

Paths to Protection: Responsible outdoor recreation in protected landscapes

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Responsible Outdoor Recreation – A knives edge

The natural world

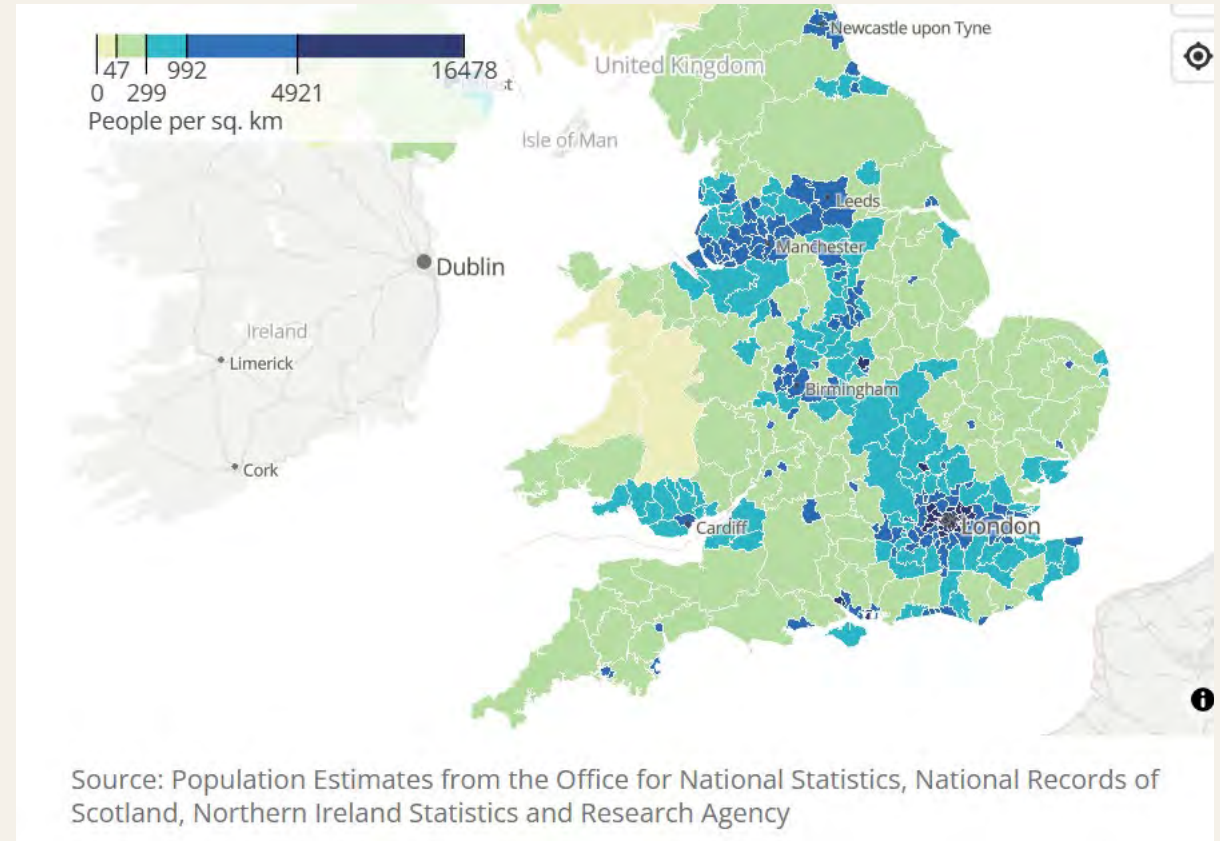


Outdoor recreation



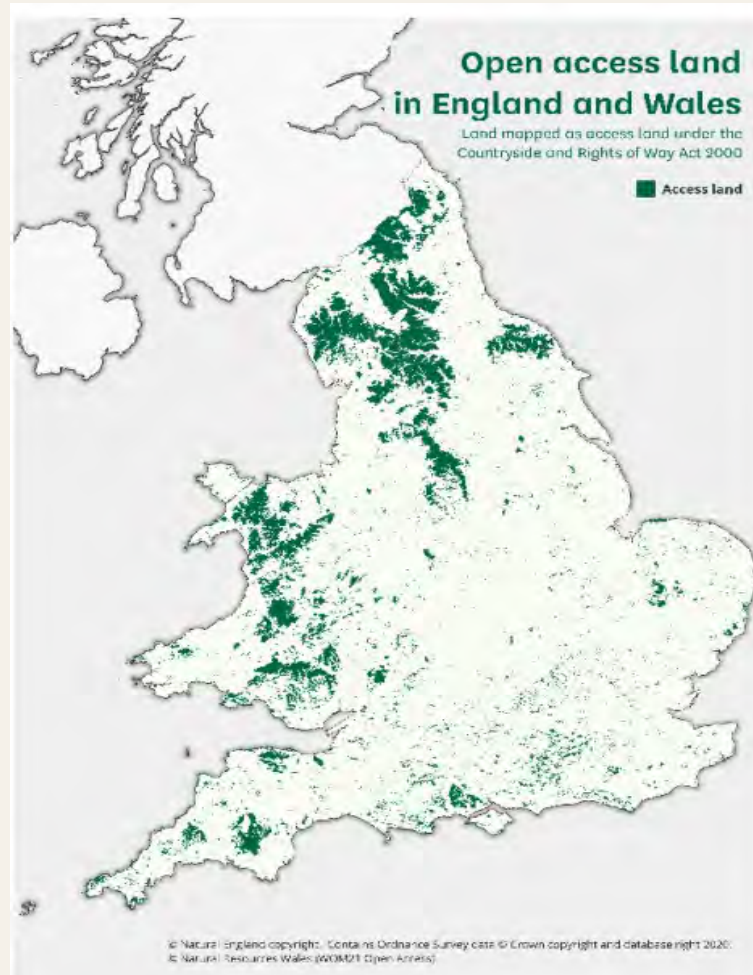
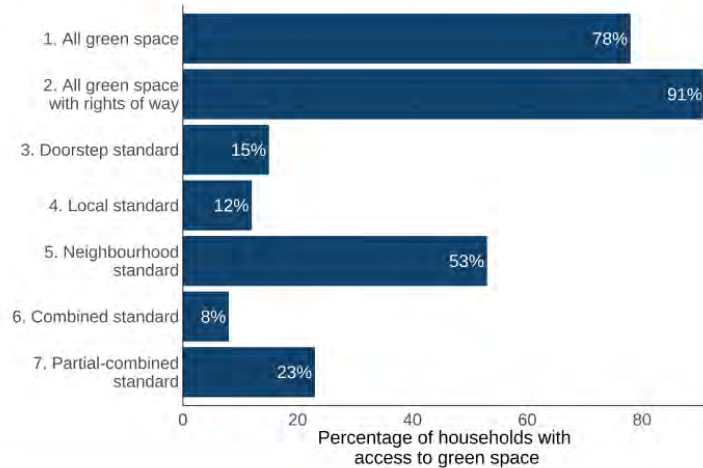
The context in England - population

- The population in England at mid-year 2022 was estimated to be 57.1 million, an increase of 6.8% since 2011.
- The population density for England was 478 people per square kilometre at mid-2022.

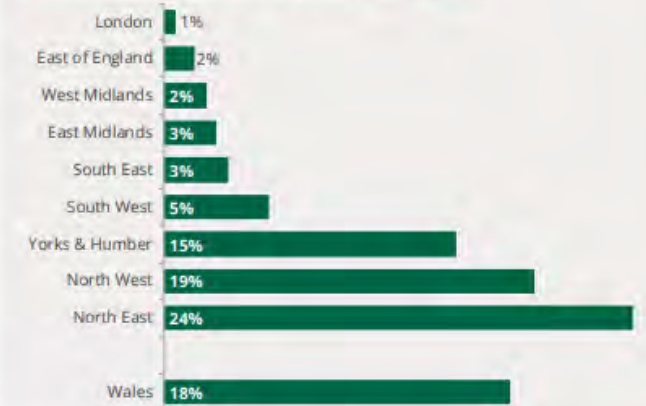


The context in England- access land

Figure 1: The percentage of roughly 25,800,000 households in England with access to green space, calculated using 7 definitions of 'green space' and 'access'.



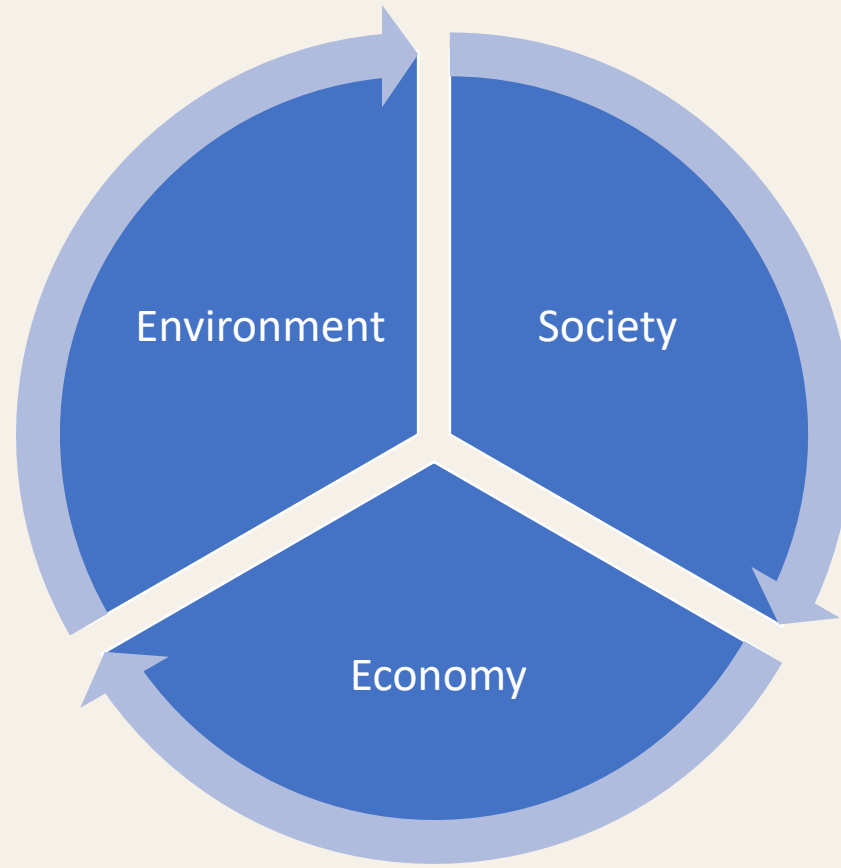
Access land in England and Wales
% of area which is access land, England 2020, Wales 2021



Sources: Natural England, [CRoW Act 2000 - Access Layer](#), Natural Resources Wales/DataMapWales, [WOM21 Open Access](#)

8% is access land in England
18% is access land in Wales

Responsible outdoor recreation: What does this really mean?



Environment

- **Reduce** impact on flora, fauna and the wider environment
- **Protect** vulnerable species and environments
- **Improve** – nature recovery actions to proactively benefit wildlife and environment

Society and ***economy*** have responsibility to and for the environment

Society

- **Health and well-being** – physical activity and access to green and blue spaces important for all members of society
- **Identity and belonging** – outdoor recreation can build social relationships and connections to other people and places
- **Increase pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours** – when people engage with the outdoors they are better positioned to understand why it needs protecting

Economy has responsibility to and for society

Economy

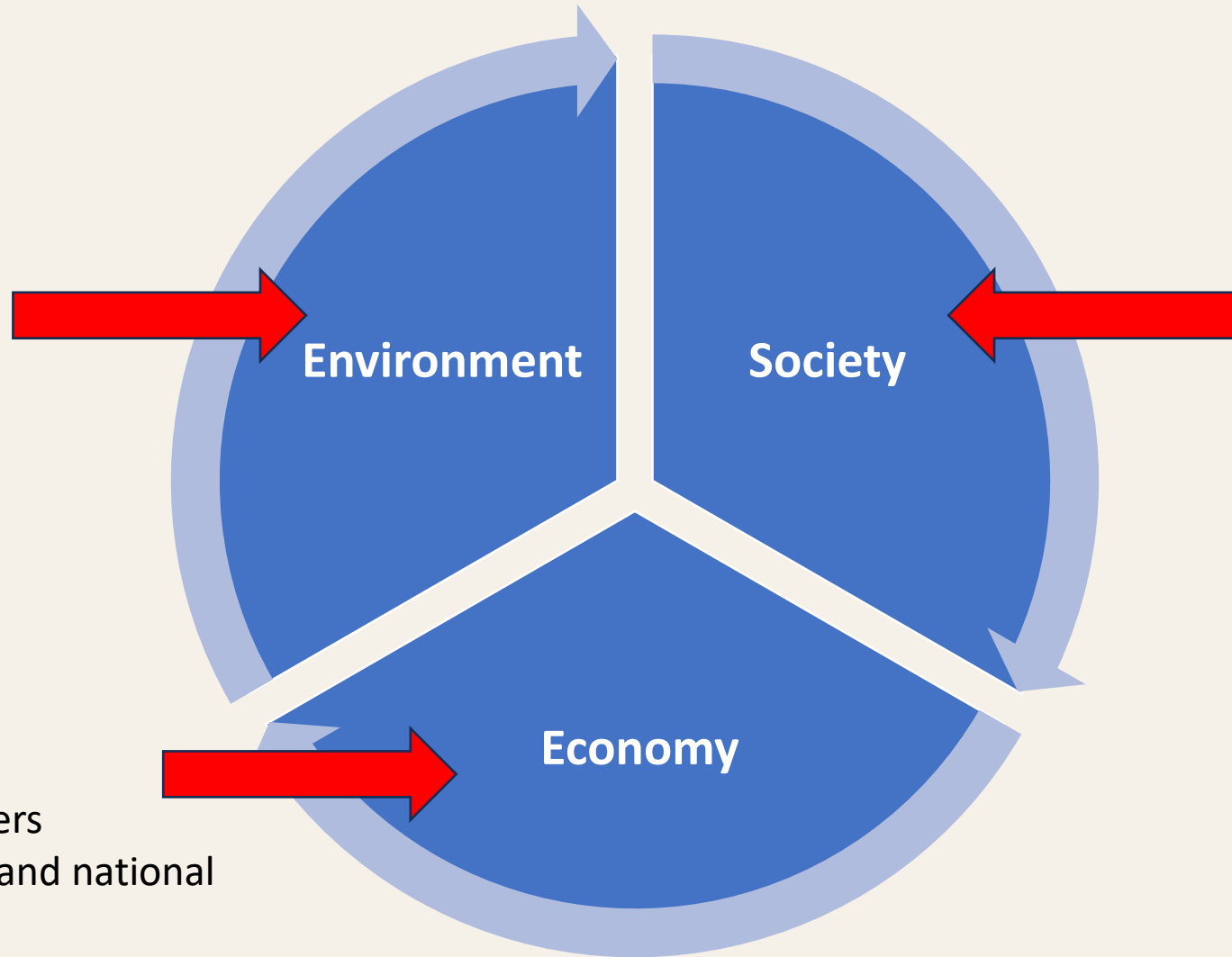
- **Financial decisions based on a commitment to doing good:**
 - *For shareholders/business owners* – economically sustainable and turn a profit
 - *For employees* - protect jobs, possibly grow/expand
 - *For customers/clients* – provide quality products/services at a reasonable price
 - *For local communities and/or specific recreational communities* – jobs, products, services etc.
 - *For wider society* - possibly contribute to wider initiatives, like EDI
 - *For wildlife and the environment* – minimise harm, green investment, actively support nature recovery

Economy is responsible to and for **both** environment and society

Key stakeholders – England

- Defra
- Natural England
- Environmental charities e.g., RSPB, wildlife trusts
- Landowners – public and private

- Businesses
- Workers
- Investors/shareholders
- Government – local and national



- Government – national and local
- Recreationalists – participants, associations and governing bodies
- Health and social care providers
- Schools, universities, community groups
- 'General public' – local, regional, national

Example 1: National Nature Reserves – Natural England

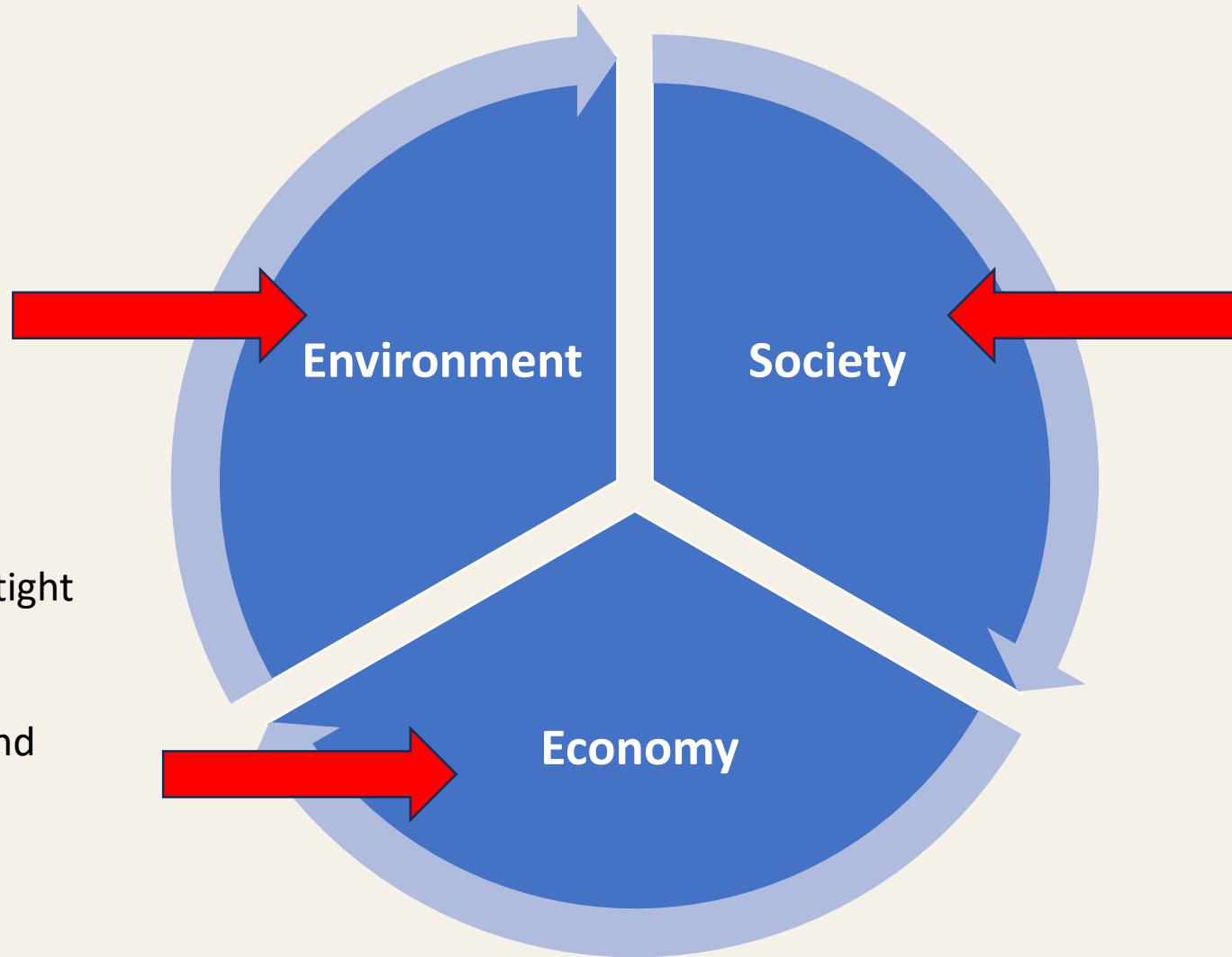
National Nature Reserves (NNRs) were established to protect some of our most important habitats, species and geology, and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research.

There are currently 221 NNRs in England with a total area of over 110,000 hectares - approximately 0.8% of the country's land surface. The largest is The Wash covering almost 8,800 hectares, while Dorset's Horn Park Quarry is the smallest at 0.32 hectares.

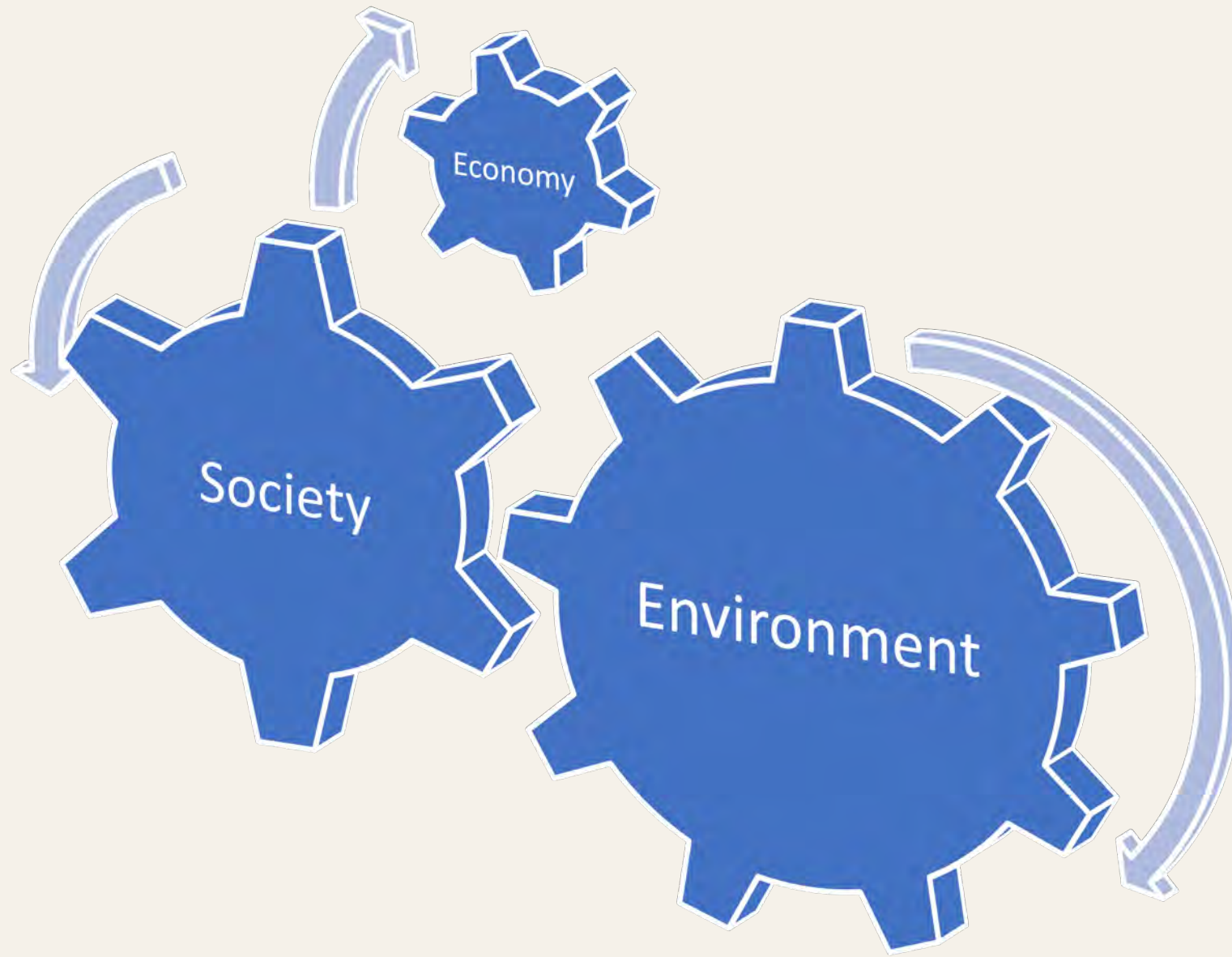
NNRs in England

- Managed predominantly by Natural England
- SSSIs, SACs
- Primary responsibility = nature protection and recovery

- Funded through Defra
- Heavily constrained by tight budgets
- Free to access
- Reliant on volunteers and 'Friends' groups
- Must be economically sustainable



- Secondary remit to provide public access
- Mainly open access land
- Some local restrictions
- Provide opportunity for recreationalists to access beautiful green and blue spaces, usually at no cost



Responsible Outdoor Recreation: NNRs in England

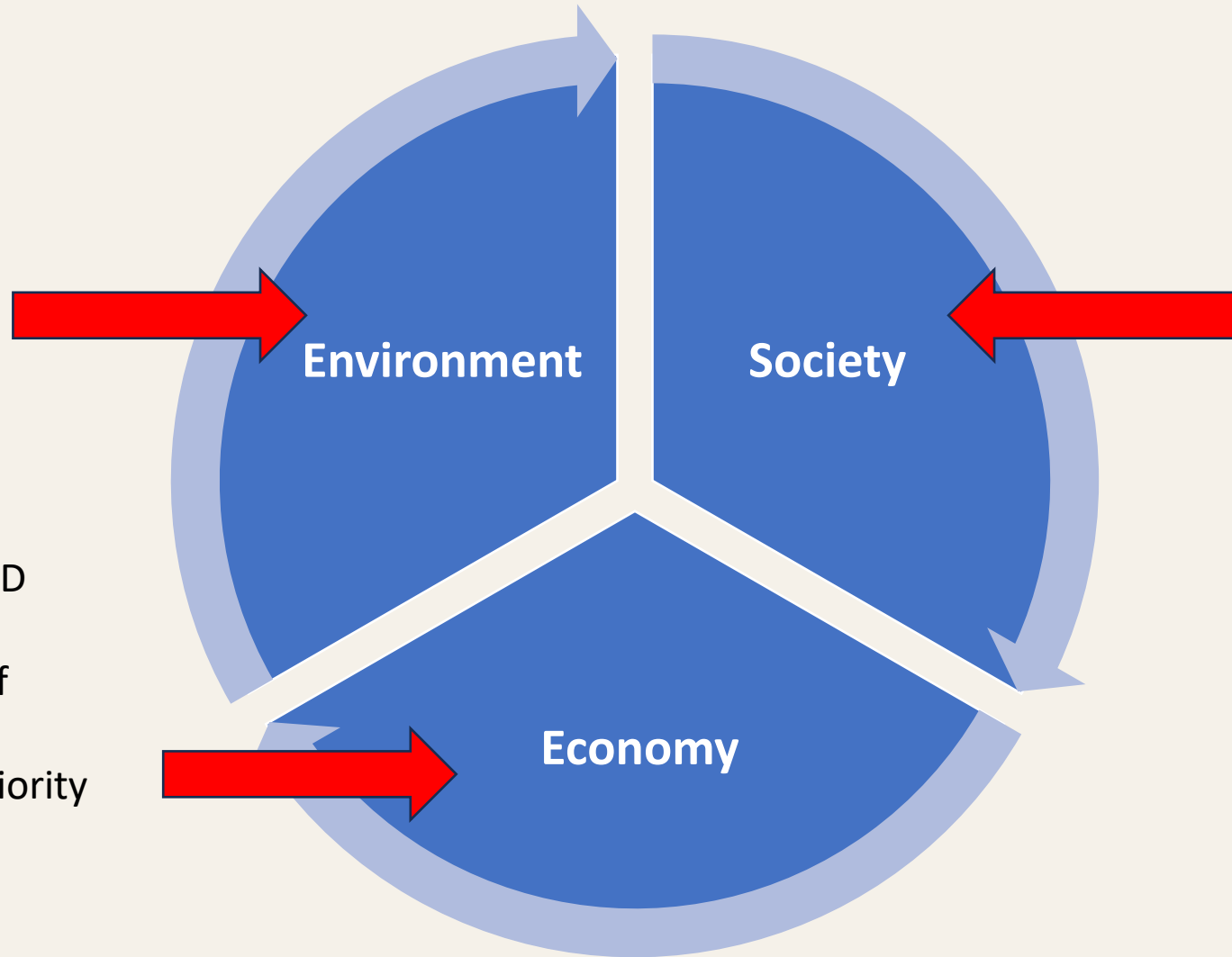
Example 2: Ministry of Defence (MOD)

- One of the largest landowners in the UK – approximately 1.4% of the total UK land mass as of April 2022
- 75.8% of MOD land is occupied by training areas and ranges
- Many areas include SSSIs
- Much of this land has public access, but with restrictions
- UK and Belgium are unusual globally in having public access on defence land

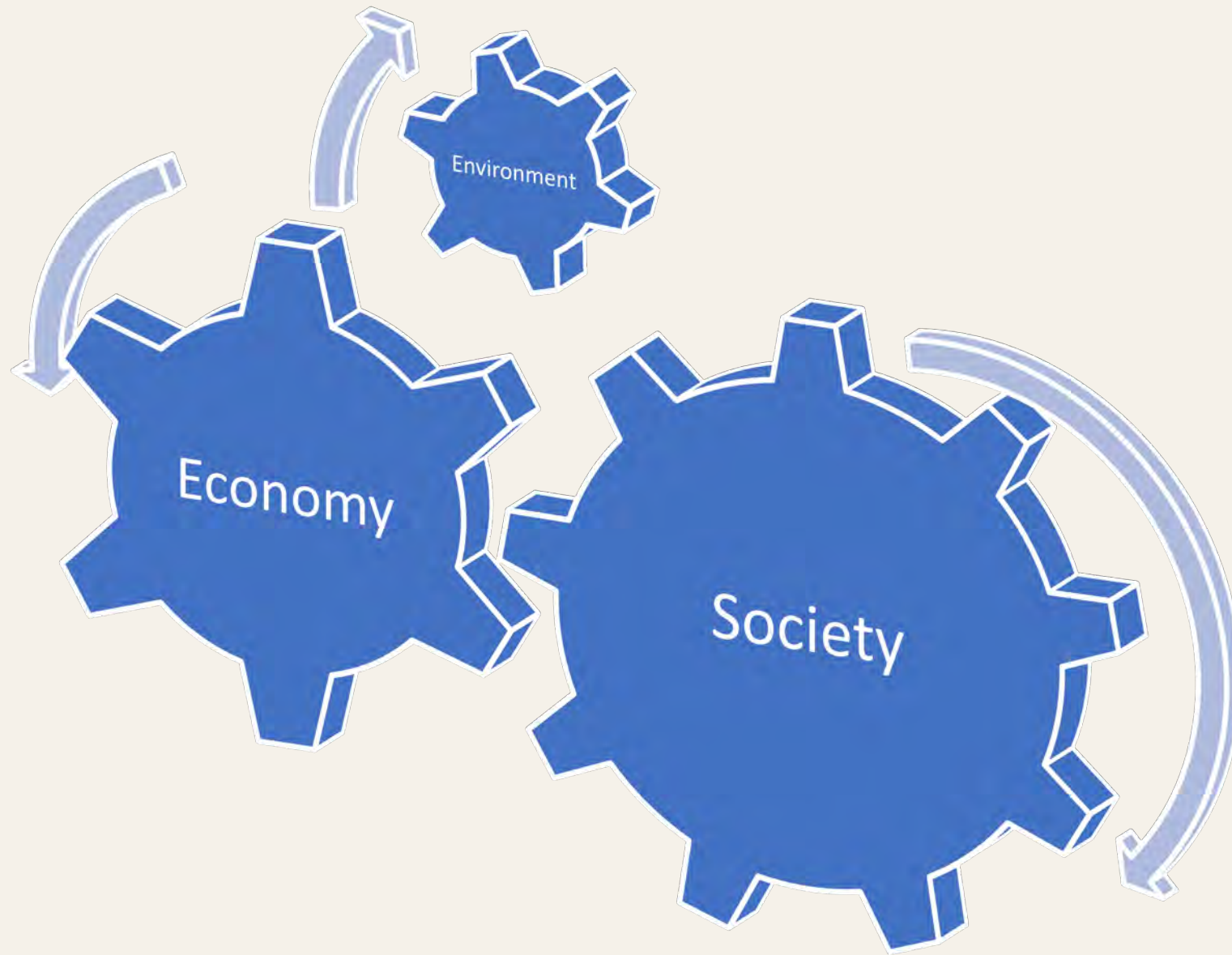
MOD land in England

- Ecological impact assessments and mitigations prior to activities
- SSSIs

- Part of much larger MOD budgets
- Only 3 members of staff related to public access
- Making money not a priority



- Primary remit is to provide space for armed forces training and preparation
- Public access permitted on many sites, with restrictions
- Difficulties enforcing restrictions
- Danger to life, damage to training, career development and financial implications



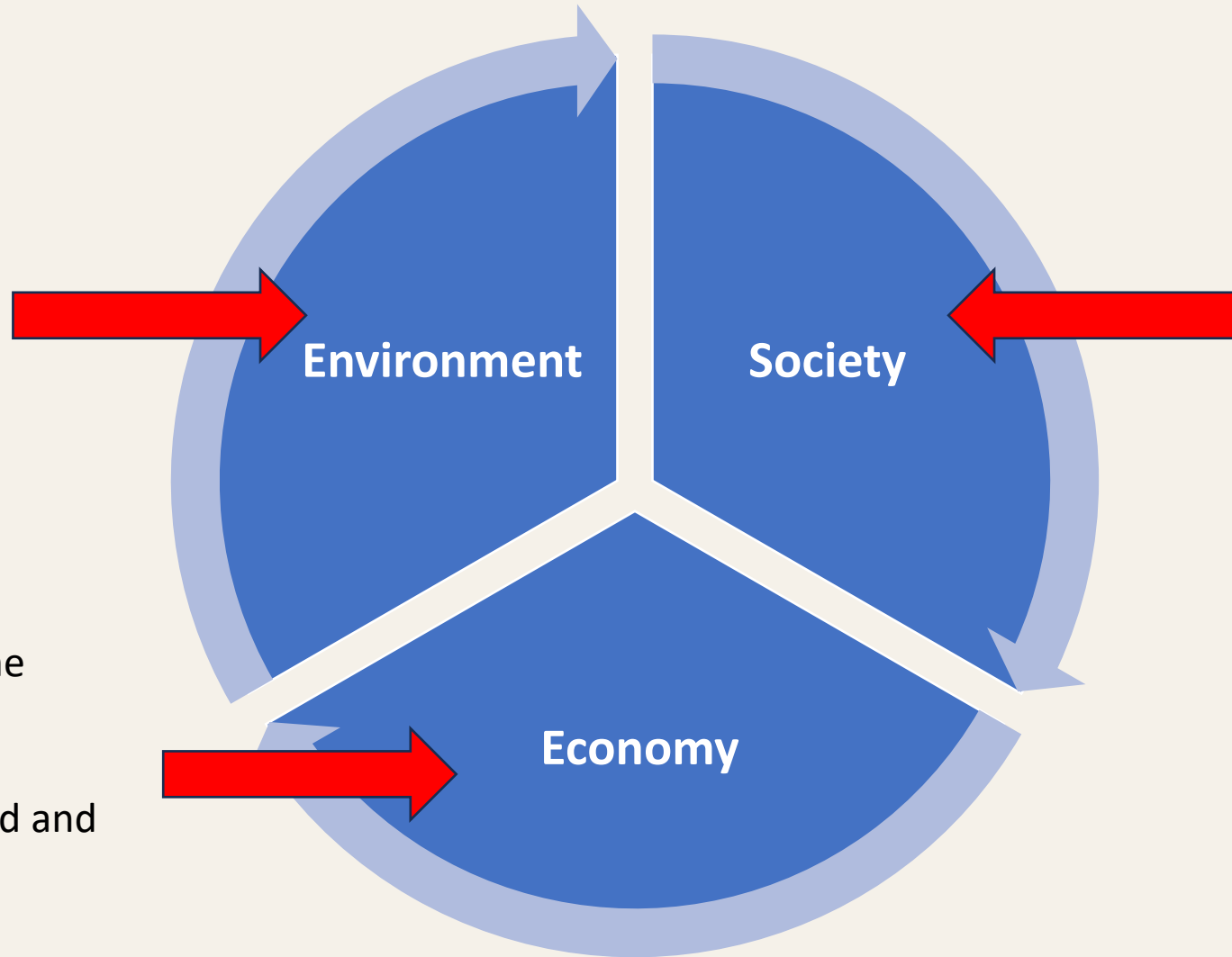
Responsible Outdoor Recreation: MOD land in England

Example 3: Lavender farms in England

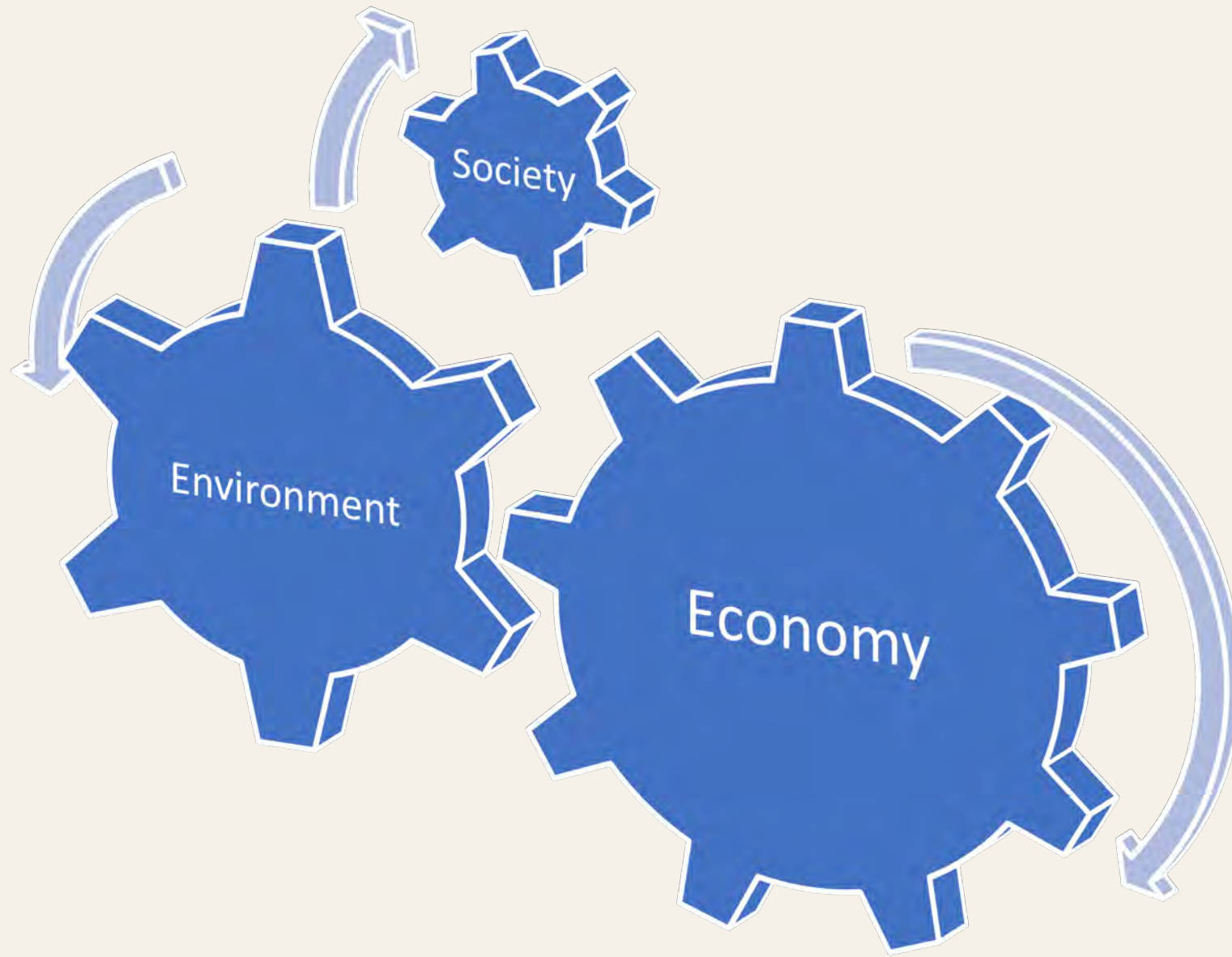
- Commercial farms that grow lavender and open up for (paid for) public access during peak flowering season
- Access restricted both by time of year and time of day
- Dogs allowed on leads
- Some extra services available – toilets, shop, picnic area, refreshments etc.

Lavender farms in England

- Land and environment maintained primarily for farming purposes
- Lavender may have some environmental benefits, such as for bees
- Economic viability is the farms' primary remit
- Commercial farms
- Public access controlled and monetised



- Provide paid for foot access to some visitors at certain times of year
- Dogs allowed on leads
- Visually stunning and unusual for visitors



Responsible Outdoor Recreation: Lavender farms in England

Dominant Recreational Disturbances

Dogs off lead



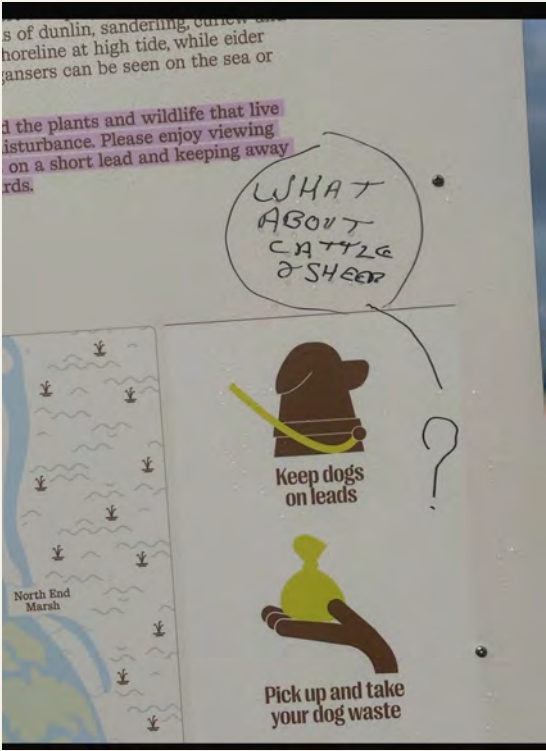
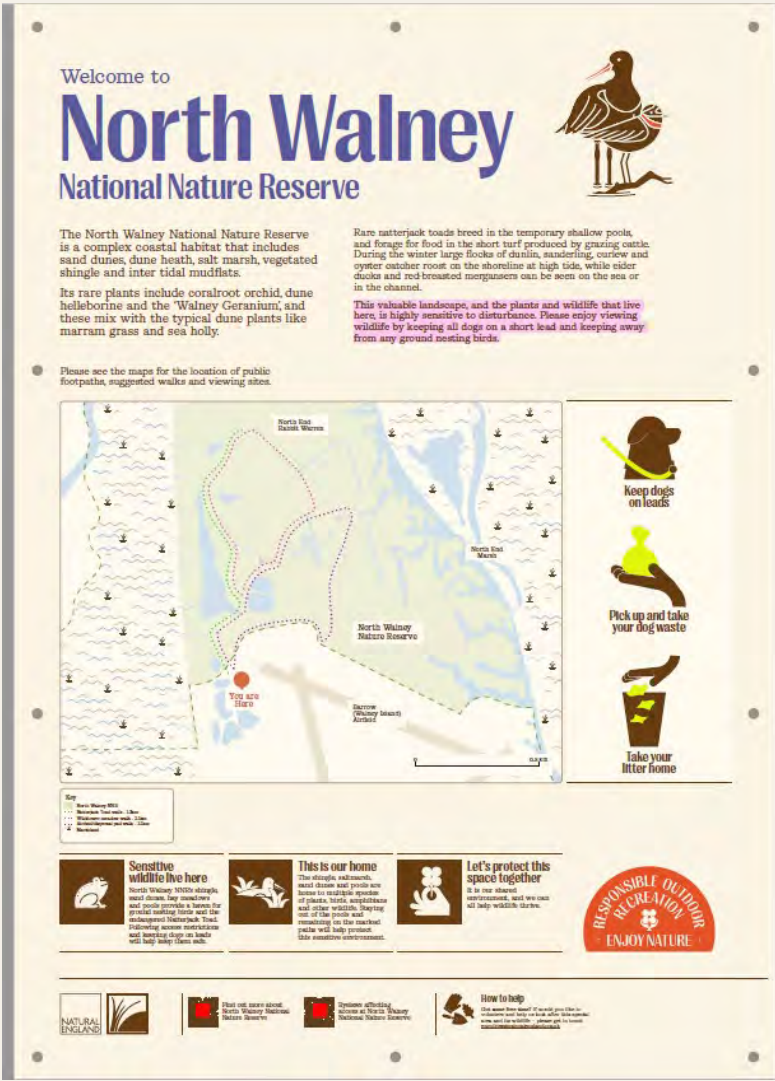
Trespass



**Activities outside the scope
of what is permitted**



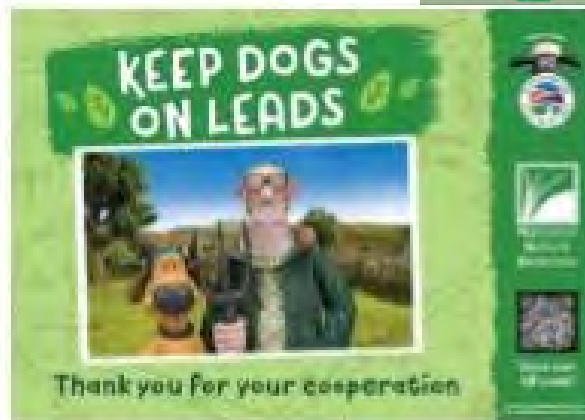
Cost-effective Interventions – Signage



Cost-effective Interventions - Barriers



Resource-intensive Interventions - Community Engagement



Project Assistants

Developing temporary signage + Install

Engaging with Visitors

Planning events or focus groups

Planning on-site engagement

Social media posts

Off site educational outreach and engagement

Observation and data collection

Desk-based research & context mapping

Reporting and analysis



Attention mountain bikers



Cotswolds Commons and Beechwoods has some of the most species rich, biodiverse soils in the country and is part of the reason why this site has designated protection.

To get non-permitted trail development under control, interventions will be introduced to keep riders onto permitted tracks (see affected area in map below).

To follow the permitted route ('The Wall'), access the trail that runs parallel to the Cotswolds Way footpath along the old wall.

Please help us maintain this site by:

- Keeping to permitted routes only;
- Do not crisscross between trails to avoid unnecessary damage;
- Spread out to avoid congestion and pushing other riders off track;
- Do not build or introduce any new trails on this site!



Ride safe, control your speed, and be alert!



BLOCKED TRAILS AHEAD

As part of work to protect this Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the following non-permitted track has been partially or fully blocked to allow this important nature reserve to heal.



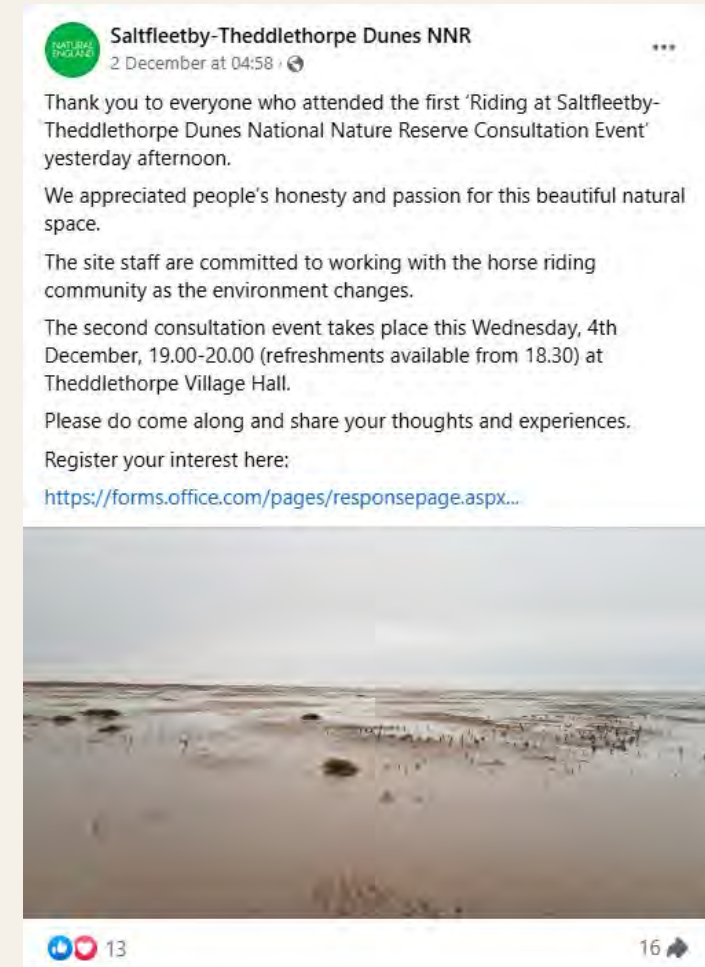
For your own safety, please use the permitted mountain bike trail (The Wall) available.



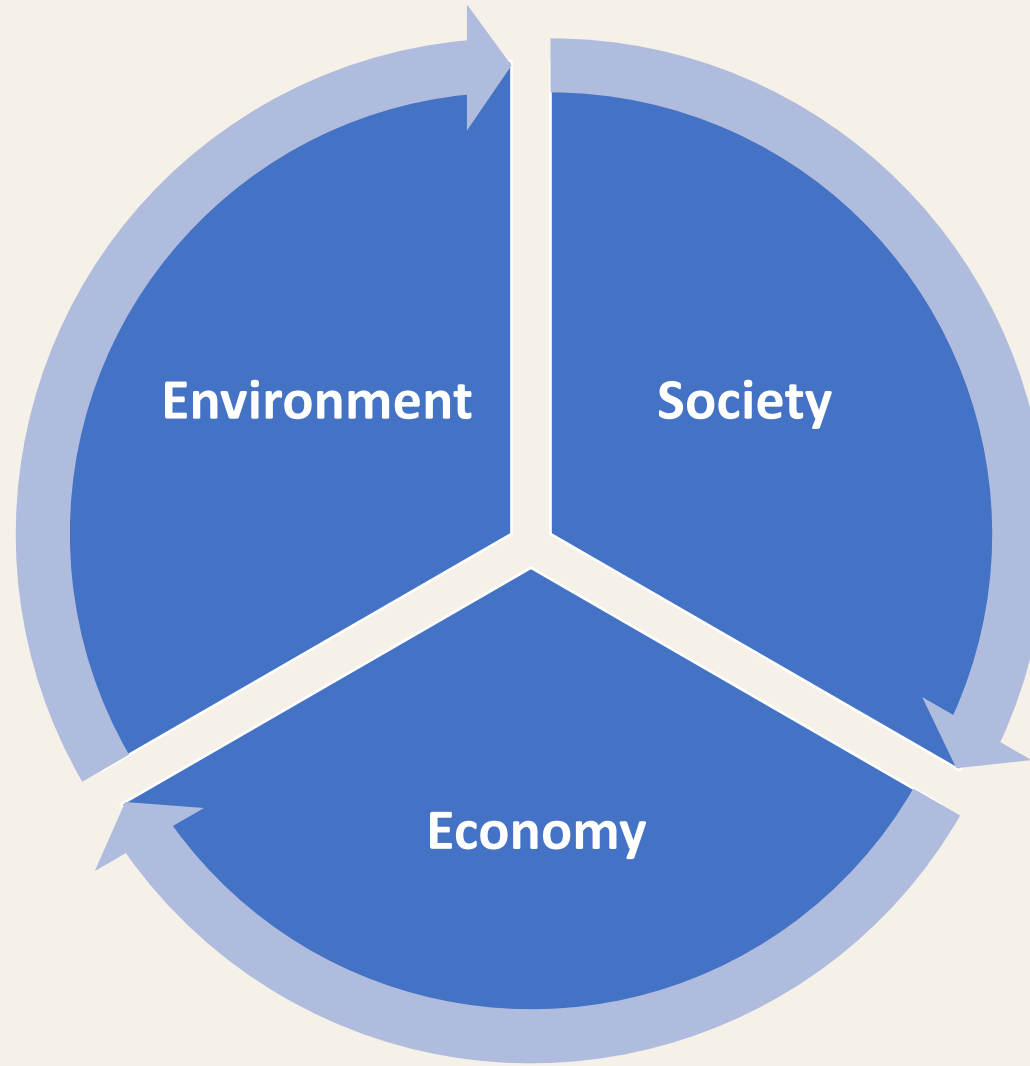
Resource-intensive Intervention – On-site staff

Resource-intensive Interventions: Public engagement and consultation

- Landowner 'listening' to recreation users
- Increase understanding of how the environment is changing, and this can affect recreation on site
- Need to work in partnership with recreation users and other landowners



Responsible outdoor recreation – A revolving circle



Questions to consider

- 1. Are you clear about your priorities and how do you balance them?**
- 2. What is the main challenge you currently have in your area for responsible outdoor recreation and tourism?**

RORRG- Responsible Outdoor Recreation Research Group

- 1.To build the profile and champion the importance of responsible outdoor recreation practices to balance the needs of the environment and recreation use
- 2.To build a network of colleagues interested in developing and sharing knowledge related to responsible outdoor recreation
- 3.Look at research opportunities with partners for furthering the responsible outdoor recreation agenda
- 4.Look for collaborative funding opportunities in the responsible outdoor recreation space.

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Thank you!



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