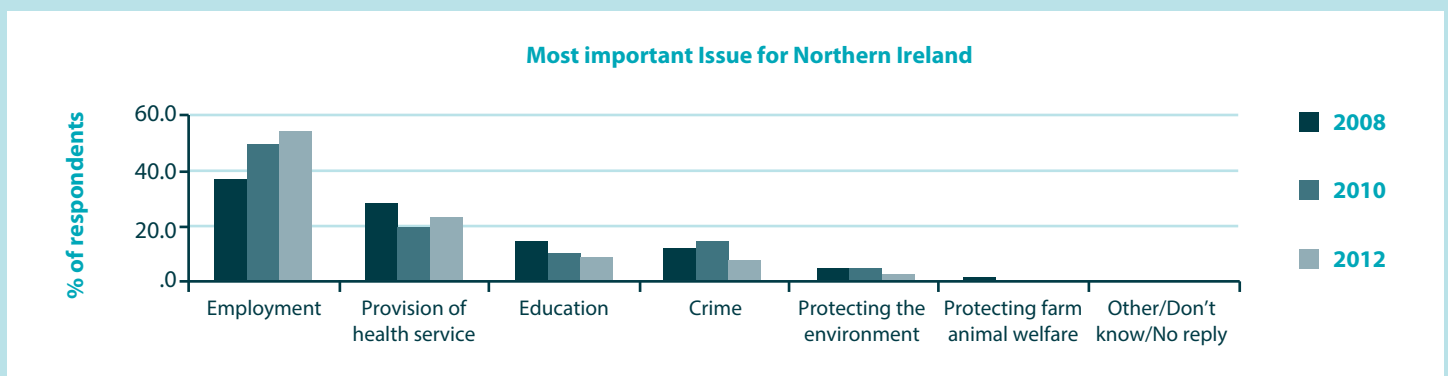
The questionnaires varied across the three surveys, with the 2008 survey focusing on which activities were undertaken within the countryside. Subsequent surveys gained additional information on respondent motivations and their expenditure. The 2010 survey focused on participation in specific activities (walking, driving, biking, horse riding and nature observation) while the 2012 survey gained detailed information on the last trip made by respondents.

Impact on the recession

Following the financial crisis, employment fell in Northern Ireland by 2.4% between 2007 and 2009. However, an increase in the number of part-time jobs (2.9%) masked a more marked decrease in full-time jobs (5.1%). Both part-time and full-time jobs continued to decline in 2009-2011, leading to a reduction in employment of 2.1% (DETI, 2012).

The effect of the recession on members of the public can be seen in the level of concern expressed for employment within Northern Ireland relative to other issues. As can be seen in Figure 1, employment is consistently the issue of highest concern. However, the level of concern rose from 37% in 2008, prior to the onset of the recession to 50% and 55% of respondents in 2010 and 2012 respectively.

Figure 1: Importance of employment within Northern Ireland



Use of the countryside

Respondents were asked whether they undertook any activities within the countryside of Northern Ireland. As can be seen in Table 2, a large number of respondents use the countryside in a wide range of activities, with most respondents partaking in a number of different activities. Participation levels ranged from 82% and 89% of respondents and included activities such as driving in the countryside, enjoying the scenery to more active sports such as walking and biking.

Walking, rambling and running were consistently the most popular activities, with approximately 60% of respondents participating in them.

Further analysis of the 2010 data showed that countryside use was highest in the spring and summer for all activities; with between 68% and 100% of countryside users participating in their activity at least once a week (see Table 4). The most frequent users were horse riders (100%), runners (94%), walkers (90%) and nature observers (86%). Unsurprisingly, usage fell in autumn and winter, with between 19% and 75% of users making at least one trip a week. Those undertaking a drive in the countryside had the largest decline to 19% from 71%.



Table 3: Respondent participation in countryside activities:

Do you undertake any of the following activities in the countryside of Northern Ireland?¹	2008 (931)	2010 (890)	2012 (617)²
	n (%*)	n (%*)	n (%*)
Walking/rambling/running inc dog walking	613 (66)	499 (56)	355 (57)
Relax and enjoy the scenery/sightseeing	589 (64)		
Drive in the countryside "appreciating scenery from your car (for example, at a viewpoint)"	583 (63)	459 (52)	
Eating or drinking out			229 (37)
Visits to a beach (sunbathing or paddling)			268 (43)
Visiting an attraction			248 (40)
Playing with children			228 (37)
Picnic	355 (37)	n/a	198 (32)
Cycling (Road/Mountain Bike)	128 (14)	27 (3)	184 (30)
Bird Watching/Wildlife Observation ⁴	168 (18)	82 (9)	89 (14)
Fishing/angling			67 (11)
Golf	91 (10)		56 (9)
Water-sports			
Swimming outdoors			39 (6)
Field-sports (e.g. shooting and hunting)			34 (6)
Horse riding		5 (1)	30 (5)
Off-road driving or motorcycling			30 (5)
Camping and Caravanning			21 (3)
Football			4 (1)
Other	21 (2)	61 (6)	4 (1)
Respondents who do not partake in any countryside activities	114 (12)	164 (18)	70 (11)

Results have been amalgamated to enable comparisons across the three surveys.

Table 4: Frequency of visits to the countryside

	Walk (309)	Run (35)	Cycle (22)	Nature (14)	Horse Riding (4)	Drive (298)
At least once a week in Spring/Summer	90%	94%	68%	86%	100%	71%
At least once a week in Autumn/Winter	52%	66%	36%	50%	75%	19%

Visitor expenditure

Within the 2010 and 2012 surveys, respondents provided details of their expenditure during countryside activities; for a typical trip to participate within their most frequent activity in 2010 (see Table 5) and their spending on their most recent trip in 2012 (Table 6).

As can be seen in Tables 5 and 6, most expenditure on trips was incurred on food (whether brought from home or eating out) followed by transport. Average trip expenditure in 2010 was £24 (£11 on food, £8 on transport and £4 admissions) and £29 in 2012 (£14 on food, £11 on transport and £4 on admissions etc). This reflects an increase in expenditure from 2010 on both food and transport.

In terms of activity, car drivers and nature observers spent the most. Drivers spent the most on eating out and transport. Expenditure on admission fees was low (£4) with nature observers and horse riders spending over double the average (£9). Annual expenditure costs varied from £9 for walkers to £300 for horse riders. This is not unexpected due to the different level of equipment requirements between activities.

Table 6: Average expenditure of countryside visitors in 2012

	Walk (309)	Run (35)	Cycle (22)	Nature (14)	Horse Riding (4)	Drive (298)	Average Expenditure
Accommodation	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Food and drink (packed lunches)	3	6	1	11	5	6	5
Food and drink (eating out)	7	3	3	8	0	16	6
Transport (fuel, parking, fares etc)	6	3	4	11	11	16	8
Admission fees	1	1	0	9	9	3	4
Annual equipment costs	9	86	47	19	300	n/a	77
Total expenditure	17	14	7	40	25	42	24

Table 5: Average expenditure of countryside visitors in 2010

	n	Total Spend	Food Spend	Transport Spend	Total Spend	Other
Countryside Visitors	547	£29	£14	£11	£4	

Visitor Facilities

In 2010, respondents were asked what facilities they considered during their countryside activities. As shown in Table 7, the provision of toilets (57% of countryside users) and car parking (44%) were the most important facilities. The importance of toilets is consistent across all activities, while car parking is important for all except runners, bikers and horse riders. However, only 29% of runners, 14% of cyclists and 25% of horse riders used a car compared to 93% of the nature observers.

Provision of a visitor centre and/or food areas is important to 47% of visitors, ranging from 20% of runners to 79% of drivers. The provision of information was more important for nature observers (50%) than others, while accessible land was relatively important for about a third of runners, bikers and nature observers. These studies have highlighted that different types of countryside users have different priorities when it comes to selecting which area to visit.

Table 7: Facilities considered when deciding where to go (2010).

	Walk (309)	Run (35)	Cycle (22)	Nature (14)	Horse Riding (4)	Drive (298)	All Activities (726)
Toilets	181 (57)	17 (49)	13 (60)	10 (71)	2 (50)	240 (81)	64%
Car park	129 (42)	10 (29)	3 (14)	8 (57)	0	246 (83)	55%
Visitor centre/cafe/ BBQ/picnic area	85 (28)	7 (20)	6 (28)	5 (35)	0	235 (79)	47%
Information	63 (20)	4 (11)	7 (32)	7 (50)	0	100 (34)	25%
Accessible public land or Rights of way	55 (18)	11 (31)	8 (36)	5 (36)	3 (75)	62 (21)	20%
Children's play ground	34 (11)	0	1 (5)	0	0	51 (17)	12%
Baby changing facilities	20 (7)	0	1 (5)	0	0	33 (11)	7%

Impact of the recession

Following the onset of the recession, the use of the countryside decreased from 88% of the sample to 82% in 2010. This decline was observed for all activities.

By 2012, the next survey identified that participation in countryside activities had increased to 89%, exceeding the pre-recession levels. However, the affect on individual activities was mixed. Cycling had returned to 2008 levels by 2012 and horse riding (not captured within the 2008 survey) had increased to 5% of the population in 2012 from 1% in 2010. However, the other activities only recorded small recoveries⁵.

Conclusions

This paper has examined how members of the public engage with the countryside and how this use has been affected by the recession and its recovery. Of note is the high level of participation observed in a range of activities, ranging from 82% to 89% of the population.

The recession was found to have an impact on respondents through the level of concern over employment and a reduction in participation in countryside activities after 2008. Countryside use had recovered to pre-recession levels by 2012.

All activities reported decline in participation after 2008. By 2012 only cycling had returned to pre-recession levels. The other activities recorded only small increases. Given the overall increase in participation by 2012, this is indicative of a shift in how people use the countryside of Northern Ireland.

The economic impact of the countryside activities will have increased by 2012 due to the increase in both participation levels and trip expenditure.

To maximise the economic impact of future developments in the post-recession era, it is important to assess how countryside use is changing; what facilities users want as well as taking into account the different numbers (and frequency) of users and their spending patterns. For example, the economic impact of the nature observers is less than walkers despite spending less (£17 per trip compared to £40) as they represent only 2% of users compared to the 43% of walkers.

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- ¹ The categories relate to the activities which were presented to the respondents in each survey.
- ² The categories used in 2012 were drawn from Natural England's 'Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE)' survey to enable cross-country comparisons. <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/evidence/mene.aspx>.
- ³ In the 2010 and 2012 survey, two categories were used "walking and rambling" and "running."
- ⁴ In 2010, this category was termed "nature observation" and "Wildlife watching" in 2012
- ⁵ Due to the change in categories in the 2012 survey, it is not possible to report the numbers of drivers as this survey recorded respondents who 'appreciated scenery from their car.' The 2010 survey identified that many drivers undertook a number of activities, with only 22% going for a drive to relax and appreciate the scenery.

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Contact

Diane Burgess, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
 Diane.Burgess@afbini.gov.uk

The Peak District National Park Youth Forum: Efforts to engage youth with Britain's oldest national park

Tom Jones, Meiji University

Britain is no exception to the 'nature-deficit disorder' theory (Louv, 2008), while rising levels of childhood obesity bear testament to increasingly sedentary lifestyles and 'videophilia' (Pergams & Zaradic, 2007).

Yet although planners and policy-makers have identified important health and well-being implications of young people's participation in outdoor sport and physical activity, recent research recognizes how hard it is to monitor young people let alone foster pro-active forums for engagement (King & Church, 2014). A 2005 survey of visitors to the Peak District, Britain's oldest national park, showed fewest visitors aged 16-24 years old (PDNPA, 2005). Meanwhile in a 2012 residents' survey, so few responses were received from residents in the same 16-24 age bracket that it had to be excluded as it did not meet the minimum requirements for a statistically valid sample (PDNPA, 2012). This was in spite of specific attempts to engage young people, including increased sampling in areas more likely to contain relatively younger households, and the provision of an additional online survey. Given that young people thus appear less likely to visit the park and more reluctant to participate in surveys, the challenge for the National Park Authority (the legally responsible managers, hereafter NPA) was how to gather feedback from a group of young people.

This paper investigates one recent counter-strategy entitled the Peak District National Park Youth Forum. This is a new initiative which aims to carry on the work of previous project-based youth engagement on a more permanent basis. It also hopes to fill an important gap between the NPA's well-established schools program geared at secondary education on the one hand, and the apprenticeship scheme for school leavers and recent graduates on the other. The Youth Forum presents an important opportunity to tailor the NPA's long pedigree of environmental education services to the somewhat unapproachable youth segment. The scheme's significance has also gained extra momentum by concerns raised about the Duke of Edinburgh's award in the area. Despite a longstanding success, public perception of the scheme has been somewhat blighted in recent years by isolated incidents where young people from a few groups failed to follow the countryside code by dropping litter or leaving gates open, inciting conflict with residents.

Case Study

This paper traces the set-up of the Peak District Youth Forum, begun in 2013 as a platform for two-way interaction between the NPA and a group of young people aged 11-18. An overnight residential-style of workshop was initially piloted in September 2013 at the Losehill Hall Youth Hostel in Castleton, followed by another one in March 2014 at Thornbridge Outdoors just outside Bakewell. The two residential were organized by tapping into existing organizations from Derbyshire Youth Council and Youth Forums, Oldham Youth Council and Dove Stone Youth Rangers, and Manchester Youth Council. This precluded the need for arrangement of time-consuming waivers of legal responsibility. A number of other groups also expressed interest and there are plans to extend the forum to other interested parties as far afield as Chesterfield, Sheffield, Staffordshire and Tameside. The two events brought together 25 and 14 young participants respectively, as well as youth workers and staff from the NPA. The young people all live in or around the national park and most had prior experience of park visits. They were also given a pre-residential task to focus thinking and encourage prior consideration of national park management issues. After arriving at the residential, the program consisted of icebreaker activities followed by brainstorming to exchange opinions on diverse approaches to valuing the park. The young people were divided into three groups and rotated through a set of three exercises including an introductory briefing to the NPA, physical activities, low ropes and a teambuilding activity known as "Jacob's Ladder" in reference to the path from Edale towards the Swine's Back ridge on Kinder Scout. This is a physical challenge where teams work together to climb the 'giant' ladder as the rungs get increasingly further apart the higher you climb.

Fig.1. Participants crossing the low ropes



The core component of the preliminary residentials to date has involved agreeing the future terms of reference for the forum. To that end, the sessions were run as discussion groups and role plays geared toward three specific outcomes:

1. To act as a youth voice to be consulted by the NPA on current issues
2. To promote interests and lobby on behalf of young people
3. To act as national park ambassadors within their own individual organizations.

Consulting with the NPA - the potential and the pitfalls

Fig.2. A round-table discussion on current issues



A round-table discussion provided a platform to tackle current management issues such as the NPA cycling strategy. The current nationwide cycling boom, fuelled by the 2014 Tour de France's passage through the Peaks, is attracting unprecedented numbers of cyclists to the national park. Aside from visitors, findings from the 2012 resident survey also showed that younger residents already had the highest rate of cycling at 57%, compared to 38% of the 45-64 age group and 16% of residents aged >65. Youth feedback on this rapidly expanding market is thus of vital importance, and the residential workgroup provided insight into barriers fuelling further growth such as transport links and lack of clearly marked cycle routes. Furthermore the young people suggested a range of ideas to encourage more young cyclists ranging from bike-friendly public transport to increasing rentacyle points and setting up a mountain bike centre. The young participants emphasized the importance of a communications strategy, with calls for set-up of a new website, apps and social media to help raise awareness. Likewise events such as a Tour De Peak District could further promote the park to younger visitors, although there was recognition from both sides that management intervention will be required to channel further influxes of young cyclists, alongside other types of visitors, to mitigate any associated social and environmental impacts. In this regard, the forum's first-hand insight into youth behaviour in the park could offer potential routes to mitigate current visitor flashpoints such as taking home litter or being wary of fire risk.

Another area of practical feedback was a new animation being developed to intervene with younger visitor segments and encourage responsible behaviour in the park. The young people helped with provisional scoping of a set of six animated guidelines designed for the NPA. One of those selected depicts a character acting as a platform video game hero, while the other employs edgy 'South Park' style humour to emphasize the potential risks of being ill-prepared for adverse conditions in

Figs.3 & 4. Animation concept visuals courtesy of www.animatid.com

Animation concept **FOUR**

In this concept the a young person acts as a video game hero who goes to the Peak District and encounters challenges like in platformers, puzzles and RPGs. Each scenario resembling a game can illustrate a message about the Peak District. Then end on a message about how visiting the Peak District is a real adventure. This could appeal to young people who don't do many outdoor activities.



It's a bit like these...



Animation concept SIX

Some characters go to the Peak District and encounter several funny scenarios to show the “do’s and “don’ts” of visiting. The humour is slightly dark and edgy. Similar to webcomics, internet cartoons and TV shows such as South Park and others by Adult Swim.

DO

Be prepared.

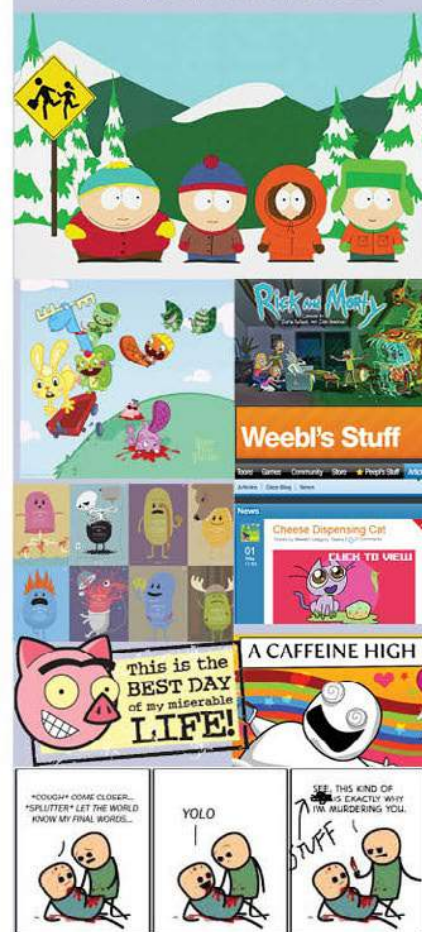


DON'T

Get lost and die.



It's a bit like these...



Challenges and opportunities

Among several hurdles faced by the fledgling Youth Forum, the single greatest challenge is continuity. The NPA has also been directly affected by the post-Lehman austerity drives that have resulted in widespread fiscal belt-tightening and there is not currently a specific youth engagement officer – instead the responsibilities comprise part of one of the Learning and Discovery Officer roles. The local authorities in and around the park have been badly affected by fiscal restructuring, with “the dismantling of statutory youth provision” resulting in reduced numbers of youth workers, less funding for projects and the closure of many youth clubs and centres (Bell et al, 2013). Austerity also has indirect ramifications in the NPA’s pursuit of a permanent platform for youth engagement. The lack of a formal host structure – combined with constraints in fiscal and human resources within the NPA itself – currently negates applications from youth on an individual basis. In the short term this breeds a reliance on existing organisations such as Youth Councils, but it also could undermine longer-term attempts to implement ideas raised at the forum and foster a sense of youth identity linked to the park. The prior experience of youth projects set-up by the NPA underlines the difficulty of achieving continuity, with websites set up but later discontinued.

Aside from fiscal constraints, this is also due to enduring logistical difficulties related to youth engagement – interaction with teenagers can be curtailed by any number of prior commitments ranging from school exams and graduation to summer holidays. Research in the US has also questioned ‘the commercialisation of play’ with an increase in organised sport along with homework and study time, resulting in less free time for unstructured recreation and interaction with nature (Moore & Wong, 1997).

The Peak District National Park’s unique geography also helps shapes demographics, another major challenge for the NPA. Sandwiched between several major urban catchment areas, the park attracts visitors from Derby, Sheffield and Leeds to the East and Manchester to the West of the Pennines. Yet the national park boundaries exclude border towns with comparatively younger age pyramids such as Buxton and Glossop, exacerbating the age imbalance within the park. The predominance of older age groups reinforces stereotypes of uncompromising residents whose values differ greatly from those of young visitors.

So although existing organisations have been used thus far to bring young participants from urban areas to the discussion table, there is also a need to engage young residents within the park. Long-term efforts to reach out to a more representative cross-section would also include segments that are particularly tricky to reach, such as disadvantaged young people and those with no prior experience of visiting national parks. The national park's extensive geographical area also makes communicating via social media platforms appear a more feasible proposition than gathering face-to-face feedback. Yet time and effort will need to be invested if the Youth Forum is to result in more than just another Facebook page or discontinued website. However, if this first challenge – continuity – is overcome, it could help further incentivise participants. Although collected opinion doesn't lead to a formal youth voice in decision-making, it wouldn't prevent lobbying or initiatives similar to the Youth Parliament, a particularly worthy goal in the national parks arena where young people represent the environmental stewards of tomorrow.

Conclusions

Combined with socio-demographic trends such as urbanisation, sedentary lifestyles and 'videophilia' have been increasingly suggested as possible contributors to rising levels of childhood obesity. 'Nature-deficit disorder' theories are difficult to determine, but the Peak District appears typical of other national parks and protected areas – both in the UK and around the world – where visitor surveys point to fewer actual visits and less interest by younger segments of both visitors and residents. National parks' unique combination of natural and cultural resources however, do have the potential to excite and inspire young people as much as older generations, but tailoring is needed to ensure quality visitor experience while mitigating impacts and issues. In short, it is vital to monitor youth attitudes and gain insights in an ongoing manner, as the innovative Peak District National Park Youth Forum described above has done.

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Contact

Tom Jones, Meiji University
tjones@meiji.ac.jp

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A Diverse Countryside - finding a path to health and well-being for all

Gail Smith, Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust

It is now widely recognised that taking part in activity in the outdoors has a positive impact on an individual's health and well-being.

There is a wealth of evidence which shows the beneficial impacts of accessing greenspaces and the countryside yet the Diversity Review¹ and subsequent MENE reports² show that certain groups are still under-represented as visitors to the countryside. This includes people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, people with disabilities and long term health conditions, young people, those living in areas of high deprivation and those over 65 years. However, many of these people experience far greater health inequalities and below average levels of physical health and well-being than the population as a whole.

For example:

- The gap in health outcomes between 'rich' and 'poor' remains the same as in 1997 despite large investments.³
- People from BAME groups living in the UK are more likely to be diagnosed with mental health problems, yet also more likely to disengage from mainstream mental health services, leading to social exclusion and deterioration in their mental health.⁴
- The prevalence of common mental health problems is over twice as high amongst the homeless population compared to the general population.⁵
- Depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress are very common in those seeking asylum.⁶ Two recent studies of mental ill health incidence rates in immigrants in the UK have also suggested that non-British white immigrants may be roughly at double the risk of psychoses than the White British groups.⁷

The cost of health inequalities in England alone is estimated at around £70 billion per year⁸. Efforts to reduce health inequalities through persuading people to lead healthier lifestyles (including engaging in outdoor activity) have so far tended to be to the benefit of wealthier sectors of the population, thus increasing health inequalities further.



Improving access to outdoor activity for those experiencing disadvantage would seem to be key to tackling the health issues of the 21st century yet little research seems to have been presented on the specific benefits of taking part in outdoor activity on the health and well-being of these particular groups.

The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) "People and the DALES" (Diversity, Access, Learning, Environment, Sustainability) project enables individuals to take part in fun, active and thought-provoking activities which focus on the special qualities of the magnificent landscape of the Yorkshire Dales, aiming to inspire, enthuse and encourage people to return independently with family and friends.

Working directly with groups supporting marginalised and disadvantaged individuals, we provide tailored opportunities for enjoying a range of activities appropriate to the needs and interests of the individuals involved. The range of activities available provides a broad, stimulating package of options that might involve a short walk to a Dales landmark, a longer walk up-hill, repairing dry-stone walls, planting trees, or working with a local hill farmer for the day. To get a flavour of our work watch our project film www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJpo6dchcYY or visit our website www.peopleandthedales.org. Building on over 10 years of YDMT work in this field People and the DALES was initially funded through the Big Lottery's Access to Nature⁹ programme and has now become an ongoing YDMT project, funded through a range of sources including trust funds and some direct contributions from participating groups. To date the project has provided opportunities for almost 5000 people from marginalised and disadvantaged communities mainly from urban communities bordering the Yorkshire Dales to access the outdoors.

Our experience and evaluation suggests that the benefits of taking part in activities in the outdoors to these individuals is both extensive and meaningful, providing positive and beneficial experiences that enable people to engage in accessible and appropriate physical activity and improve their well-being. A series of case studies (<http://peopleandthedales.org/about-us/>) highlight the impact the project has had on a range of 'user' groups including; people experiencing mental illness, refugees and asylum seekers, people experiencing homelessness, people from BME communities and young carers. In addition some of these case studies highlighted the impact the project has had on community workers and organisations we have worked with.

Key aspects include:

Increasing people's confidence through enabling them to make independent visits in the outdoors.

Increased knowledge and understanding of how to access the countryside independently and of new activities and opportunities that may be available to them.

Giving community leaders the skills and confidence to lead groups in the outdoors

"The training has given me the skills and confidence to take a younger group of substance mis-users out on a longer walk to Buckden pike, this really opened doors for the organisation, new partnerships and new opportunities."

"People open up more because they are relaxed and because it's a neutral space" thus providing increased capacity for support and counselling opportunities and also for self-growth and development. An advocacy and support worker for a refugee and asylum seeker support organisation commented "a day in the Dales is worth hours and hours of counselling"

Positive benefits on mental health and well-being

"One service user commented on an early visit to Malham that this was the first time he really felt like he didn't need his medication. This really brought home the powerful impact of the serenity of the countryside on well-being."

The project impacts also reflect current strategies and thinking in relation to well-being, as Figure 1 shows we have demonstrated that project activities support the '5 Ways to Well-being'¹⁰– connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give.

Figure 1 - 5 ways to well-being¹¹

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Improving quality of life and life experiences through:

- building new friendships and support groups through meeting up and having shared experiences with others
- helping build a sense of community and belonging helping reduce isolation and overcome loneliness
- allowing people the freedom to just be who they are, sharing experiences and memories of other experiences and other lives

Providing new opportunities and opening doors.

Providing a stepping stone to taking part in new environmental activities in the local area for some.

Through our work and wider evaluation a range of learning points have emerged that we feel are key to enabling meaningful and beneficial activity in the outdoors with socially disadvantaged groups thus providing a wider range of opportunities for improving their health and well-being.

- **Strong relationships** - Developing a good ongoing relationship with the target communities, supporting community groups and community leaders is key. A good knowledge of peoples' interests and needs is essential to delivering activities that work. "This project is all about relationships. It's the difference between what PaD offers and what a typical 'widely advertised open programme of outdoor events' might offer."
- **Flexibility** - Provision of tailored activities to suit groups is key. No two groups will come with the same needs, so provision needs to be highly flexible and activities appropriate for and adaptable to the group's physical ability and their specific needs. It is essential to devise activities that work with 'where a group is at' at that moment in time, particularly for initial visits. This provides a safe starting point for some groups that may be reluctant to visit new places or try new activities. Once trust and familiarity has been established then groups can be moved on to try new activities and challenges. "Flexibility is key – there is no set programme which means that activities can be adapted to meet the needs of any group."
- **Being informative** – Providing beneficiaries with the right amount and kind of information to make their visit an easy, informative and enjoyable one. Many of the beneficiaries are visiting the countryside for the first time. They will not always know what to expect, there may also be a range of fears and apprehensions that may come attached to this. It's very important to offer as much information as possible in advance to prepare people for the visit – pre-visit talks to new groups, photographs, personal testimonies and copies of our newsletter have all helped with this.



- **Understanding** - It is essential for project staff to maintain humour, patience, tolerance and understanding of the potentially chaotic background of groups and individuals.
- **Developing confidence** - Through visits and follow up the project has provided participants and community group leaders with a wide range of support and information (e.g. www.peopleandthedaes.com), enabling them to undertake independent visits with family and friends or other group members.
- **Developing Skills** – Providing opportunities for people to learn about leading groups through bespoke training for community groups leaders and volunteers has increased the capacity of local communities to enable people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enjoy the outdoors for themselves.
- **Promoting diversity in the outdoors** – Sharing information about events, the project and event images with both groups and a wider audience. Seeing images of people ‘like themselves’ out walking or taking part in conservation activities plays a key part in acceptance and ‘normalisation’ of this kind of activity for these groups of people, People and the DALES has worked hard to both deliver and promote this. Resources such as the project website www.peopleandthedaes.org, handbook, project film www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJpo6dchcYY, Facebook www.facebook.com/peopleandthedaes and twitter www.twitter.com/peopleandthedaes pages all help promote the involvement of people from more diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds in the outdoors to a range of audiences.

Work undertaken through YDMT’s People and the DALES project shows the powerful and positive benefits to health and well-being of enabling more diverse groups to access the countryside and engage in activity in the outdoors. A significant difference can often be made to people’s lives often through just one visit. Regular visits to the countryside or greenspaces could be the prescription needed to improve both the health and well-being of some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people in 21st century society.

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Contact

Gail Smith, Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust
gail.smith@ydmtd.org



Activate Coast and Countryside; embracing outdoor recreation in the 21st century

Karl Prince, Moors Valley Country Park and Forest

Over the last 20 years modern-day culture in the United Kingdom has changed dramatically from the foods we eat, the technology we use and the clothes we wear.

Surprisingly, Apple released the debut version of their iPad tablet only four years ago¹ and today over a third of the UK's population use a tablet on a daily basis². Changes in society, combined with an aging population³, have led to changes in outdoor recreation over the last two decades. With more entertainment to occupy our free time and more competition for leisure activities, the big challenge is how to ensure outdoor recreation stays relevant and appealing to a constantly changing general public.

A sedentary population?

In 2005 Sport England undertook their first national Active People Survey⁴, designed to measure the number of people taking part in sport across the nation. It highlighted that 65.8% of the UK's general population (approx. 39.5 million) were not achieving the industry target of participation in 30 minutes, moderate intensity sport, at least once a week. Fast forward to 2014 and whilst this percentage has dropped to 64.5% of the general population (approx. 41.1 million) the actual number of inactive people has risen by almost 1.6 million nationwide. These figures show that whilst more people are becoming active, relative to the overall population of the UK, which increases at a higher rate¹⁰, the level of sedentary individuals is actually on the rise.

Combined with the understanding that ageing has a detrimental effect on participation in recreation and sport and it is a worrying prospect. Sport England documented that 54.5% of 16-25 year olds take part in at least one sport session a week, compared to only 32% of older adults, aged 26 plus⁵.

If these trends continue by 2050 not only will we have a significantly older population, there are currently 10 million people aged 65 years and older, projected to increase to 19 million by 2050³, we could also see unprecedented levels of sedentary individuals. This again highlights the importance of keeping outdoor recreation relevant and appealing, but the question is how?

Issues and solutions

For people in the 21st century there are many alternatives to exercise and especially outdoor recreation. From an ever-increasing reliance on social technology and smart devices, there has never been more accessibility to digital entertainment and as a consequence the amount of time people allocate to staying active and outdoors recreation is dwindling.

The percentage of adults in the UK who own a device able to connect to the Internet reportedly stands at 80%⁶ and with each household owning, on average, three devices this trend is set to increase. Combined with the abundance of choice means activity providers can no longer solely rely on the great outdoors being the obvious alternative to boredom and routine.

To combat this ever-changing, digitally inclined society, many activity providers saturate the market with more sessions, more events and ultimately more opportunity to engage the consumer in recreation. As the figures from Sport England's Active People Survey suggest, it doesn't necessarily work. One solution that bucks this trend is to tailor the opportunities offered to the local public and their needs, rather than flood the market and hope there is something for everyone. This means not only embracing the relationship between consumer, technology and outdoor recreation; via social marketing and digital content, but also ensuring the programmes offered are designed to match their outdoor needs.

For the Rangers at Moors Valley Country Park and Forest this philosophy is a successful way of engaging with the local population and through research, evaluation and frequent interaction with the local public this mind-set has seen tens of thousands of individuals, both young and old, engage in various outdoor events. With environmental education school programmes and road shows, conservation volunteer groups and a diverse outdoor recreation programme designed to ensure that it is relevant in the 21st century.



Based on the local population of East Dorset this means an older target audience, as Dorset has a higher than national average age, 26.3% of Dorset's population are aged 65 years and over, compared to an average of 17.0% for England and Wales⁷, and one that has more time on their hands. For the Rangers the flexibility of tailoring what is offered to the local needs was borne out of the success of implementing a nationally recognised Walking for Health (WfH) health walk on a weekday morning. It gave the locals what they stated they wanted; "active and social opportunities on mornings when the children were at school". Before this change in mind-set weekday mornings at a cold and blustery Country Park were sometimes a quiet lull before weekends and school holidays, now compared to busy, and most importantly, active opportunities for hundreds of eager locals in the present day.

'Activating' individuals in East Dorset

Over the past two decades East Dorset District Council has embraced the ever-changing culture of outdoor recreation and has implemented successful leisure opportunities aimed at all ages, abilities and demographics to combat these changes in outdoor recreation. In February 2007 the first WfH health walk was launched at the Country Park and saw 60+ people attend, with its continued success ultimately leading to several externally funded recreation programmes.

With a history of Ranger-led activities such as countryside walks, Moors Valley Country Park has always strived to increase public engagement in the local countryside, however they were eventually restricted by their own success. An increasing popularity of the countryside walks created a demand for more weekly opportunities, which required additional input not viable with the Rangers' limited resource. This demand led to a partnership with the nationally recognised WfH scheme and an increased confidence in the regular use of volunteers. It allowed for growth in the weekly walking opportunities, but also empowered regular walkers, many of who trained as the first walk leaders, into taking ownership of the opportunities offered.

This increased interaction with the regular participants of the sessions led to a more customer-focused approach when creating further opportunities and ultimately led to the first externally funded recreation programme.

In 2009 the Activate 1000 project began with the aim of facilitating a regular activity routine for a minimum 1,000 local people and to ensure that the aim of increasing consistent participation in sport was feasible. One discovery that was quickly made was that you cannot 'pigeon-hole' participants into certain activities. This understanding came about from several sessions simply not working no matter how much time and attention they were given, whilst other sessions flourished regardless. It was soon established, through research and evaluation, that whilst the local population of East Dorset may demonstrate an older demographic than the national average, many of them are still keen to try a diverse range of outdoor recreation at a time that suits them⁸. By giving them what they actually wanted, rather than assuming what they needed, the first Activate project saw the number of participants and throughput (activity spaces) of many activities steadily increase.... leading to a new Activate project, which is currently coordinated and delivered today.

Activate Coast and Countryside, a Sport England funded project aimed at increasing regular participation in sport, defined as at least 1 session a week of 30 minutes moderate intensity, epitomises the mind-set of designing opportunities offered around the needs of the local population. This diverse and flexible scheme, created from the success of previous programmes, aims to ensure that there is no excuse for local people not to get active and into sport in their local area. With the goal of increasing regular participation in sport and lowering the percentage of sedentary individuals in East Dorset, which in 2009 stood at a higher than national average 65.4%⁴, the challenge was and always will be to ensure outdoor recreation stays relevant and accessible to the local population.

With the heart of this project based at Moors Valley Country Park and Forest, the flexibility and willingness to diversify the activities offered has already seen an abundance of varying sessions; including; surfing, orienteering, cycling, walking, rounders, petanque and canoeing. A digital copy of the Activate Coast and Countryside's news and events guide is available from www.moors-valley.co.uk⁹ and alongside prominent social profiles and a regular enewsletter campaign has seen the relationship between the schemes participants, modern technology and outdoor recreation further develop to ensure it continues to meet the local populations changing needs in the 21st century.

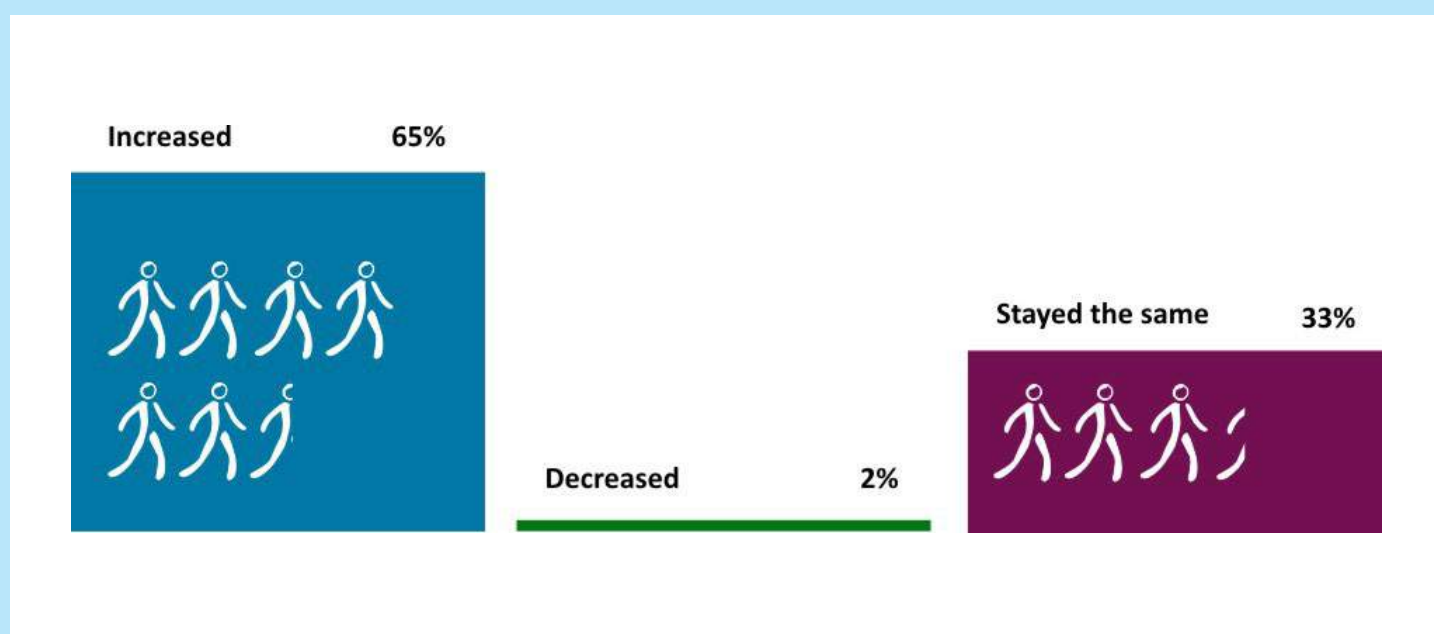
Does it Work?

Since the implementation of the Activate schemes in April 2009 the projects have seen nearly 7,000 new participants and a throughput approaching 110,000. This equates to approximately 4 new participants and 58 activity spaces filled everyday for the past 5 years and more importantly it shows that participants have completed, on average, 15 activities through the various Activate opportunities offered. An interesting statistic is the data collated from Moors Valley's car park system indicating that in the month of February 2006, before the first WfH health walk, the Park saw approximately 39,372 visitors, compared to 45,699 in February 2012. Whilst not conclusive to the enhanced recreation programme creating an increased uptake to the Park, it does suggest that by creating opportunities the locals wanted their interaction with the Park increased.

Research and evaluation undertaken in April 2012 showed that in the previous 12 months, 11% of the Activate participants did not complete 1x30 minutes active recreation before their first event, with 98% of those individuals going on to increase their weekly uptake of active recreation to at least 1x30 minutes, 72% recording 3x30 minutes and a credible 26% achieving 5x30 minutes⁸.

Furthermore 65% of those who returned their evaluation stated that their activity levels had increased, 33% stated they had stayed the same and only 2% stated they had decreased.

Effects of Activate project on participants regular activity levels



Source: Activate end of year evaluation, 2012

The most compelling statistic to whether this approach works is from Sport England's National People Survey, which in 2014 highlighted that the percentage of sedentary individuals in East Dorset was now at a lower than national average 58.4%⁴ compared to a higher than national average 65.4% back in 2009⁴.

These figures highlight that through understanding the needs of the local population and offering opportunities tailored to these demands, it is possible to engage with people in a way that keeps them wanting more and ultimately ensures outdoor recreation places a relevant and regular role in people's lives.

One question I frequently get asked is "what's it like to work at the Country Park" and a common theme to my many answers is "the diversity and willingness to change what we offer, whilst not losing the importance of actual public interaction, makes most other roles seem less appealing" and this is something we hope continues to translate to the way in which we tackle the dilemma of ensuring that outdoor recreation is relevant in the 21st century. Karl Prince, Healthy Lifestyle Ranger.

'Case Study'

"I no longer get out of breath walking up hills and I generally feel better and sleep better. We have met lots of interesting and friendly people and have found something that got my husband away from the computer! You're doing a great job - thank you!" Judy Webb, regular walker, cyclist and Nordic walker¹¹.

5 steps to a successful recreation programme

1. Understand your audience and their needs.
2. Don't assume you know what they need, find out what they want.
3. Keep regular contact with your participants, no matter how big your project gets.
4. Listen to the feedback the participants contribute.
5. Never be afraid to change and adapt what is offered.

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Contact

Karl Prince, Moors Valley Country Park and Forest
 KPrince@christchurchandeastdorset.gov.uk

Innovative Online Outdoor Recreation Plan for Loch Lomond & The Trossachs NPA

Kenny Auld, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs NPA

As a relatively new Authority, created in 2002, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority had not previously been able to call upon a traditional “Access Strategy” for strategic guidance.

The 12 years have flown by and the Access and Recreation Team have been busy implementing the new access legislation as well as being reactive to issues and opportunities as they arise. In 2011, with a greater understanding of the potential of the area, the stakeholders and the NPA itself, we were able to start developing an “Outdoor Recreation Plan” which brought all forms of recreation, motorised and non-motorised, under one action plan.

The final Plan includes 69 Actions, shared across a wide variety of stakeholders working in different areas of outdoor recreation, which accumulate to expenditure of £8.7 million over a 5 year period.

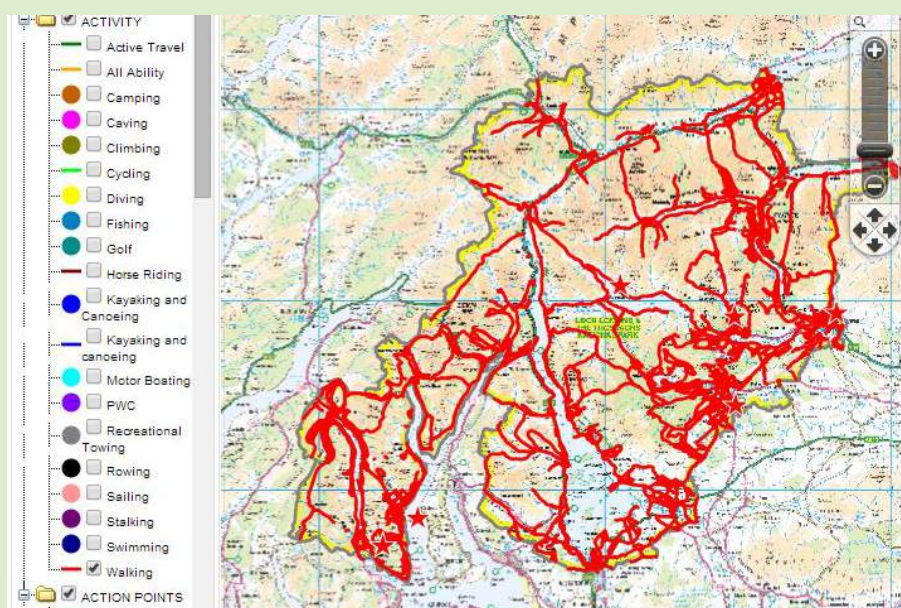
At an early stage the team realised that we needed to align any outdoor recreation plan to the new NPA Tourism Strategy as over the previous 10 years it had become clear that the two areas of work were inextricably linked. The team also knew that we wanted to create a “live” document and wanted to avoid becoming embroiled into a paperwork exercise which would produce an ineffective tomb to sit on a shelf somewhere. Mapping would be key to bringing any document to life and we shared a vision of an online system which would allow users to navigate across the whole Park area to clearly see gaps in provision and opportunities.



To this end the team liaised with our underappreciated in-house GIS team who had been working with Scottish Government on new software known as OLDP (Online Local Development Plan) from a company called IDOX. We were conscious that Scottish Government were trying to gently prod Local Authorities and National Park Authorities away from traditional paper based strategies and consultations. The ORP is not a statutory document which afforded us the luxury of risk and so we decided to dive straight in with an online-only strategy with interactive map capabilities. The process and feedback was not pain free but we hope we have made all of the mistakes possible so that others can embrace this format with more confidence (and fewer stomach ulcers) in the future. We are proud of the final product and are delighted to see our colleagues in Natural Heritage use the same format to bring their new Biodiversity Action Plan to life.

Users can dip in and out of the 5 chapters: Scene setting, Recreation and Access, Sustainable Activity Promotion, National Park Scenic Routes and Monitoring. However, 90% of actions and points of interest are listed under the activities in Recreation and Access. The great advantage of the online system is that it allowed us to simply list all of the priority recreational categories from active travel to caving, all-ability access to open water swimming, and everything in between so that there is something of interest for everyone. Users can access their recreation activity of interest and easily see relevant provision and proposed actions.

In addition to this, users can choose to navigate the Plan geographically to explore all of the provision and actions, over all activities, which are specific to their community or area of interest.



Map showing long distance routes across the park

Throughout 2011 the ORP Project Team facilitated a series of workshops with the key stakeholders. A draft plan was produced in August 2012 and was consulted on widely over a three month period.

The feedback from the public consultation in 2012 was generally positive. The current infrastructure provision for recreational activities was on the whole seen as being satisfactory, with some specific opportunities identified for improvements in particular tackling gaps in provision in certain geographic areas. A focus on promotion of opportunities was also seen as being important.

Controversially the consultation was also “online only” using the OLDP system and, barring a few technical issues, this allowed responses to be easily collated and greatly reduced the administration burden that often accompanies such a consultation process. It could be argued, and it has, that such an approach excludes some demographics from having a voice. Open sessions were held across the Park to reduce this risk but negative feedback was less than had been expected. However, we did feel that the lack of a “tangible” executive summary had meant that we received fewer responses than we had anticipated. As a result, the Final Plan has an executive summary which lists the actions under the recreation types and includes one overarching map.

The 2012 consultation un-earthed the following key themes for attention:

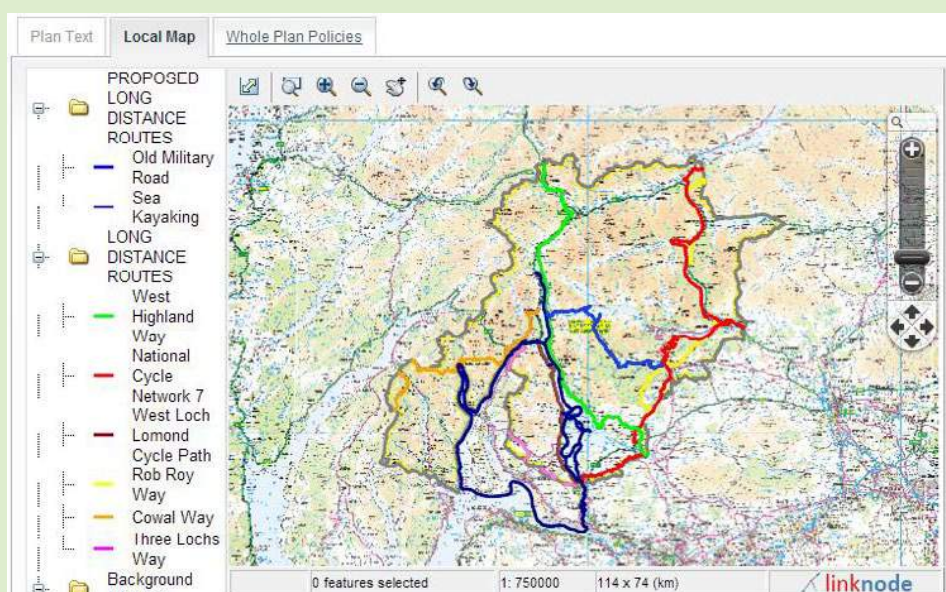
- Family friendly activities
- Accessible and diverse range of activities at entry level
- Recreational off road cycling
- Linking up the Park and creating journeys
- Water based recreation
- Letting people know what they can do and where



Subsequently the ORP Project team amended the text where appropriate and prioritised actions by scoring against set criteria including Core Paths Plan, Tourism Strategy, Park Partnership Plan, risks and whether the action was a priority for a specific activity.

Early in the process, the project team decided that the final output should be an “action plan”, short on words but with solid commitment. Each of the final 69 “Actions” has received commitment from the lead partner associated with the specific task. Examples include:

- Signed core path network
- Long Distance Route development
- Promoted network of public berthing opportunities on Loch Lomond
- Expansion of Wheelie boat provision
- Upland paths project
- Development and promotion of Trossachs and Cowal mountain biking network
- Park wide semi-formal camping network



That said, the project team wanted the final plan to show ambition and vision that would inevitably involve projects which at this time had no firm commitment or funding allocated. To this end we included “Aspirations” which have value appreciated by potential project partners but which at the time of writing were not included within stakeholder work plans. Such aspirations include:

- Falls of Leny destination development
- Improved links into the National Park
- Glen Dochart shared use cycle path
- Pilot online fishing permit system

The ORP actions are now embedded into the NPA and stakeholder work plans and the online system has been positively received. The primary goal for the online ORP was that it would provide an easy reference point for stakeholders, however a significant bi-product is that we have created an attractive mapping resource which the general public find useful, whether it be looking at opportunities across the park or specific projects which will affect their specific recreational interest.

Photos have now been added to the online document which addresses early criticism that the format was too dry.

We feel that the final product is innovative and effective. We hope we have now developed a “live” system which we can easily update and improve over the years, allowing it to be relevant and interesting to both access professionals and the general public on an ongoing basis. If you are interested in finding out more about the work please visit <http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/looking-after/outdoor-recreation-plan-2013-2017/menu-id-940.html> and we would be delighted to hear what you think and where you think improvements can be made.

Zoomed-in map of Aberfoye

The screenshot displays the 'Outdoor Recreation Plan (Version: 2013-2017)' web application. The browser address bar shows the URL: oldp.lochlomond-trossachs.org/oldp/doc/areaSearchAction.do. The page title is 'Outdoor Recreation Plan (Version: 2013-2017)'. Below the title, there are navigation tabs: 'Contents Viewer', 'Search Plan', 'Address Search', and 'Map Search'. The 'Map Search' tab is active.

The 'Map Search' section includes a description: 'The Map Search tool can be used to search for parts of the plan that are relevant to a particular area on the map. Click the help link for more information on using this feature.' Below this is a link for 'Map Search Full Screen'.

The map interface shows a zoomed-in view of Aberfoye. The 'Area' dropdown is set to 'Settlement' and the 'Location' dropdown is set to 'Aberfoye'. The 'Map Legend' on the left lists various activities with checkboxes: Active Travel, All Ability, Camping, Caving, Climbing, Cycling, Diving, Fishing, Golf, Horse Riding, Kayaking and Canoeing, and Kayaking and canoeing. The map itself shows a topographic view with various colored lines representing different activity routes.

On the right side, the 'Document Results' panel shows 'Found 48 items from Map Boundary search'. The results list includes: '2.2 Active Travel', '2.3 All-ability Access', '2.8 Cycling – Day', '2.9 Cycling – Hubs', and '2.10 Cycling – Long Distance'. At the bottom of the results panel, it says 'Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 >'.

Contact

Kenny Auld, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority
kenny.auld@lochlomond-trossachs.org



Digital Denbighshire Helen Mrowiec and Hannah Arndt, Denbighshire County Council

Digital technology is advancing at an incredible rate. It is no longer confined to the classrooms and office blocks of towns and cities, with technological developments now being applied to the great outdoors. Two recent projects delivered by Denbighshire County Council have embraced digital technology and put it to good use for access and recreation in the north Wales countryside

Accessible Denbighshire and Healthy Walks

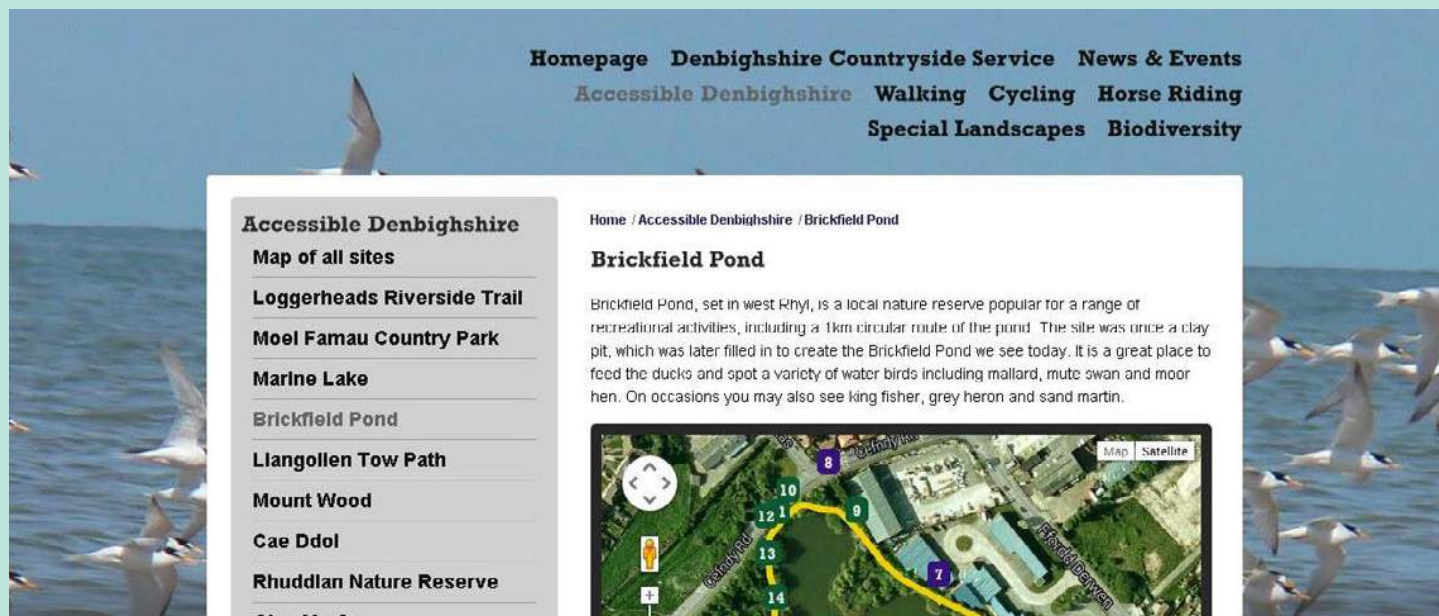
Rights of Way Improvement Plans (RoWIP) detail how the rights of way network and access to the countryside is managed and improved over a 10 year period through a series of rolling annual work programmes. It was highlighted in the 2008 – 2018 statement of action for Denbighshire¹ that only a limited number of paths are open to the elderly, those with mobility impairments or other special needs. The authority aims to remove restrictions, which limit access wherever practically possible. However it was also identified that due to the range of differing personal needs and expectations, and the nature of the path network across the authority, it would be difficult to increase the level of access available.

A new approach was required and Accessible Denbighshire came to life. An out of print publication, “Denbighshire’s Accessible Countryside” produced by the Countryside Service in Denbighshire was still being requested by users. An opportunity to address these requests, and the aims set out by the RoWIP had arisen, and the solution was to produce an easily amendable resource with all the information required for people to decide if a site is suited to their specific requirements.

It was felt an innovative and self-sustaining solution was required, rather than be in the same position, with no printed booklets or out of date information in a few years. An online resource was favoured, linked to an easily accessed content management system, which could be amended as required by nominated staff, so route information and photos could be updated as required.

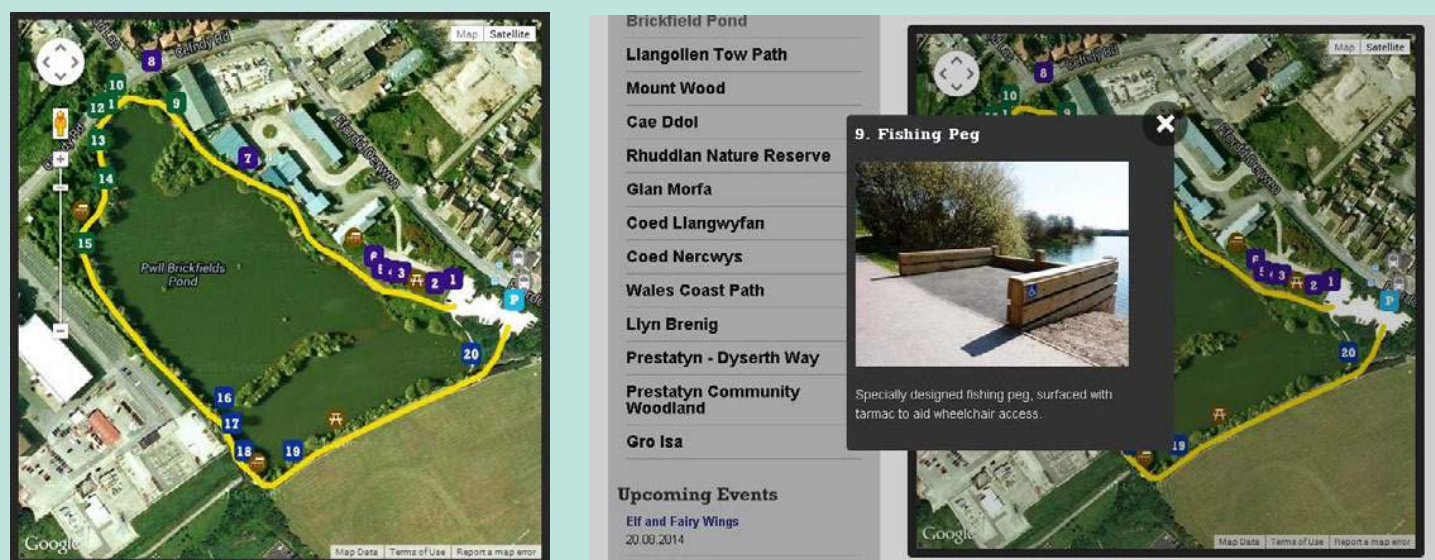
The result is an online resource, highlighting 16 countryside sites in Denbighshire which provide differing levels of easier access routes. Detailed information is available, allowing users with varying levels of ability and mobility to decide if a site is suited to their requirements.

Picture 1 : examples of the interactive maps and information provided through Accessible Denbighshire www.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk



Objectives were;

- Improve the quality of information available on accessible activities in Denbighshire
- Provide enough reliable and detailed information for individual users to decide if a site is suitable to visit, simply by viewing our web pages
- Provide a dedicated section on Denbighshire Countryside Service website www.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk/accessible-denbighshire/
- Provide interactive maps of accessible sites
- Highlight the important and interesting features through detailed route descriptions, photographs and a printable A4 download containing the most important information



Pictures 2 and 3; Examples of the interactive maps and information provided through Accessible Denbighshire

Funded through the RoWIP and the Rural Development Plan for Wales, and administered by Cadwyn Clwyd (www.cadwynclwyd.co.uk), the project was designed and built by Splinter (www.splinter.co.uk/) and used Google mapping with an overlay of the route and clickable icons detailing the following information;

- Path surface
- Bench locations
- Toilets
- Refreshments
- Bus stops and car parks
- Access points (width, type, location)

A lot of information stored within these pages, for people to study at home and make the decision that the chosen route is suited to their individual needs. On leaving the website it is quite possible that a lot of the information will be forgotten, so very simple download sheets were designed, featuring a basic map showing the location of parking, toilets, the route, access points and the postcode or grid reference for finding the site. The download can be printed in colour or black and white and is a useful aid, once the decision has been made that a site is accessible to that person.

The map shows a circular path around Brickfield Pond, marked with a red dashed line. The pond is labeled 'Brickfield Pond Gwarchodfa Natur/ Brickfield Pond Nature Reserve'. Surrounding areas include 'Ffordd Derwen Industrial Estate' to the north and 'Maes Hamdden/ Recreation Ground' to the south. Roads shown are 'CERNY ROAD', 'FFORD DERWEN', and 'FFORD DERWEN'. A 'Parcio/Car Park' is located near the pond. The 'Key to symbols' includes: Path (red dashed line), Other Roads (white line), Parking (blue 'P' icon), Disabled Parking (blue wheelchair icon), Footbridge (brown bridge icon), Bench (brown bench icon), Picnic table (brown picnic table icon), Staggered barrier (brown barrier icon), Kissing gate (brown gate icon), Fishing peg (blue fishing peg icon), Bus stop (blue bus icon), and Narrow Path (brown path with '><' symbol). Below the map, the title 'Brickfield Pond' is displayed in a green box.

Route Information

A circular route of the lake may be taken from the car park.

Distance: 1km / ½ mile *Allow:* 20 – 30 minutes

Surface: Tarmac.

Slopes: Mostly flat with a few small slopes.

Path width: Minimum 1m.

Bridges: Minimum width 107cm.

Boardwalk: 125cm wide.

Gates: One kissing gate with 90cm clearance.

Steps: Alternative ramp available.

Staggered Barriers: Minimum clearance 153cm.

Visitor Information

For Satellite Navigation please use: LL18 2RN.

Parking: The large, tarmac carpark is free and includes four disabled parking bays.

For Public Transport users: Service 38A stops in the bus stop outside the car park entrance. See www.travelinecymru.info to plan your journey.

Toilets: The nearest toilets are located at the railway station or Sainsbury's.

Bring waterproof clothing and wear appropriate footwear. In summer months wear sunscreen.

Further Information: www.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk

Picture 4, An example of the site specific downloadable print outs provided by the Accessible Denbighshire project

Accessible Denbighshire is a tool to help walk leaders plan their walks and an aid for the public to plan recreational activities, whether regularly active or trying to walk more. The Let's Walk Denbighshire programme (http://www.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk/lets_walk/) began 14 years ago, in 2000 with one walking group in Rhyl. There are now walking groups across the whole county, attracting around 700 walkers each week. Walks vary from 45 minutes to two hours, following routes on town streets and footpaths, by the sea and in the hills. The programme aims to offer walks to suit everyone, including challenging walks, Nordic walking and themed walks. More than 200 people have now been trained as walk leaders in Denbighshire. The longevity of the programme has made it possible to build up this number of qualified volunteers.



Picture 5: One of the Denbighshire walking groups, supported through the Lets Walk scheme

Numerous case studies have shown the health benefit of regular exercise that translates to a saving to the Health Service. Physical activity reduces the risk of a number of diseases including heart disease, some cancers, diabetes and osteoporosis. The Welsh Health Survey² highlighted that a staggering 57% of adults in Wales are classed as overweight or obese, with physical inactivity in Wales estimated to cost approximately £650 million every year, including the costs to the NHS. The Department for Health's report 'Let's Get Moving' suggests that when the indirect costs to the wider economy (such as working days lost due to sickness absences and premature mortality) are included, the cost of physical inactivity in the UK may be as high as £8.3 billion per year³. Schemes which encourage physical activity therefore make a significant contribution to reducing the costs to the NHS. The Lets Walk scheme ties in with key priorities of 'Let's Get Moving' and the 'Heart Disease Delivery Plan'⁴ and can help to address and reverse the correlation between poverty and socially deprived communities with health problems.

There are no doubts about the huge benefits and enjoyment associated with access and recreation in the countryside. Technology can make it easier for potential users and guides to access all the information they need, and Accessible Denbighshire has certainly done this for a variety of sites in Denbighshire.

21st Century Cycling

Mountain biking in north Wales has reached some dizzy heights in the past ten years, with the exponential growth in popularity of trail centres such as Oneplanet Adventure @ Coed Llandegla (www.oneplanetadventure.com). Thousands of trail blazing riders flock to follow the well signposted and maintained tracks. Beyond these trail centres lies a network of quieter natural routes, along hundreds of kilometres of bridleways, more often than not a little more difficult to find and to follow. Through Ride North Wales (ridenorthwales.co.uk) cyclists can now access tracks as route cards, gpx and kml files, or a navigational app, making it easier to find their way off the beaten track.

Gone are the days when cycling was a means to an end – to get to work, to school, or to the shop. Although numerous projects and initiatives try and encourage us to commute and take short trips by bike, and many are enthused to do so, the thrill of the trails has seen a new breed of cyclist, oozing sweat, mud and sometimes a few tears! Ride North Wales hopes to limit the tears shed, by providing information to plan your cycling trip. It shows you where to ride, where to eat, and where to stay. It also gives inspiration on what you can do when not on the bike.

Behind the scenes, the system is powered by one database using OS Opendata, Open Street Map and Opus 3 software to ensure accurate mapping and simplified management. The Ride North Wales website was designed by Blue Fox Technology (www.bluefoxtech.co.uk) in partnership with Artychoke using Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Dreamweaver. The website and the excellent content management system were coded and configured using Microsoft Visual Studio and SQL Server. This system has changed our lives at Ride North Wales HQ! In Wales, we work bilingually. We publish everything in Welsh and English, so all our web pages need to be bilingual. So it is refreshing to use a system, which makes updating things in both languages so easy. The CMS also has a feature for local businesses to provide their details on the website, including the ability to make their business a point of interest on the interactive mapping so users can see where the nearest facilities to their route or accommodation are.

The other clever thing is Opus 3, which allows us to create interactive route maps, which can be embedded and published on the website. This is a huge help when we need to make amendments to route. The website is also linked to a smartphone app that will allow cyclists to select a route map and locate points of interest on and near the route. The hidden natural trail gems of north east Wales are now much easier to find.



Picture 6 Cycling in Denbighshire

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Contact

Helen Mrowiew, Denbighshire County Council
helen.mrowiec@denbighshire.gov.uk



Reconomics – the economic value of outdoor recreation.

Verity Comley, Sport and Recreation Alliance.

Britain is blessed with a wealth of natural landscapes. From the spectacular Scottish Highlands to the white cliffs of the south coast, from the scenic waterways of the Norfolk Broads to the miles of paths through sprawling woodland, Britain's environment is diverse and ever changing.

It is no wonder that such a place draws in great swathes of the population as visitors. Research has found that 3 in 4 of us love to get active outdoors regularly.¹ And this outdoor recreation takes many forms. It ranges from a gentle stroll down a country lane to a sky dive at 10,000 feet.

The reasons why people make these journeys to the natural environment are as varied as the destinations and activities themselves – to seek peace and quiet, for a hit of adrenaline, to explore our natural heritage, to spend time with family and friends, to improve individual wellbeing or simply to enjoy the views.

Whatever the motivation, all of this activity has an impact on our economy which is felt in every corner of the country – stimulating tourism, creating jobs, developing young people and fostering healthier communities. The Sport and Recreation Alliance, with guidance from Liverpool John Moores University, undertook a systematic review of literature to establish the economic impact of outdoor recreation and called this impact 'Reconomics.'

A report and evidence document were created outlining the findings of the literature review. Alongside this 26 case study snapshots were created which expand on the human side of outdoor recreation – from looking at how the Wales Coastal Path has brought new life to rural areas, to how angling tourism draws visitors to a remote Scottish community.

The Reconomics report provides a compelling case for politicians of the true value of outdoor recreation in the 21st Century – it is not a nice to have, but a need to have.

The UK's favourite pastime

As a nation we love to get outdoors. In 2012- 2013 42.4 million adults in England visited the natural environment for an average of two hours and seven minutes. This resulted in a total spend of £21 billion.

With so many people getting involved in outdoor recreation, spending a significant amount of time and money, it must be taken seriously as a key contributor to the UK's economy.

Drives the visitor economy

Getting active outdoors doesn't necessarily mean staying in your back garden. Outdoor recreation often prompts us to leave our usual surroundings and explore somewhere new, be it for a few hours or a few weeks. In 2012 126 million overnight trips were made by UK residents which resulted in a total spend of £24 billion. 37% of those trips involved outdoor recreation and 43% of spending was accounted for by overnight trips involving outdoor recreation – equating to a figure in excess of £10 billion.² On top of spend resulting from the increasingly popular 'staycation', there are an estimated eight million inbound holiday visits to England involving outdoor recreation, accounting for £6 billion in expenditure. The contribution of outdoor recreation to this important sector is considerable.

The benefits of this spending are felt by those who meet the needs of tourists by providing the products, services and infrastructure. This economic impact is particularly important for rural areas whose prized landscapes bring people from far and wide. The more rural an area is, the more likely it is to rely on income from tourism.³

Creates jobs and skills

The UK has a rich offering when it comes to outdoor recreation. But even the natural environment relies on people to keep it accessible. There is a far-reaching network of businesses, non-profit organisations and individuals working behind the scenes to ensure that people can enjoy the outdoors as easily and as safely as possible.

The paid workforce for outdoor recreation is considerable. An estimated 245,000 people are employed in walking tourism, 14,900 in boating tourism and 37,400 in freshwater angling. Recreational horse riding is estimated to employ 28,000 and the cycling economy provides a further 23,000. All of the gear people need to take part in outdoor recreation is manufactured and sold by an estimated 27,500 people in the UK.

In addition to the paid workforce the outdoor recreation network also relies heavily on the time, energy and expertise of volunteers who share a passion for their activity with countless others. These volunteers are the stewards of the natural environment and ambassadors for the outdoors.

The commitment of volunteers benefits the wider population, but it also has considerable benefits for the volunteers themselves. Through training, personal development and networking they benefit from enhanced knowledge, understanding, confidence and competence which in turn boosts their earning power. From a sample of 3,000 employers across the UK, it was found that four out of five employers value volunteering on a CV.⁴

Outdoor recreation also provides opportunities for young people, who are particular beneficiaries of the employment and volunteering opportunities within the outdoor recreation network. Outdoor activities are a vehicle for engaging and developing young people, as exemplified by initiatives like UCanoe, Get Hooked on Fishing, and the Outdoor Partnership.

Promotes a healthy nation

The health benefits of an active lifestyle are well documented – physical activity is often referred to as a ‘wonder drug.’ And yet, as a nation too many of us are not taking advantage of these benefits, which costs over £10 billion in England alone. This includes the direct cost to the NHS which accounts for 5% of the total budget, as well as the impact of 72,000 work days lost.

Outdoor recreation is essential as it provides a vast blue and green gym with no membership fee, and a sporting arena like no other. Getting active outdoors is also associated with lower levels of stress, tension and depression, and with increased self-esteem and energy levels.⁵ As the world around us gets increasingly urbanised and lives become more stressful a natural outlet will become increasingly important.

The outdoors and outdoor recreation also provide the means for sustainable forms of transport which will result in people moving more and also contribute to reduced pollution and congestion. It is estimated that if 10% of all trips were made by bike, the NHS in England and Wales would save at least £250 million a year.⁶

By offering so much to so many it is not surprising that outdoor recreation is, and likely will remain, the UK’s favourite pastime. The Reconomics research provides many examples of how investment in outdoor infrastructure can offer significant economic return.

What are the next steps?

The Reconomics report is the beginning of a long conversation with both policy makers and our sector. We launched the report in Parliament and will continue to have meaningful discussions with parliamentarians about the economic value of the outdoors. Making the case for outdoor recreation is an important part of what we do, and Reconomics will play an integral part of that. Having evidence which promotes the economic value of these activities will really help us and our members make the case that outdoor recreation has a significant role to play in society and should be encouraged and supported by government. The report calls for a single home in government for outdoor recreation. We believe that responsibility for all the various facets of outdoor recreation are too disparately spread across Whitehall, and the sector would benefit from a dedicated place in government for the outdoors.

The full report can be downloaded from the Sport and Recreation Alliance website, www.reconomics.works

‘Case Studies’

<http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/sites/sportandrecreation.org.uk/files/web/Snapshot%20-%20Angling%20in%20Assynt.pdf>

<http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/sites/sportandrecreation.org.uk/files/web/Snapshot%2017%20-%20Get%20Hooked%20on%20Fishing%281%29.pdf>

References

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- ² Visit England, (2013)
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- ⁴ Sport and Recreation Alliance, (2012) The Game of Life, London, Sport and Recreation Alliance, October 2012
- ⁵ M. Ryan, (2013) Feel Better Outside, Feel Better Inside: Ecotherapy for Mental Wellbeing, Resilience and Recovery, London: Ecomind.
- ⁶ J. Woodcock, M. Givoni, A. Morgan, (2013) Health Impact Modelling of Active Travel Visions for England and Wales Using an Integrated Transport and Health Impact Modelling Tool

Contact

Verity Comley, Sport and Recreation Alliance
vcomley@sportandrecreation.org.uk

ORN 2015 Conference

Public Health and Outdoor Recreation

Date: 10th & 11th March 2015

Location: Tredegar House, Newport, Wales

With a focus on public health and 'population approaches' our conference will emphasise how outdoor recreation promotes and protects health and wellbeing in terms of preventing ill health, as well as prolonging and enhance quality of life.

Advancing services within health and social care, as well as other sectors, including that of outdoor recreation are expected to be based on principles of service efficacy and cost effectiveness. With these principles shaping contemporary health and social care service sectors, 'population health' approaches are increasingly common. Such approaches focus on the social determinants of health and hold real opportunities for cross sector co-production on improving health outcomes.

The event will:

- Focus on how health inequalities can be addressed and how services can better develop their scope and staff skills to address some of the population health needs.
- Look at key public health areas including mental health, obesity and sedentary behavior.
- Examine good practice in key Public health areas, focusing on what outdoor recreation can offer though 'prescribing it'
- Address the evidence gap and consider how outdoor recreation as a health intervention can move from good practice and successful pilots into the mainstream.

Who is the event for?

- Practitioners and policy makers in public health and outdoor recreation

Outline programme

10 March

- Afternoon pre-conference site visit of the National Trust's Tredegar Estate, to explore health focussed outdoor recreation initiatives
- Ministerial launch with keynotes from:
 - * Welsh Government's Minister for Natural Resources
 - * Welsh Government's Minister for Health
 - * Dan Bloomfield, Exeter University
- Overview and poster sessions of a range of best practise projects and case studies from across the UK
- Networking buffet reception

11 March

- Full day conference with the following keynotes:
 - * Malcolm Ward, Public Health Wales and Ambra Burls, UNESCO UK
 - * Nadim Haboubi, Wales' leading obesity specialist
 - * Bridget Finton, Scottish Natural Heritage
 - * Jo Barton, University of Essex
- Plus a range of workshops focussing on successful, national-level initiatives targeting better public health through outdoor recreation
- Networking breaks and lunch

Registration

To register your interest in the conference, please [click here](#) to email the ORN secretariat. You will be contacted by email once booking is open.

Delegate fee for 10 & 11 March: £150.00 (early bird and member discounts will be available)

Overnight accommodation on 10 March: £85.00 (subject to availability)

Richard Broadhurst - An Appreciation

Richard was a former Chairman of the (then) Countryside Recreation Network. Sadly, Richard passed away on 18 September 2014. He will be missed. Following are two appreciations from the Network:



Logo of the Countryside Recreation Network, as it was in Richard's day as Chairman of the Network, 1994-1998.

'Richard was chairman of CRN in the mid 1990s and saw through the transition from what was then called the Countryside Recreation Research Advisory Group (CRRAG) to a new way of bringing public bodies with a remit for sport, tourism and the countryside. CRRAG had a strong research focus and produced an annual directory of research activity, published a journal and held an annual conference.

Richard shaped CRN and gave it a new direction and focus. It became much more about good practice in the management of outdoor recreation, the day long seminars started to come into being and Richard started to invite new members to join. I very well remember meeting with Richard in 1997 as he invited the National Trust to join. This was a brave step as membership had not previously been open to the voluntary sector. There was some nervousness as to whether the network would be used for lobbying purposes and that open discussion would be hindered with someone present from outside the public sector. But Richard steered a clear course through this and made me feel, as the National Trust's representative, very welcome. He must have made a very good impression on me as 18 years later I have stepped into his shoes as Chairman'.

By Jo Burgon, ORN

'I first met Richard when I joined Forest Enterprise Head Office as Environment Support Officer in 1997. At that time Richard had been part of the important Forestry Commission Environment Branch, a multidisciplinary team of recreation, archaeology, education, ecology and landscape experts. This team had helped to reshape the Forestry Commission and wider industry through the 1990's developing a wide range of policy and practice including the well regarded Forest Recreation Guidelines. Richard's broad experience and academic understanding of the countryside and recreation was important in developing outdoor recreation management as a professional activity rather than as an add to forestry and land management work, this culminated in the publishing of his book *Managing Recreation and Leisure Environments* in 2002. During my time in Edinburgh Richard was both a mentor and friend and inspired me to a greater understanding of recreation management that helped the evolution of my career from a forester to my current role as head of marketing for Forestry Commission England'.

By Paddy Harrop, Forestry Commission England

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For more information contact:
Outdoor Recreation Network
C/o Outdoor Recreation NI
The Stableyard, Barnett Demesne, Belfast BT9 5PB
T: +44 (0)28 9030 3937
E: kathryn@outdoorrecreation.org.uk
www.outdoorrecreation.org.uk