



# Countryside Jobs Service

Focus on Recreation



In association with the Outdoor Recreation Network

20 May 2019

## Sharing Good Practice – People and Dogs in the Outdoors

By Dr Elizabeth Rogers

The Outdoor Recreation Network recently delivered a seminar on the topic of “People and Dogs in the Outdoors” hosted by Forestry England and The Kennel Club. Over the course of the two days, delegates heard from key policy makers, stakeholders, academics and practitioners about important policy and practice matters relating to the opportunities and management of dogs in the outdoors.



People and Dogs in the Outdoors seminar delegate pack (Outdoor Recreation Network)

The event focused particularly on practical management measures and good practice and facilitated networking opportunities. Delegates greatly appreciated the information sharing and the key learnings from the seminar are summarised below:

### Dogs are part of the family

Whether it's a trip to the local park or a family holiday, many families will want to take their canine member with them. Since 2010, dog ownership is up 10% and is now at 8.5 million dogs. 26% of homes have a dog and astonishingly over half of all outdoor visits include a dog.<sup>1</sup>

For outdoor recreation sites there are commercial

benefits to welcoming dogs. These include:

- Dog owners and families with dogs are a large and growing market;
- They visit off peak and are less weather dependent;
- 7,000 assistance dogs help people in ever-more ways.<sup>2</sup>

Given the importance of dogs to families, the focus should be on managing the demand rather than suppressing it.<sup>3</sup>

### Dogs keep us healthy

There are significant physical and mental health benefits from having a dog. Research recently found that dog owners are far more likely to meet weekly exercise targets of 150 minutes per week than people without dogs. In fact:

- 64% of dog owners met the physical activity guidelines through dog walking alone;
- Dog owners are 14 times more likely to walk for recreation;
- Dog walking was in addition to – not instead of – other exercise.



Dawn husky demo © S Jenkinson & The Kennel Club

We also know that dogs facilitate social interaction which is important for good mental health. People are more likely to stop and talk to someone walking a dog than someone on their own or with another person. With higher social capital, dog owners are more likely to chat to others and be involved in their community, know the names of neighbours, visit family and friends, and have a sense that the people that live and work in their community care about them.<sup>4</sup>



**Peter Gorbing, CEO, Dogs for Good speaking to delegates**  
(Outdoor Recreation Network)

There are important public health implications. Dogs play an important role in keeping us healthy and this should be recognised and facilitated.

### **Happy, healthy, hassle-free dog walks**

Policy making and planning on the natural and built environment should provide for the needs of dogs and plan-out conflict from the start. Dogs and their owners want to feel welcome in the outdoors, with the provision of safe, nearby, one hour, off-lead dog walks. The best management ethos now is to both reduce negative impacts and promote the benefits of having dogs on site.

### **Addressing problems through partnership**

Dog fouling, disturbing local wildlife, livestock

worrying and raiding picnics do still happen. But instead of being divisive, managing dogs in the outdoors is now seen as less binary with the outdoors considered a place for all – humans and dogs. There is a move to a more informed approach that highlights the need for interventions to be built on evidence rather than common myths.

Simply saying “no” to dog access is ineffective.<sup>5</sup> Rather a partnership approach is recommended between responsible dog owners and landowners. For example, in terms of preventing livestock worrying dog walkers should accompany their dogs to prevent livestock attacks and landowners should ensure signs are up-to-date to indicate if livestock is in the area.



**Natalie Light, Certified Clinical Animal Behaviourist, Nat Dogs Ltd delivering a demonstration of the fun dog training sessions developed in the New Forest NP**

(Outdoor Recreation Network)

### **What is needed for dog walkers?**

- **Prevention is better than cure** and highlights the importance of puppy training (e.g. sit, down, stay, recall), picking up dog poo, and ensuring dogs don't run after wildlife/livestock.<sup>6</sup>
- **Informative and clear on-site signage and instructions** (e.g. where dogs are allowed on a lead, off-lead and not allowed), bypass routes available when livestock is present and designated areas for dogs (e.g. enclosed dog training areas).
- **Informative and clear off-site information** such as websites with information and maps of great places to walk dogs and responsible behaviour messaging.

This three-pronged approach is crucial to ensuring the outdoors is shared and enjoyed by both people and dogs. As Alison Kohler (Director of Conservation and Communities, Dartmoor National Park Authority) put it in her presentation: “We need to build understanding trust and respect (between dog walkers and landowners) – just like the relationship between dog and owner!”<sup>7</sup>

The key ORN takeaways proposed by delegates were:

- Create a **common language and code of practice** for managing dogs in the outdoors across stakeholder organisations.
- Advocating the proven **benefits of dog companionship** on people's health and wellbeing.
- Increase awareness of the **revenue generation** that comes from dog owners to greenspace sites and conservation.
- Explore potential of a **condensed training day** for staff tasked with managing dogs in the outdoors.
- Create a “**People and Dogs in the Outdoors Forum**” of relevant stakeholders (landowners, recreation, health and disability etc.).
- Collate a **library of good practice** to guide practitioners in their day-to-day work.

Some of these takeaways will be incorporated in the next edition of the ORN journal to be published later in the year and the wider information that has emanated from the seminar, which are available to view/download from here: <https://www.outdoorrecreation.org.uk/other-publications/>

#### Footnotes

- 1 Slides for Stephen Jenkinson's (Access Advisor, The Kennel Club) presentation on "10 Years On: Changes in Thinking, Policy and Practice on People and Dogs in the Outdoors" are available here: <https://c-js.co.uk/30heJLt>
- 2 There are various types of assistance dogs, from guide dogs, hearing dogs, mobility assistance dogs, autism assistance dogs, medical alert dogs, to psychiatric service dogs including veteran and dementia dogs. They can help with physical disability, dementia, learning disability, and autism spectrum condition.
- 3 For more information on the commercial benefits of dogs, please see Josephine Lavelle's (Head of Marketing, Brand and Communication, Forestry England) presentation: <https://c-js.co.uk/2HiQeER>
- 4 Please see recent article on Dr Carrie Westgarth's research: <https://c-js.co.uk/2Q0P30R>
- 5 Please see Stephen Jenkinson's (Access Advisor, The Kennel Club) presentation for more information on access planning and displacing conflict: <https://c-js.co.uk/30heJLt>
- 6 A good example of this partnership approach is the New Forest Dogs Forum which helps local organisations with an interest in dogs in the outdoors to work together and enable a positive approach to addressing areas of common concern. More information on this group can be found here: <https://www.newforestdog.org.uk/the-dog-walking-code>
- 7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H72tkrBYFRY>

#### Stephen Jenkinson – Access and Countryside Management Ltd

The UK's only specialist in minimising adverse impacts on wildlife, livestock and other access users arising from dog walking, while also supporting the human and canine health benefits of dog ownership. Clients include Natural England, Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage, national parks, wildlife charities and private landowners. 08456 439435 [steve@sjacm.co.uk](mailto:steve@sjacm.co.uk)

**PONT is often asked to help organisations** who are planning to conservation graze sites with public access. We have tools in our toolbox for a variety of situations.

We can draw grazing plans to ensure that the appropriate livestock are chosen for the site's management and that the timing and intensity of grazing is right and we can help to find a grazer with animals that behave well with people and dogs.



(PONT)

This is helpful in allaying people's fears about losing access to their favourite walk.

For more information on how PONT could help you please contact: [info@pontcymru.org](mailto:info@pontcymru.org) or tel 07421 994859 / 4860 [www.pontcymru.org](http://www.pontcymru.org)



In North Wales quiet Belted Galloway cattle graze a grassland fungi SSSI which is heavily used by dogwalkers and schoolchildren. We have trained local people to be stock checkers and Wildlife Trust staff have attended our Conservation Grazing training and Working with Farmers courses.

We've advised on signage and even run a dog show to draw local people in so we can discuss how to manage dogs in the countryside and offer dog training opportunities. PONT runs a course on managing dogs in the countryside too.

We run "meet the animals" days and consultation events so local people can understand why grazing is necessary and how it will be managed.

**ScotWays (The Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society)** is the independent charity which upholds public access rights in Scotland. We help the public with access problems, and encourage responsible access with information, training and signs, drawing on our vast database covering routes throughout Scotland. Our expertise in the law and practice of access is widely recognised. [www.scotways.com](http://www.scotways.com)





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**A wealth of information about walking** in Scotland is now available on a single website. Walkipedia contains over 120 resources including statistics, evidence-based information, and government surveys relating to walking, pedestrians and active travel. Launched by Paths for All and Living Streets Scotland, the website acts as a one-stop-shop for outdoor access and planning professionals, researchers, healthcare practitioners, and groups looking to make the case for walking. Visit [www.walkipedia.scot](http://www.walkipedia.scot)

**MyParkScotland** [www.mypark.scot](http://www.mypark.scot) helps people **discover**, enjoy and support parks. The website provides up-to-date information on park locations, facilities and what's on - currently covering Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow and NNRs, listing over 400 greenspaces, and working towards Scotland-wide coverage. MyParkScotland is also Scotland's only crowdfunding platform specifically for parks and greenspaces.

**Cicerone has a range of over 370 award-winning** guidebooks for day and long-distance walks, cycling routes and tours, scrambling and winter climbs, as well as outdoor adventures with children. British Isles and overseas destinations. Availability throughout the UK. Contact via website [www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk)

**Encourage walking and wellbeing** in your local area with Go Jauntly, an award-winning, community-based app available on iOS and Android. We can work with you to curate routes in your area, promote active travel, and gather valuable data on walking in your community. Learn more at [gojauntly.com/partnerships](http://gojauntly.com/partnerships)

**We encourage and help families enjoy** the outdoors. To help get visitors to your area, list your walks and attractions on our website, or write an article as a guest contributor. To find out more, visit [www.getoutwiththekids.co.uk](http://www.getoutwiththekids.co.uk) or contact [support@getoutwiththekids.co.uk](mailto:support@getoutwiththekids.co.uk)

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A wealth of resources and advice at [www.outdoor-learning.org](http://www.outdoor-learning.org) Join IOL to shape the future of outdoor learning.



**The Parks Alliance** is the only UK wide organisation solely working to promote and protect the public parks we are proud to have at the heart of UK life. Help our campaign to publicise their true value and wider social and environmental benefits by joining for free at [www.theparksalliance.org](http://www.theparksalliance.org).

The  
**PARKS**  
Alliance

## Celebrating 10 years of Nordic Walking at Rosliston Forestry Centre and beyond

By Dr Catherine Hughes, National Nordic Walking Trainer for England and Director of British Nordic Walking CIC



Rosliston Forestry Centre in South Derbyshire has been playing host to groups of Nordic Walkers for over ten years as part of their Get Active in the Forest initiative. From the Rosliston group, the programme has expanded its Nordic walking provision, running sessions in Etwall, Swadlincote and at Elvaston Castle. The Rosliston session is still by far the most popular with over 30 participants a week.

Nordic Walking plays a significant part in the Centre's regular activity timetable, with sessions throughout the week at different times of day to suit visitors. The price for each person is kept affordable with a small extra charge to hire Nordic Walking poles for anyone who does not have their own.

Nordic Walking has also been a useful way for South Derbyshire District Council to reach out to groups that are not typical users of outdoor facilities.

On the back of the session at the fantastic Swadlincote Woodlands, an Indoor Nordic Walking session was set up for people with more serious mobility problems who have seen a proven positive impact on their physical and mental wellbeing.

At Burton Hospital there have been taster sessions to encourage patients with neurological conditions into physical activity. A number have been inspired to become more active and join the regular group walks. Children have been able to give Nordic Walking a try through taster sessions at a local secondary school as part of a wider enrichment program.

### But what is Nordic Walking?

Originally a means of off-season ski-training, Nordic Walking developed in its own right with the introduction of specially designed poles ergonomically suited to the Nordic Walking technique. Done correctly, the internationally recognised 10 Step Technique can burn up to 20% more calories compared to walking without poles by giving you a full body workout using core and upper body muscles as well the lower body.

Even better news – it has a low perceived rate of exertion. That means that you don't feel as though you are working as hard as you actually are. And this despite the fact that Nordic Walking can use up to 20% more energy than walking without poles. No wonder Nordic Walking is growing in popularity.



**A charity Nordic Walking event for Children in Need**  
© British Nordic Walking

Whilst Nordic Walking is a great exercise for sporty people, it comes into its own for those who don't consider themselves regular exercisers or even outdoorsy types. The sociable nature of Nordic Walking in a group appeals to many people who otherwise would not be outside in all weathers making it an effective way to get more people out in the fresh air and enjoying the countryside. All this whilst enhancing their strength and fitness, and having fun. A cup of tea and cake is a traditional way to end many Nordic Walks!

Alex Rowley-Kearns, Get Active Officer at South Derbyshire District Council says, "Nordic Walking has proved to be a terrific addition to our outdoor activity provision and a great way to reach new audiences. Our instructors have been trained by British Nordic Walking to teach the 10 Step Technique, of course, but also

to carry out dynamic risk assessments – essential when running group walks safely over woodland terrain – and can easily keep a group of mixed fitness levels and ability whilst maintaining motivation and sense of camaraderie.”

British Nordic Walking – [www.britishnordicwalking.org.uk](http://www.britishnordicwalking.org.uk)

International Nordic Walking Federation (INWA), developers of the 10 Step Technique - <http://www.inwa-nordicwalking.com/>

Rosliston Forestry Centre - <http://www.roslistonforestrycentre.co.uk>

## Helping more people to get outside more often



Life is better outdoors but getting outside can be hard, and sometimes we all need a little nudge in the right direction. So, we're making it our mission to encourage the nation to get outside and discover what's on our doorsteps.

At Ordnance Survey, we're passionate about helping more people to get outside more often, as we believe an active outdoor lifestyle helps you live longer, stay younger and enjoy life more. And GetOutside sits at the heart of everything we do. Just as the outdoors is for everyone, GetOutside is for everyone.

We want to showcase the best that Britain has to offer, by providing inspirational stories, experiences and adventures for people of all ages and abilities. From accessible, family and wheelchair friendly routes, to beautiful scenic locations to visit, our landscape has a lot to offer and is not short on variety. There are plenty of adventures out there just waiting to be discovered.

As part of rekindling the nation's love of outdoor activity, we want to activate the whole nation regardless of age, ability, gender or religion, by celebrating with a day focussed on free outdoor events and activities.

National GetOutside Day is embraced by the whole nation and we want everyone to get involved and get outside! Taking place on Sunday 29 September 2019, help us get everyone active outdoors.

If you'd like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you. Visit [GetOutside.uk](http://GetOutside.uk) to find out more or simply email [GetOutside@os.uk](mailto:GetOutside@os.uk)

## May is Walk in the Woods month

During May, people across the country get out to celebrate their local trees for #WalkInTheWoods month. It's an opportunity to celebrate your local trees, and The Tree Council want you to join in!

You can do this by attending a local guided walk, organising your own, or simply gathering together friends or family and getting out under your local trees. Check out the events listed on our interactive map, and follow The Tree Council on Twitter or Facebook to see the latest events being announced.



If there's nothing going on near to you, why not consider organising your own walk! Organising an event is simple

1. Choose a local woodland and a route to enjoy. Think about the sort of length of walk you might like to do, and how challenging it should be.
2. List your event on our Near You map so others can learn about it
3. Print a copy of The Tree Council's Walk in the Woods poster and fill in the details of your walk.
4. Spread the word on social media – create a Facebook event or post about it on Twitter

You can find more inspiration for your walks here. And whatever you do, don't forget to share your experience with [@thetreecouncil](https://twitter.com/thetreecouncil) and [#walkinthewoods](https://twitter.com/walkinthewoods). Find out more at <https://c-js.co.uk/2VYfXfb>

**Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust's Bee Together** project aims to create wildflower meadows. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund thanks to National Lottery players, it connects communities and landscapes to reverse the decline of wild pollinators such as bees. To find out more email [info@ydmtd.org](mailto:info@ydmtd.org) or log on to [ydmtd.org](http://ydmtd.org)

**The Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC)** is delighted to announce the launch of Where to Watch Birds in Scotland, the Club's free mobile app for Apple and Android devices. Discover the best places to birdwatch around Scotland and the bird species likely to be found at these sites. Visit [www.the-soc.org.uk/app](http://www.the-soc.org.uk/app).

# The Lee Valley Regional Park. London, Hertfordshire and Essex

By Stephen Wilkinson, Head of Planning & Strategic Partnerships



## Introduction

The Lee Valley Regional Park presents a rich tapestry of open spaces, nature reserves and major sporting venues originally designed to serve the leisure and recreation needs of Londoners. It runs for 26 miles broadly aligned with the natural course of the river Lea from its southern tip, the East India Dock Basin on the River Thames, through east London and Essex to Ware in Hertfordshire. The Park extends to 4,010ha of which the Authority owns 2,300ha. In total the whole Park attracts just over 7.1m visits each year of which 4.5m visits are to its open spaces and unique sites of biodiversity interest and a further 2.6m visits are made to its 15 venues.



Bow Creek looking towards Canary Wharf (LVRPA)

## Management

The Authority, through its leisure contractor, Lee Valley Leisure Trust, trading as Vibrant Partnerships, manages 15 venues which include 3 Olympic Legacy venues, the Lee Valley White Water Centre, VeloPark and the Hockey and Tennis Centre. Other venues include an Ice Centre, Riding Centre, an Athletics Centre, marinas and campsites.

Large areas of the Regional Park are owned by infrastructure and utility companies.

## The Parklands

The Regional Park's defining feature is its landscape which, unusually for such a large park, is largely man made. This provides a varied backcloth and physical

context for the kaleidoscope of activities which occur. The use of many sites is multi layered.

## The Natural Landscape

The Regional Park is rich in biodiversity. It has sites of international, national and regional importance. The Park is made up of a patchwork of habitats resulting from centuries of changes due to the development of agriculture and industry.

Whilst areas of habitat with some degree of naturalness can still be found, significant areas have been altered over time by the actions of man. The key habitats are rivers and streams, open water, grassland and fen and post-industrial. The landscape includes remnants of historic wetlands and marsh at Cornmill Meadows, Waltham Abbey and Walthamstow Marshes which historically characterised the valley floor but during the last two centuries have been drained and built on.

The main challenges to the landscapes of the Regional Park come from the physical impacts of new development, often from utility companies. For example, although a route for Cross Rail 2 has yet to be formally 'safeguarded', the proposed route will follow the West Anglia line which forms part of the Park's western edge and it is likely to require additional land for new lines. Other pressures arise from developments such as large scale glasshouses.



Seventy Acres Lake, River Lee Country Park (LVRPA)

In the long term whilst the parklands can often be protected from housing because so much of the area is designated as green belt, large scale housing developments right on the edge of parklands are increasingly common. These can create a 'wall' of development hiding the parklands but at the same time the increased populations place more recreational pressures on the Park's delicate landscapes and habitats.

Although the legacy of industrial uses and former sand and gravel workings has left many areas of the parklands contaminated they still contain habitats for a unique biodiversity.

## Biodiversity

The diversity of habitat is protected through statutory designation including eight Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Together four of these form the Lee Valley Special Protection Area and Ramsar site. They provide habitat for over 300 species of bird, 32 species of mammal and 900 species of flowering plant. The valley is recognised as an important site for the wintering birds gadwall, shoveller and bittern and provides good

habitat for wetland mammals such as water vole, Britain's fastest declining mammal.



**A lattice of footpaths** (Eleanor Bentall)

Balanced against the need to protect the natural environment is the Authority's role in creating opportunities for people to gain access to nature. With over 4.5m visits each year to the parklands there are several important nature reserves at Rye Meads, Amwell, and Cornmill Meadows. A further site at Walthamstow Wetlands in London has recently opened and receives over 250,000 visits each year.

## The Regional Park as a Community Resource

The Regional Park is a multi-layered venue for a range of activities; some of these can be formal or, given its size, are informal with visitors allowed to wander either on foot or bike along its extensive lattice of paths. Ease of access is particularly important given its proximity to many of London's deprived communities.

The world class venues balance a mix of sessions for first-timers, schools, people with disabilities, community groups and hard to reach groups with corporate events, birthday parties, clubs and leagues and extensive venue hire, plus major events.

The three London 2012 venues have hosted four World Cups, two World Championships and ten other major international sports events since London 2012. In 2022, Lee Valley VeloPark will make history becoming the only venue in the world to host an Olympics, World Championships and Commonwealth Games in the same sport. The Lee Valley White Water Centre will host the Canoe Slalom World Cup in 2023.

A varied event programme held across the parklands, is designed to address health inequalities and is attended by over 20,000 people each year. A series of programmes are focused on supporting people with disabilities with other schemes targeted at women and girls and for people from ethnically diverse backgrounds who unfortunately can face barriers to accessing opportunities for fitness and well-being. The Authority's active communities programme attracts 25,000 school children each year.

The Park acts as a large resource bringing communities together through an extensive volunteering programme which has over 450 volunteers. Volunteers can work in a number of roles either as stewards at major sporting events or implementing improvement programmes clearing out rubbish and weeds including invasive species such as Japanese knotweed.

## Informal recreation

There are a whole series of walking and cycling routes through the Regional Park. These include a number of strategic walking and cycling routes including the Lea Valley Walk which extends from Bow Locks to the river's source in Leagrave near Luton, the London Outer Orbital route, Capital Ring and the New River Path. The main north-south route follows the towpath along the River Lee Navigation. Linked to each of these is a lattice of short routes, linking the main features of the parklands and the venues.

There are over 100km of cycle pathways throughout the Park.



**Three Mills, Bow, London** (Stephen Wilkinson)

The waterways of the Park are a defining feature with two marinas and three boating clubs along the Navigation.

There is a broad range of visitor accommodation throughout the Park. This includes a youth hostel at Cheshunt and several caravan and camping sites at Dobbs Weir Hoddesdon, Picketts Lock, Edmonton and Sewardstone. In 2017 the Authority opened an 'Almost Wild' site which allows people to experience the delights of the natural environment in clean but basic conditions at a site alongside the Lee Navigation.

### Challenges

Recent announcements for a major surfing and outdoor activity centre proposed for the LV Leisure Centre, Picketts Lock and the Authority's plans for the redevelopment of the existing Ice Centre as a 'twin pad', demonstrate the important contribution the Regional Park will continue to make to the recreation and leisure needs of London and surrounding communities. Of increasing importance, though, will be its role in addressing the resilience of these areas through flood mitigation, reducing air pollution, addressing climate change and the protection of ecology and the natural environment.

Find out more about the Park at [www.visitleevalley.org.uk](http://www.visitleevalley.org.uk) or [www.leevalleypark.org.uk](http://www.leevalleypark.org.uk)

### Walk this May

May is National Walking Month, a chance to celebrate walking and the benefits this simple act brings. Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking is behind the campaign.



As well as encouraging people to walk more of their everyday journeys, the charity also campaigns to improve streets so that they are accessible for everyone.

To mark National Walking Month this May, Living Streets has launched its #nine90 campaign, advocating for streets to be designed with nine-year-olds and 90-year-olds in mind – with clear pavements, slower speeds and effective crossings - because when they are, they become accessible to everyone.

Thousands of schoolchildren will be able to join in the National Walking Month celebration during Walk to School Week (20 – 24 May) when over half a million pupils will take to their feet.

Walking to school is an easy way for children to be more active whilst helping them develop vital road safety skills. As we all become more aware of the dangers of air pollution on our health, walking to school is a positive action people can take to help clean up our air.

To find out more about National Walking Month visit [livingstreets.org.uk/nwm](http://livingstreets.org.uk/nwm)

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### Sheffield Hallam University - Outdoor Recreation Research Group



We are a cross-disciplinary research group looking at the growing sector of outdoor recreation from all perspectives.

We bring together economists, social scientists, ecologists, engineers and behavioural change and tourism experts, to provide expertise in the way we play outdoors – and the important economy behind it.

We work with local authorities, national bodies, recreation providers, sport companies, NGOs and other agencies with an interest in outdoor recreation, to provide evidence to support their work. Recent projects include: providing the economic evidence underpinning the Sheffield Outdoor City initiative; supporting Harworth Estates with community consultation, design and technology experts, for their flagship Waverley development, using an 'Active Environment' concept; and an 'Access and Gateways Appraisal' to inform the development of the Sheffield Lakelands Landscape Conservation Action Plan for a £2.8 million Heritage Lottery Funded project.

Our research team can undertake access surveys and community consultation; economic impact evaluations; provide design and technology advice for recreation developments in the natural environment; and assist you in developing outdoor recreation and leisure strategies. Further information is available on our web site, or do get it touch if you would like to discuss your research needs further.

Email - orrg@shu.ac.uk

Web site - <https://c-js.co.uk/2Q4yzF4>

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**The John Muir Award is a nationally** recognised award scheme which supports people to connect with nature, enjoy and care for wild places. Its flexible framework supports leaders to meet a wide range of objectives and recognise the achievements of their participants in the outdoors. More info: [www.johnmuiraward.org](http://www.johnmuiraward.org)

**The National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS)** aims to amplify the voices of Friends Groups across the UK. We are the dynamic and inspirational grassroots movement of local Friends of Parks groups, volunteers who use and care for public green spaces of all kinds. Find out more: [www.natfedparks.org.uk](http://www.natfedparks.org.uk)

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# Outdoors visits at a record high

By Aileen Armstrong, Policy and Advice Officer for research



People in Scotland enjoy some of the best outdoor access rights in the world and participation in outdoor recreation has never been more popular. The latest estimates from Scotland’s People and Nature Survey show that adults in Scotland took 547 million outdoor visits in 2017/18, the highest volume recorded since the 2006 baseline year.

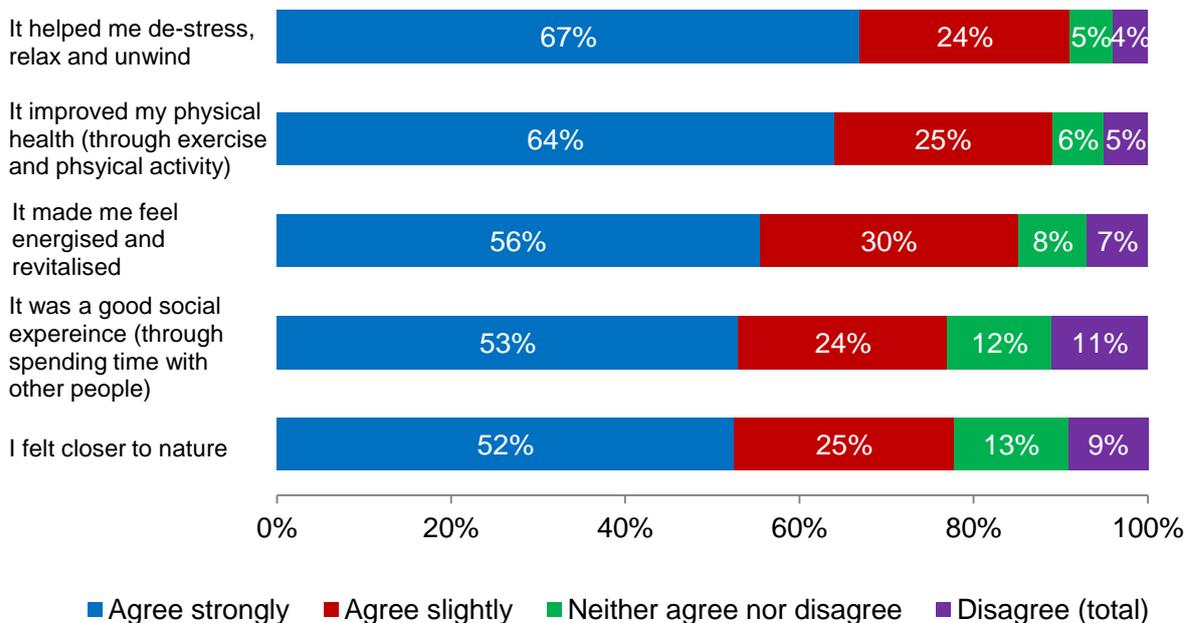


**Family walking at Dunardry near Crinan Argyll and Stirling area** (Lorne Gill / SNH)

The personal benefits people gain from these visits are significant – 9 in 10 people, for example, report improvements to their physical and mental well-being as a result of spending some time outdoors. But there are other, more wide-ranging benefits too. Expenditure generated by outdoor visitors can make a significant contribution to the local economy (in 2012, the Scottish Recreation Survey estimated that visits to the outdoors generated around £2.6 billion in expenditure); more people walking and cycling can help address the issues associated with car dependency such as congestion, pollution and climate change; and enjoyment of the natural environment can also help create a sense of responsibility among outdoor visitors, encouraging more people to help look after this important resource.

Scotland’s People and Nature Survey (SPANS), commissioned by Scottish Nature Heritage (SNH), is a national-level population survey which monitors trends in how people in Scotland use, value and enjoy the natural environment. The findings are based on in-home interviews undertaken over a 12 month period with a representative sample of around 12,000 adults in Scotland. SPANS and its predecessor survey, the Scottish Recreation Survey, is one of the main sources of information used by SNH and its partners to inform policy, planning and communications around outdoor recreation – and to ensure that the benefits people experience from visiting the outdoors are shared as widely as possible across society.

**Bar chart showing the benefits people derive from outdoor visits**



Source: SPANS 2017/18

So, what does the survey tell us about outdoor visitors and trends in outdoor recreation in Scotland?

Over the last few years we’ve seen a significant increase in participation in outdoor recreation. More than half of adults in Scotland now visit the outdoors on a regular, weekly basis – that’s around 400,000 more

people than in 2012. A steady growth over the last few years in the numbers of people participating in recreational walking is likely to be one of the main factors behind this increase.

Over the longer-term, there's also been an increase in the proportion of visits being taken close to home, suggesting that people are finding more opportunities to enjoy the nature on their doorstep. As a result, most outdoor visits are now made entirely on foot, with a corresponding decrease in the proportion involving the use of a car.

Scotland's natural environment provides a fantastic backdrop for a wide variety of outdoor activities, ranging from informal outings to more specialist pursuits like mountain-biking, hill-walking and water sports. Many outdoor visits are of the 'every day' variety, for example, to get some exercise or to walk a dog, and going for a walk remains the most popular outdoor activity undertaken in Scotland (84% of visits), followed by family outings (9% of visits) and cycling (7% of visits).



Children walking at Maryhill Locks Forth and Clyde Canal Glasgow (© A Coombes EpicScotland / SNH)

Most outdoor visits are 'repeat visits' to familiar places and involve a variety of settings. The countryside accounts for around half of all visits (49%) but as many as 40% of visits are now taken in town and cities, underlining the importance of providing good quality urban greenspace, paths and routes close to where people live. Local parks remain the most popular type of outdoor destination (42% of all visits), followed by woods and forests (21% of visits) and beaches (13% of visits). Parks are a particularly important resource for people living in urban areas (52% of visits) and for people living in Scotland's most deprived areas (62% of visits).

In many wild or remote areas, people expect very little in the way of visitor facilities but elsewhere, well-planned and managed outdoor places close to where people live can help make the outdoors accessible to everyone. In spite of recent increases in participation, some population groups remain under-represented in outdoor recreation. These include older adults, less affluent individuals and those in poor health or with a long-term illness or disability – people who have much to gain from the personal benefits associated with visiting the outdoors. Understanding and accommodating the needs of these groups will help ensure everyone can enjoy the benefits of connecting with nature.



**KNOW THE CODE  
BEFORE YOU GO**  
outdooraccess-scotland.com

In 2005, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act gave people in Scotland a legal right of access to the outdoors provided that they act responsibly. Access rights and responsibilities are set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Find out more at <https://www.nature.scot/>

**CAE is a leading authority on inclusive design** in the UK. As the recognised experts in the field CAE can help organisations meet their duties under the Equality Act 2010. We offer access consultancy, training, advice and guidance. Contact us on [info@cae.org.uk](mailto:info@cae.org.uk) or [www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

**One day course with CAE** - September 3 2019 - Access and way-finding in the pedestrian environment. £350+VAT. This course will help participants to recognise the key factors required to design accessible pedestrian environments and understand requirements relating to navigation, orientation and way-finding to enhance the accessibility of buildings and external environments. <https://c-js.co.uk/2VihZm4>

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**Develop your personal skills, confidence and independence** in the hills on a Hill Skills or Mountain Skills course. Courses are delivered across the UK by organisations approved by Mountain Training (the national awarding body). More info at [www.mountain-training.org/hill-and-mt-skills](http://www.mountain-training.org/hill-and-mt-skills)

**Adventure Training North East** offer courses in Outdoor First Aid, Forest School (at level 1,2 and 3) , navigation and climbing. If you are looking for a day out or to gain a qualification in any of the above please contact: [info@atne.co.uk](mailto:info@atne.co.uk)

**Access auditing and the Equality Act course** is aimed at anyone interested in taking their access knowledge to a higher level and gain an understanding of the practicalities of access improvements in light of the Equality Act 2010. Running on June 5th & 6th, September 11th & 12th and November 13th & 14th. Info at <https://cae.org.uk/our-services/training/>

**Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS)** is a nationally recognised Open College Network accreditation operated by the Access To Farms partnership, the scheme offers training for individuals who are working – or plan to work – with groups of school children, young people or clients with additional needs.  
<http://www.visitmyfarm.org/cevas-farmer-training>

**Add another string to your bow & train to be a Forest School Leader.** If you'd like to inspire Outdoor Learning, book onto our Forest School or Outdoor First Aid Training this summer. Level 1: Introductory Course, Level 3 Forest School Leader Qualification & Outdoor First Aid available. Details:  
<https://forestofavontrust.org/training-listing>

**Get qualified and gain the experience** you need to be an Outdoor Leader with our Woodland or Coastal Activity Leader Training in 7 days with Wild Things! Our courses will enable you to lead outdoor sessions working with people of any age. For more details visit <https://bit.ly/2CWcPWh>

**Dementia friendly environments** 1 day course with Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) on June 25 2019 £350+VAT. This course is relevant for anyone designing or working in settings such as extra care or sheltered housing and health or social care environments where dementia friendly design would be of benefit. <https://c-j.s.co.uk/2VYcWeR>

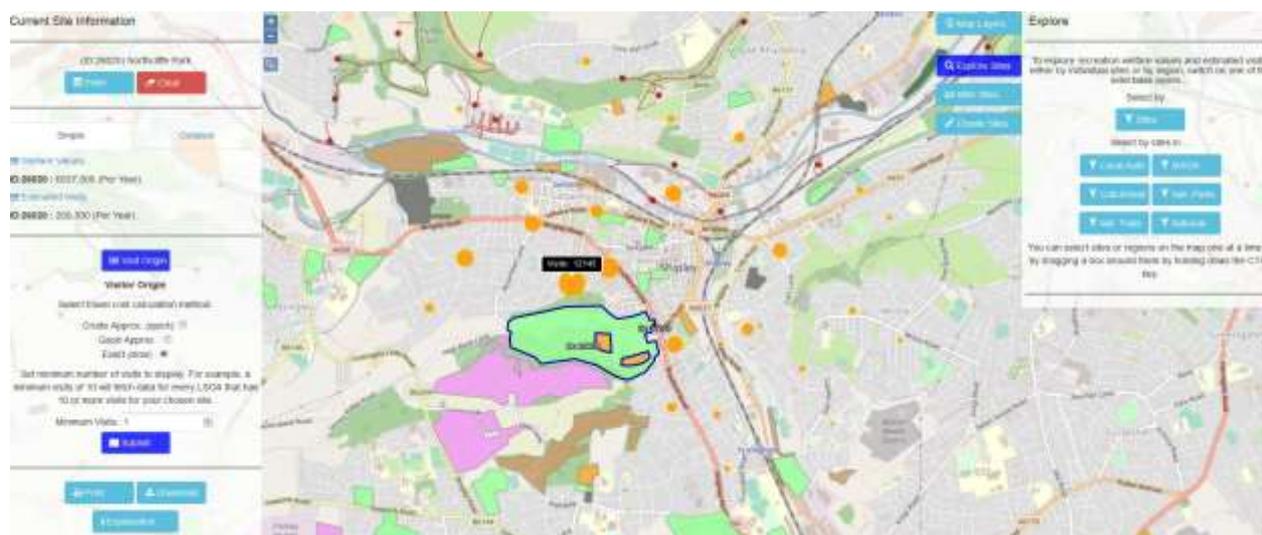


## ORVal – The Outdoor Recreation Valuation Tool

Brett Day – Professor of Environmental Economics. LEEP, Business School, University of Exeter  
Greg Smith – Research Fellow. LEEP, Business School, University of Exeter

The British love 'the outdoors'. On a sunny spring day you will find us in our hundreds of thousands setting off with the dog to the local park, pulling on our walking boots to go hiking in the countryside or packing the back of the car with a picnic for the beach. In fact MENE, the national survey carried out by Natural England each year, suggests that over 2.5 billion such trips are taken by residents of England every year.

That the countryside and its environment provide a much-loved resource is beyond dispute, though until recently making a case for enhancing that recreational asset has been hampered by an inability to accurately identify the value that the public put on such enhancements. The Outdoor Recreation Valuation (ORVal) Tool has been developed by the Land Environment, Economics and Policy (LEEP) institute at the University of Exeter in order to provide just such evidence.

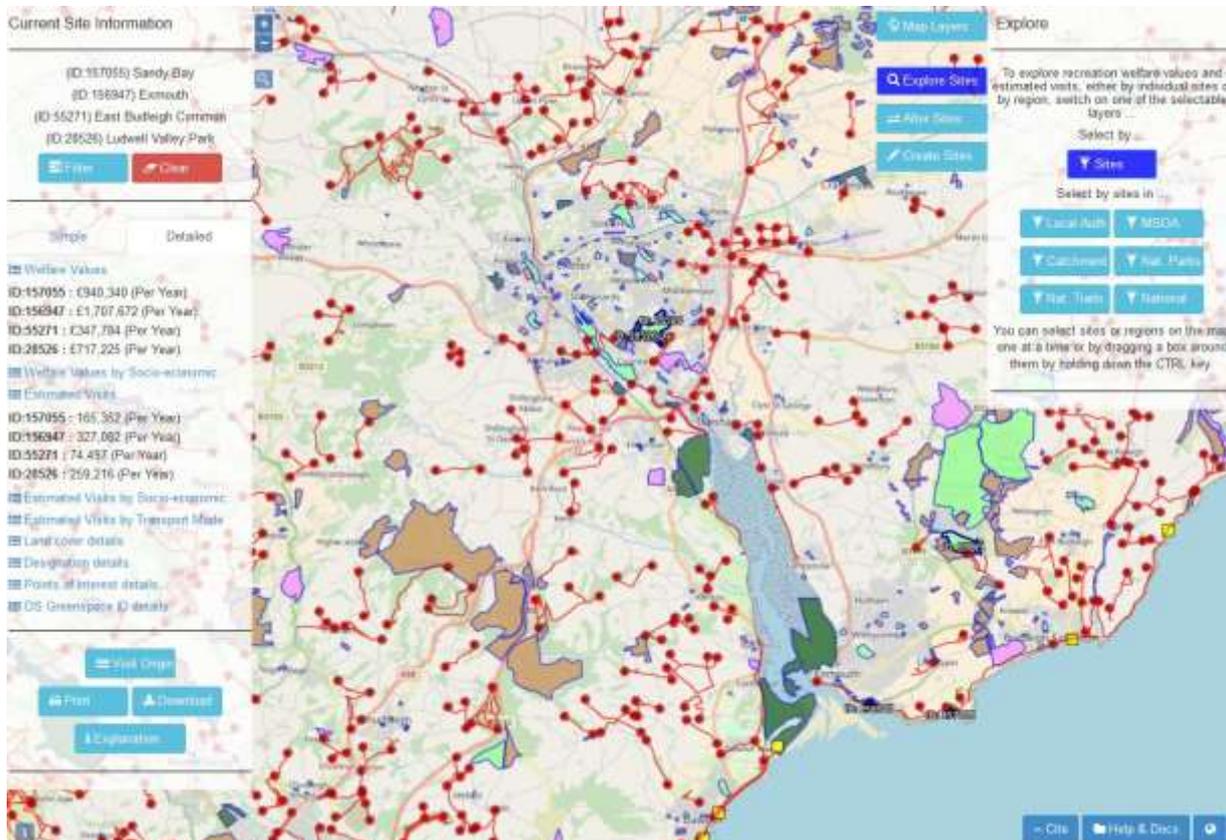


Screenshot from ORVal: <https://www.leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval/> - ORVal Visitor Origin, Shipley, Yorkshire

ORVal began life some 10 years ago as part of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment project, an ambitious cross-disciplinary initiative that attempted to understand the range of benefits provided by the environment. LEEP took on the task of assessing the benefit flows from recreation. To do that, the research team first developed a uniquely detailed map of paths, parks and beaches open to the public for recreation

and collated details of the sorts of facilities and environments that a visitor might enjoy at each location. The core data on how people used those recreational sites was drawn from the MENE survey. The MENE data allowed the research team to build a model that explained individuals' choices of recreational activity. This ORVal model predicted how frequently individuals with different characteristics might choose to take an outdoor recreation trip and then which of the various sites in their vicinity they might then visit.

Noting how useful the model's outputs might be to decision makers, in 2016 Defra began work with LEEP to develop an online tool which would allow government, businesses and the public access to the model in order to answer their own questions about values from outdoor recreation.



Screenshot from ORVal: <https://www.leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval/> - ORVal Explore, South Devon

After a number of years of hard work the ORVal Tool was released (accessed at: <https://www.leep.exeter.ac.uk/orval/>). The tool provides a simple interactive interface through which users can explore a map and examine information on the characteristics, predicted visits and values commanded by the thousands of different recreation sites across England and Wales. Perhaps more importantly, the tool allows users to examine how visits and values might change if a site's characteristics were to change. Likewise the tool can be used to predict the value of visits that might be generated by a new site established in some particular location. The tool's strength lies in the sophistication of the modelling that sits behind the website, making predictions that account for literally hundreds of factors from the age and socioeconomic composition of people living in each area of the country to the quantity and qualities of the environment available at each site.

The tool should, of course, be used with some caution. Its outputs are 'best guesses' based on a model developed from the observed behaviour of hundreds of thousands of actual visitors. The outputs are designed to be of use where detailed local information is not available. Also users should be aware that the estimates are for day trips by adults. Tourist or overnight trips are not included nor are those by children under the age of 16. All the same, ORVal is a substantial step forward in the provision of tools for the valuation of services from the environment. Indeed, HM Treasury features ORVal in their latest guidance on appraising policies and projects (the Green Book) where ORVal is explicitly recommended as being relevant "for national and local appraisals where outdoor recreational opportunities are likely to be affected."

And what is the value of outdoor recreation? Well ORVal estimates that the residents of England and Wales enjoy over £9 billion of value a year from being able to access the outdoors.

**The British Activity Providers Association** is the trade association for residential and non-residential providers and activities in the UK and Europe. Member centres all commit to abide by the BAPA Code of Practice and commit to high standards of safety and customer service. Go to [www.thebapa.org.uk](http://www.thebapa.org.uk) to find out more

**Leave No Trace Ireland** promotes responsible outdoor recreation. There are many ways to support us - become a member, get hands on as a volunteer or complete one of our training courses and become a Leave No Trace Ireland Trainer. To find out more visit [www.leavenotraceireland.org](http://www.leavenotraceireland.org) or email [info@leavenotraceireland.org](mailto:info@leavenotraceireland.org)

## Follow the Data

National Trail Officer for Peddars Way and the Norfolk Coast Path, Jack Davidson, discusses how good data gathering and interpretation can help to grow visitor numbers, whilst minimising the impact of recreation.

### Peddars Way & Norfolk Coast Path



As with any access management, managing a Trail is a balancing act. More visitors equals more benefit to the local economy – a key performance indicator of my role – but it can also mean more strain on the beautiful but sensitive sites that draw visitors to the trail in the first place. It can be argued that a long-



Cake, Coffee and Coastal Treasures (Sam Holden)

distance trail that exists as a feature on the landscape scale is in itself a mitigation against impact on any one site; it would be easy to assume that trail-users simply pass through these sites, their impact minimised by great access infrastructure that keeps them away from the most sensitive areas. However, our data shows that during peak season – predictably summer – only 15% of Norfolk Coast Path users are thru-hikers. The balance then, isn't as simple to find as it seemed. Visitor numbers are growing, especially at sites such as nature reserves, so how do we reduce the impact of this, without losing that important visitor expenditure?

We do know that the western half of the Norfolk Coast Path is more popular than its eastern half, the latter having been established in 2014 and 2016 as part of the England Coast Path, and the former being thirty-two years old this year. Counter data supports this, and it is to be expected: the infrastructure to support visits can't develop overnight, so the spread of visitor concentration will be slow. Much of the western half of the trail runs through or adjacent to the North Norfolk Coast SSSI, which hosts a number of NNRs and other designations within it, but these are largely concentrated on the coastline itself. Enter Coastal Treasures: funded by the Coastal Communities Fund, this project was designed to promote sustainable tourism and new ways of accessing the wealth of heritage interest in north west Norfolk. Supported by a high-quality guidebook, sixteen new circular walking and cycling routes have been created in the area. Whilst circular walks are not exactly innovative, I feel that the Coastal Treasures approach is. In collaboration with Norfolk Museums, the heritage features that each route visits have been exhaustively researched in order to generate a very high-quality of historic content for the book and accompanying website, stories that guide the reader through the landscape as surely as the sturdiest oak fingerpost. Crucially, we have taken pains to keep the inland portions of these walks away from other sensitive sites, whilst signposting points of interest equal to or greater than that of the coastline.

What about undersubscribed sites and trails though? The same principle applies: start with the data. To expand your audience, you first have to understand your audience. We are in the fortunate position of having seventeen data counters at locations along the Norfolk Coast Path, with seven more on Peddars Way. This alone doesn't tell us much, but placing a self-survey box next to each of these increase the insight we are given, and face-to-face surveys deepen it further still. The main goal of this data gathering has always been to evidence the economic impact of the trail, but it also helps to build a picture of the trail's demographic. To give just one example, we know that the most-represented demographic is 36-60, and that this group spends almost twice as much as 18-35s on accommodation, but only 20% more on food and drink. This is borne out in the fact that 18-35s are more likely to make a single-day visit to the trail than a multi-day visit, too. It is accepted among National Trail officers and managers that this core demographic is getting older, and that

the trails need to develop a greater appeal to a younger audience, without forgetting the users that, may well have been enjoying the trail for their whole lives.

One small way that we are doing this is by installing benches that feature phrases in Norfolk dialect, such as 'hold you hard' (meaning slow down) – the idea being, that as well as a place to rest tired legs, it's a great spot for a #peddarsway or #norfolkcoastpath photo to share on Instagram or twitter: #freetargetedpromotion.

Far from sitting down, a key group within the younger demographic is trail runners. The sport is growing in popularity, and as a relatively low-impact user-group we are keen to encourage their use of the trail. Perhaps best for access managers is the fact that they require no infrastructure that isn't already in place for walkers. As with long-distance walkers, coffee and cake is a popular way to end a run, meaning that they're also good for trail-adjacent SMEs. On our social media outlets, we recently covered two runners setting a new Fastest Known Time for the Norfolk Coast Path (all 84 miles in 21 hours, 5 minutes!) and this was tremendously popular, particularly on Instagram where we increased our number of followers by around 8% within 24 hours.



**With its 500,000 visitors worth approximately £12million to Norfolk's economy annually, the Norfolk Coast Path is also quite pretty (Sam Holden)**

This is just a tiny portion of the many ways we use data interpretation to inform our management of the trail. At the time of writing, we are rolling out new counters on the Coastal Treasures circular walks, to be accompanied by a scheme of surveys that we hope will discern the success of moving visitors inland, as well as continuing to gather data on general use of the National Trails, where we hope to see growth in the numbers of younger trail users.

Email: [jack.davidson@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:jack.davidson@norfolk.gov.uk)

Website: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/coastaltreasures](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/coastaltreasures) or [www.nationaltrail.co.uk/peddars-way-and-norfolk-coast-path](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/peddars-way-and-norfolk-coast-path)

### **Paths for All: Dementia and the Outdoors Guidance note**

Paths for All's vision is for a happier, healthier Scotland where physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all. We want to ensure that everyone living with dementia can enjoy the benefits of walking, being outdoors and connecting with nature.

Our research has shown that spending time outside can provide many benefits for people living with dementia.

That's why we have been looking at how our paths and walking environments can be more welcoming to people living with dementia.

For this to happen we have been working to raise awareness of the challenges and issues faced by people with dementia in accessing outdoor spaces and developed training, resources and support for organisations and groups involved in planning, designing and maintaining paths and outdoor environments.

We have produced a Dementia and the Outdoors Guidance Note to share advice on what considerations to make when creating outdoor spaces. Read <https://c-js.co.uk/2WB0GOq>

It is intended as a guide for those working to improve accessibility to different types of greenspace, such as parks, gardens and woodlands that are already established or still at the planning stage.

If you have any questions or queries, please email [Dementiafriendly@pathsforall.org.uk](mailto:Dementiafriendly@pathsforall.org.uk)

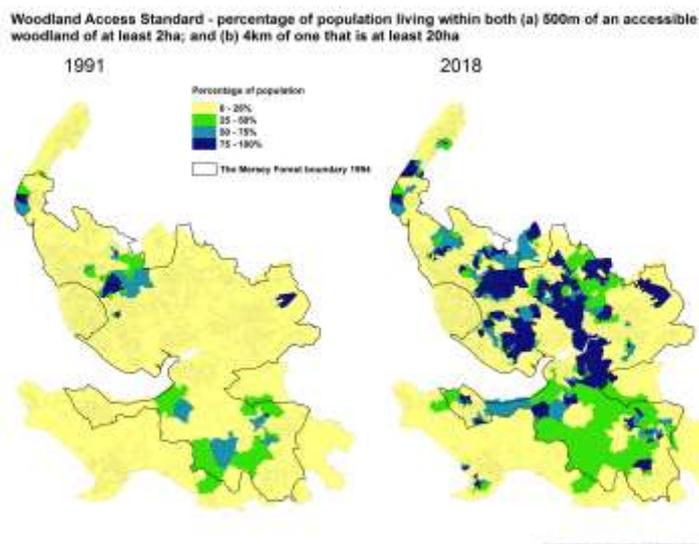


**We provide all types of environmental** and heritage interpretation including planning, trails, signage, events and training. We have over 14 years experience with national parks, country parks, Woodland Trust, National Trust, local authorities and NGOs. Please get in touch for a chat or a quote [www.inheritage.co.uk](http://www.inheritage.co.uk) [bill@inheritage.co.uk](mailto:bill@inheritage.co.uk)  
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## The growing value of England's urban woodlands

England's community forestry movement kicked off in the 1990s – which means many woodlands are now maturing and coming into their own as venues for recreation, habitats for wildlife and as drivers of tourism and economic growth.



(The Mersey Forest)

One of those original community forests, The



**THE MERSEY FOREST**  
more from trees

Mersey Forest Partnership, has worked closely with local people since 1991 to create new areas of accessible woodland close to where they live, reclaiming derelict land or making use of underused land. More than 9 million trees have been planted in the past 25 years, creating thousands of hectares of new woodland. The area of woodland has increased by close to 75%, bucking the national trend.

Paul Nolan, Director of The Mersey Forest said, "We have dramatically increased the availability of accessible woodland in hundreds of urban sites across Merseyside and north Cheshire over the past 25 years.

"Based on the Woodland Trust's Woodland Access standard there is clearly a large increase in woodlands close to the places people live. We know from surveys that 65% of people close to these new woodlands are using them for recreation at least once a month."

### Boosting health and wellbeing

Increasing opportunities for access to and recreation within woodlands is especially important near to where people live and work. It's these local woodlands and green spaces that can have the biggest impact on people's health and wellbeing. Many people live a long distance from National Parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty but can benefit from a well planned local green infrastructure that brings the countryside into town.

The positive effect of nature and a green environment on health is now well documented. The maturing woodlands of The Mersey Forest are a great resource for health – the task now is to engage more people with their local woodlands and provide more recreational opportunities. The



Northwich Woodlands ©McCoy Wynne for The Mersey Forest

Mersey Forest's 'Natural Health Service' is providing opportunities for people to get involved in activities such as walking, conservation work and mindfulness in their local woodlands.

Other sites are becoming venues for activities such as parkruns, with local 'Friends of groups' also organising regular events. The annual 'Walk in the Woods' month in May is also used to promote local woodland walks.

### Attracting tourism and transforming image

In parts of The Mersey Forest area the changes to the landscape have been dramatic. In particular, the beautiful Northwich woodlands, covering a large area once scarred by salt and chemical industries, are now recognised as one of the Cheshire town's key assets in attracting visitors. The extensive woodland walking and cycle routes complement and connect the waterways of the River Weaver and the Trent and Mersey canal, providing a landscape where recently established tourist attractions of the Anderton Boat Lift and the Lion Salt Works can thrive.



**Dream, Bold Forest Park, St Helens**  
©McCoy Wynne for The Mersey Forest

Bold Forest Park, a collection of interlinked woodlands south of St Helens are also changing the image of the town and attracting new visitors, especially to the 'Dream' sculpture that dominates the local landscape. The 'grim up north' stereotypes are finally beginning to fade as former

coalfields burst into new life as recreational and environmental hubs.

### The Northern Forest and the future

The greening of the north has only just begun. The Northern Forest is a new 25-year vision to plant 50 million trees across the North of England, stretching from Liverpool to Hull with the M62 as its spine. Working with the Woodland Trust, five Community Forests (The Mersey Forest, City of Trees, HEYwoods, The White Rose Forest and the South Yorkshire Forest) will play a key role in planning and delivering this ambitious plan to reforest the area.

It's ambitious – but also essential. There is an urgent need to plant more trees. The IPCC report on Climate Change in October 2018 highlighted the need to plant billions more and make some hard choices globally about how land is used.

The target of 50 million trees equates to trebling the current rate of planting and will create a productive forest across the Northern Powerhouse area that will provide a range of social, economic and environmental benefits.

In thirty years time that means many more northern communities will be able to enjoy the benefits of local woodlands. Anticipated hotter summers are likely to make outdoors recreation and tourism increasingly desirable – and mature trees will be highly valued for their shading and cooling effect. Urban areas that plant trees now will reap the rewards in decades to come.



**The Northern Forest**

You can find out more about The Mersey Forest at [www.merseyforest.org.uk](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk).

The **European Outdoor Conservation Association** is a conservation charity set up to raise money from the European outdoor industry to put into conservation projects around the world. It is a way for the whole industry to work together to give back to the environment it values and depends on for its livelihood.



With a current focus on tackling plastic pollution in wild habitats, EOCA will work with its members and the European outdoor industry to reduce their use of everyday single use plastics, whilst also raising awareness through the organisation of clean ups to educate people on how to stop plastic waste from getting into wild habitats from the summits of mountains to the depths of the oceans.

The headline target is that EOCA and its members will collectively clear 3000km of habitat, trail and beach of plastic waste and pollution over the next 2 years. That is the distance from the Mediterranean coast to Lapland! With this in mind EOCA has launched a public fundraiser to fund a project across Europe which will raise awareness and educate thousands of people through waste collection and clean-up events. To donate, or to find out about an event near you to get involved in, please look at [www.outdoorconservation.eu](http://www.outdoorconservation.eu)

**Everyone deserves the opportunity** to experience the wonders of England and Wales' National Parks. But too many face barriers – including those who stand to benefit most. Campaign for National Parks is the only independent national charity dedicated to all the National Parks in England and Wales. Working hard to make the Parks accessible for everyone. [www.cnp.org.uk](http://www.cnp.org.uk)



The Outdoor Recreation Network is pleased to announce that booking is now open for its upcoming **"Accessibility in the Outdoors"** seminar and site visit on Wednesday 19th June 2019. Hosted by Natural England.

Throughout the day you will hear from key policy makers, stakeholders and industry experts. This seminar also includes a site visit to the National Land Access Centre in Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve. This will include a number of on-site demonstrations led by Natural England, British Horse Society and Forestry England as well as an opportunity to meet manufacturers.

Spaces are limited and expected to fill up fast as this topic is of real interest to many. Tickets cost £70pp and can be booked online via Eventbrite: <http://bit.ly/2Ypcmo7>



## How to Reverse Engineer the Building Blocks to a Resilient and Healthy Outdoor Recreation Industry

An opinion piece from Rob Sayers, Owner and Editor, Active Outdoors



You want to get more people outdoors? Marketing alone won't help you. Somehow you need to drive the need where it is seen as desirable, accessible and a rewarding experience. But how do you bridge the gap between those new customers and returning customers? Getting them to the mountains is not the whole answer.

### Bring the Mountains to the People and Make it the Easiest Choice

Modern society loves convenience and value for money. People inherently take the path of least resistance. Why work things out for yourself when you can ask someone or look it up online? If the value of the end goal is not clear, why bother? The effort people are willing to make depends on knowing what the reward is. Better Technology and shopping habits have made it so easy to get things delivered to your doorstep. Except for the great outdoors. To experience the mountains you have to travel, pay, and have the knowledge, skills and inclination to go there. All very well for existing outdoor enthusiasts, but it is a very daunting experience for newcomers. Why spend your hard earned cash on the unknown? What about reaching those who have never been before? The travel industry currently preaches to the converted. Websites give details of holidays for those who know what they want. What is your business doing to reach those who know nothing about the things you do?

### Outdoor Experiences on the Doorstep

Over the years some interesting habits have been observed that are associated with recreation and outdoor leisure. People want:

- to feel good about themselves
- health and wellbeing
- convenience
- to be social
- food and drink
- fun
- personal accomplishment
- to do or try something interesting

### Spreading the Resources to Spread the Load

An holistic systems approach is needed to build the outdoor recreation economy, businesses commonly use the approach of find a need, build it, market it and the people will come. Unfortunately the internet is disruptive to traditional business that new ways of thinking are required to not only stay ahead of the game but to also build resilience into the industry. If the mountains are too much of a distant concept for your potential customers, how can you bridge that divide to bring the appeal and experience closer?

The outdoor recreation industry prides itself on trying to get people out of the towns and cities and into the countryside to enjoy leisure activities. However, the types of people they wish to target do not necessarily have the means or motivation to visit the depths of the countryside. Also, the pressure this exerts on the rural infrastructure and natural environment is not sustainable. So why not bring outdoor recreation to where the people are?

If you have ever visited Go Ape or a Forestry Commission site, you will find trailhead shops that rent and sell outdoor gear for cyclists, hikers and casual weekenders. In addition to the compulsory teashop, cafe or restaurant, these shops provide visitors with a single choice of purchase for the right here and now. I have seen people spend huge amounts of money on the latest gear just because they want to have it there and then and experience some outdoor fun. Why didn't they plan ahead? The thing is that most people will buy due to convenience or as a spontaneous purchase.

Why not exploit the societal behaviour by providing that convenience in the locations where people are most in need of those healthy recreational options? Develop green spaces and facilities in the centre of towns and cities and provide trail head shops and services to enable casual visitors to be more active outdoors. At the same time give people the opportunities to spend more time socially being active recreationally.

I think that if a study is carried out to compare the high streets that are still thriving and those that are not, they will observe that the ones that thrive have the following:

1. Good quality places to eat and drink socially
2. Green spaces nearby such as parks, playgrounds, golf courses, tennis courts, sports pitches and multi-use games areas.
3. Leisure centres, gyms and other indoor recreational spaces
4. Easy access via cars and public transport
5. Shops providing recreational goods and gear
6. Wifi
7. Events
8. Good street lighting
9. A safe environment
10. Places to sit, spectate, relax and read.

If you compare this with what Center Parcs has to offer, you will find that it is very similar in how it has been set up. The focal recreational hub also has places to socialise, eat and drink. There are plenty of places for those of all ages who want to be a part of the social scene but don't necessarily want to actively join in. This is ideal for grandparents and those less able. It allows people of all ages to feel a part of the activity.

Events are also a key part of the recreational hub. Organised events and activities whether they are activities such as parkrun, craft days or nature watches, all the way up to outdoor cinema screenings, concerts, theatre and fireworks.

So, through a bit of urban design, local councils can have a huge impact on the Nation's health, wellbeing and prosperity. This will impact the burden on the National Health Service, improve the mental health of the population, improve the economy, and bring the heart back to the community. This will see a rise in people spending time together for real, and could help to reduce the screen time addiction society is succumbing to.

Once the population experiences the pleasure and benefits of being active outdoors in their local community, the outdoor leisure and travel industries will see an upturn in the number of people wanting to explore further afield and experience the adventures to be had around the world.

### So What Can the Recreation, Travel and Tourist Industry do?

The key thing is to invest in recreation in the urban communities where your target customer base is. Convert your customer base where they live and make sure your brand is associated with the resources and facilities you are providing. One way is to sponsor local council recreation projects. Running events, mountain biking trails, sports facilities, city parks and events are all ways to get your brand in front of your potential customers. UK outdoor research has shown that word of mouth and personal recommendations are the best way to attract new customers. Give them a taster of what you have to offer and move them in the right direction. Play for the long game, provide unique outstanding experiences that are value for money, but be attentive to changing trends and a resilient business will be yours.

You can find plenty more inspiration on how to get people active outdoors on the Active Outdoors blog at <https://www.activeoutdoors.info>

**ACE - Enhance people's lives facilitating** physical and emotional wellbeing through adventure. Based in Moray by the River Findhorn, Scotland we offer white water rafting, river tubing, canyoning, canoeing, paintball & disc golf. A unique camping experience in birch woodland - bell tents and shepherd huts. [www.aceadventures.co.uk](http://www.aceadventures.co.uk)

**British Exploring Society** is a youth development charity that believes challenging experiences can change and empower the lives of young people. Leading with us is a chance to work with young people on expeditions to remote locations where they face challenges, gain skills and learn about themselves. [www.britishexploring.org](http://www.britishexploring.org)

**Adventure Vertical offer abseiling**, canyoning, caving, mountain walking & rock climbing. [info@adventurevertical.co.uk](mailto:info@adventurevertical.co.uk) 07849 398288. Go Cave – caving & mining exploration. [www.gocave.com](http://www.gocave.com)

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The CJS Team would like to thank everyone who has contributed adverts, articles and information for this CJS Focus publication.

Next edition will feature Countryside Management, published 23 September 2019

A4 sides this CJS Focus: 21 - Details believed correct but given without prejudice, Ends.