

Visitor Monitoring and Information Sources

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What monitoring and information is already out there?

National surveys

People & Nature Surveys (versions of this across UK nations)

On-site monitoring

Visitor surveys, automated people/cycle counters

Digital data

Strava Metro, mobile/location data

Models / maps

ORVAL, (upcoming REAM), Green Infrastructure Map (NE)

How can we make better use of what already exists, and where are the critical gaps? – today's focus

Recreation Activity and Engagement Monitoring

REAM (University of Exeter and Natural England)

Understanding when, where and how people use natural spaces can support better planning, site management and decisions for nature and people.

WHAT REAM IS DOING

Developing scalable models to predict visitor numbers across England by combining digital activity data with environmental, demographic and contextual information, calibrated and tested against visitor counts.

THE AMBITION

- Understand where visitor prediction can support real-world decisions
- Improve and validate models across different places and conditions
- Develop an accessible tool for recreation planning and management



Share your experience: how could REAM be useful, what outputs matter, and what data could help?

Purpose of this session

To bring together different perspectives on recreation visitor monitoring and identify what we need to know, how better information could support decisions, and where the biggest monitoring gaps lie.

Groups

Pick the most relevant to you and your work

- **Visitor experience**

What are visitors doing, experiencing, and what do they need?

Includes visitor use, motivations, activities, satisfaction, quality of experience, accessibility and inclusion.

- **Recreational disturbance and impacts**

What effects is recreation having?

Includes impacts on wildlife and habitats, erosion/trampling, visitor behaviour, congestion, parking, noise, litter and local communities.

- **Site management and operational decisions**

What action do stakeholders need to take?

Includes maintenance, infrastructure, staffing/ranger activity, visitor management, peak pressures, investment, safety and evaluating interventions.

1. What do we want to know?

What are the most important things we want recreation visitor monitoring to tell us?

Prompts:

- What do we want to understand better?
- What questions are we currently unable to answer?
- What changes or patterns would we want to understand?
- What are the priority information needs for our theme?

Output: Agree a maximum of **3 priority questions or information needs**.

2. How could this information be used?

Why do we need this information, and how would we use it?

Prompts:

- What decision would this information help us make?
- What action could it inform?
- Who would use the information?
- What might we do differently if we had this information?

3. Existing monitoring information and gaps

What evidence or monitoring information is already available or being collected, and what is missing?

Prompts:

- What data or monitoring already exists? And at what spatial, temporal scales etc?
- Who collects or holds it?
- What can it already tell us?
- Are existing data adequate in terms of coverage, quality, frequency or scale?
- What important information is missing?
- What would be useful but difficult to obtain?

Mark monitoring information / evidence as:

- ✓ **Already have**
- ? **Gap**
- ! **Exists but difficult to obtain**

Plenary

Each group move its sticky notes onto one shared sheet of paper for each question.

Each group takes ownership of one question and reflects on the following before feeding back to the group:

- Cluster similar needs and evidence.
- Look for shared monitoring needs across the themes.
- Identify existing evidence that could serve more than one purpose.
- Highlight important questions where evidence is missing or particularly difficult to obtain.

Thank you and close

