



Sport England Consultation

Response by National Parks England

February 2016

Introduction

National Parks England (NPE) supports policy and practice by providing a collective voice for the nine English National Park Authorities and the Broads Authority. It is governed by the Chairs of the ten Authorities. This response represents the collective view of officers who are working within policies established by the National Park Authorities (NPAs) and follows internal consultation amongst the All Parks Access Officers Workgroup.

Our founding legislation, the *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949* includes two purposes for National Parks, the second of which is to '*promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks by the public*'. The special qualities of National Parks are many and diverse including their wide open spaces, relative wildness and tranquillity and natural beauty. The outstanding opportunities for all forms of outdoor recreation are an important element of why National Parks exist and what they have to offer the nation.

National Parks cover almost 10% of England and over 50% of the population are within an hour's travel of a National Park. English National Parks are home to more than 300,000 people and collectively account for over a 90 million visitors a year. Many are involved in a range of activities including walking, cycling, horse riding, climbing, water sports, air-sports and events as well as simply 'getting away from it all'.

National Parks are a resource for all to benefit from escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection in high quality landscapes, attracting people from all ages and walks of life. They help to boost confidence and support behavioural change while delivering wider social and economic benefits and developing community cohesion between rural and urban communities.

As well as providing infrastructure and information, the National Parks can provide inspiration for the wider public about the benefits of physical activity and can help communicate messages that encourage greater take up of activities.

QUESTION 1: TACKLING INACTIVITY

Within the new Government strategy there is a clear statement that "We (Government) will distribute funding to focus on those people who tend not take part in sport as much, including women and girls, disabled people, those in lower socio-economic groups and older people". With this recommendation in mind, please provide your views on the following questions:

Which particular audiences should Sport England focus upon?

Focus on those who tend not to take part in sport and outdoor activities regularly.

What is the best way to engage with these audiences?

Consider the target audiences and age groups. Weave activity into daily routines. National Parks can inspire and offer opportunities to people visiting as well as those living within and near to the NPs. Individuals need the right information at the right time in the right format together with investment in appropriate facilities at sites eg car parks, bike hire, information

boards so the venue where they choose to go is 'welcoming' and/or 'packaged' as appropriate to make undertaking a chosen activity easy. They may also require guided or led experiences to begin with but these should be designed so that people are supported towards being able to undertake activities independently.

Do you have experience of working with these audience groups? If yes, please provide practical examples of where and how you have been successful.

National Park Authorities have considerable experience of working successfully with the general public to increase engagement and activity as this meets our purpose to '*promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Parks by the public*' and forms part of our core activities. We also want to widen participation in outdoor activity and access to the natural environment to as many people as possible. Since 2001 we have worked successfully with under-represented groups including young people, BME communities and deprived urban communities through the Mosaic project with Campaign for National Parks, YHA and other partners (Details of all Mosaic programmes and their outcomes can be found at <http://www.cnp.org.uk/sector/mosaic>. This has developed a 'community champion' approach to bringing in people who would not traditionally visit national parks

In order to address challenges and barriers to physical access for the less able National Park Authorities and our partners have invested in Miles without Stiles (access for the less mobile) schemes across the National Parks, backed up by leaflets, videos and downloadable maps to inspire people and outreach and taster events to show what is available and encourage uptake Both the Yorkshire Dales and Peak District National Parks have worked with Experience Community to offer challenging disabled access using mountain trikes. Cycle hire centres in the Peak District have a range of adapted bikes and play an important role in enabling inclusive cycling. Dartmoor offer a tramper hire scheme and ranger guided tramper 'walks' which are very popular. PEDALL New Forest provides a range of bicycles adapted for different users including hand-cranked cycles and bikes where a wheelchair can be attached to the front and the carer/companion pedal at the back. These bikes can be hired individually or for guided group events.

NPAs also have experience of promoting and delivering the benefits of outdoor activity for health and wellbeing. Using our experience of leading activities and events, NPAs have set up and participated in several health projects which have shown good outcomes. NPAs have supported the national Health Walks programme with some linking to referrals from GPs. Monitoring from other projects such as Moor Men's Health on Dartmoor and Moor to Enjoy on Exmoor showed improvements in both physical and mental wellbeing of the participants and uptake of regular self-delivered activity post project.

Our focus for outreach work is mainly on resident and nearby communities but does include work with visitors. Evidence from the monitoring of the initial Pedal Peak District project which offered cycle training demonstrated large numbers of new and returning cyclists, often from less represented groups, both resident and visitor.

Some National Park Authorities have experience of working with ex-offenders delivering training and rehabilitation. The benefits of such schemes are demonstrated by the award winning Fit For Work scheme delivered by the Peak District NPA in partnership with The Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland Community Rehabilitation Company(<http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/learning-about/news/current-news/volunteer-project-wins-top-award>)

QUESTION 2: INVESTMENT APPROACH

Sporting Future states that "All new Government funding for sport and physical activity will go to organisations which can best demonstrate that they will deliver some or all of the five outcomes in this strategy" This means that Sport England will need to decide what evidence of ability to deliver it should require from the organisations it funds, bearing in mind the Key Performance Indicators and

strategic outcomes in the new Government strategy. What evidence do you think Sport England should expect from:

Organisations that have regularly received long term Sport England investment (2-4 years)?

- Evidence of increasing participation in target groups with case studies – including evidence of independent activity continuing after project intervention.
- Evidence of physical and/or mental wellbeing improvements.
- Evidence that the participation has been sustained in the longer term.

Organisations that are applying for investment from Sport England for the first time?

- Evidence of ability to reach target groups and to deliver positive outcomes with those groups
- Evidence of the ability to create appealing infrastructure, provide suitable led experiences and/or market these products to the target groups
- Evidence of increasing participation in target groups with case studies.
- Evidence of physical and/or mental wellbeing improvements

Small organisations or projects seeking small grant opportunities?

- Evidence of increasing participation in target groups with case studies.
- Evidence of physical and/or mental wellbeing improvements
- Evidence of ability to work in partnership and to reach new audiences – evidence of their intention to broaden their appeal and reach.

QUESTION 3: 5-14 YEAR OLDS NOW WITHIN SPORT ENGLAND'S REMIT

Sport England's remit has been extended with a responsibility for sport and physical activity now being for children aged 5 years and upwards outside of school. The Department for Education will remain responsible for the delivery of physical activity and sport during curriculum time.

With an extended remit but no additional funding available for Sport England, what should the priorities be for Sport England working with children aged 5-14?

Focus on giving children and young people the skills and confidence so they can undertake a range of outdoor activities themselves with minimal support. Promote at schools as a starting point. National Park Authorities do this through our existing education programmes but aim to do more and give opportunities to many more children.

Recognise the importance of informal activities and take the opportunity to work with partners in developing Wild Play and family activities. Provide opportunities for wild play and outdoor activities through accessible and supportive events for families, schools and groups. Provide taster sessions and pointers to clubs, facilities and opportunities for independent activity i.e. family friendly walks, cycle routes, runs, etc to encourage take up of regular activity.

The Go Dales project in the Yorkshire Dales National Park helped young people attain skills and to gain basic qualifications in conjunction with clubs so they could organise and undertake activities under their own steam (ie not as a one-off). Participants were also introduced to local outdoor activity clubs to encourage continued participation and progression in an activity. Resources required include clubs, volunteers and individuals willing to facilitate, enable and motivate. Clubs should be supported so that they are geared up to take young people.

We are looking for new ways to provide opportunities and inspiration to young people. For example, National Parks England is in discussions with the National Citizen Service about developing a strategic partnership with them. The first week of their programme is themed around 'adventure', which would provide an opportunity for young people to get more active/inspired.

QUESTION 4: GOVERNANCE STANDARDS FOR SPORT SECTOR

The Government strategy states:

“UK Sport and Sport England will, along with the other Home Nations’ Sports Councils, agree a new UK Sports Code of Governance by September 2016, the equivalent of the Financial Reporting Council’s UK Corporate Governance Code”

“This new UK Sports Governance will be mandatory for all sports bodies seeking public funding in the next funding period. Organisations that do not meet the code will not be eligible for public funding”

Agreeing the Governance Code and requiring grant recipients to comply with it will therefore be an important part of Sport England’s work in future. From your own organisation’s perspective:

What are the minimum governance standards that you would expect any sports body to achieve?

We would expect minimum requirements for governance to ensure financial probity, organisational stability and best practice in dealing with volunteers (including CRB checks, etc). However, given the wider remit that now covers outdoor recreation we would ask that standards are reviewed to ensure that they do not excluded organisations or groups who are not traditional seen as sport bodies but who could help deliver the new Sport Strategy such as National Park Authorities, the Ramblers, the YHA or community walking groups.

How might Sport England help organisations to achieve any required standards?

Are you aware of any other sources of support or expertise to help organisations improve their governance?

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QUESTION 5: CAMPAIGNING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Government has recognised that the success of the new sport strategy will be significantly aided by the creation of both campaigns, such as This Girl Can, and overarching messages that the sector can use to help change behaviours in targeted audiences. Sport England along with Public Health England has been tasked with leading “message development and marketing activity to create a compelling environment that encourages everybody, especially people in under-represented groups, to meet the Chief Medical Officers’ (CMO) guidelines on physical activity”

IF HOVER OVER CMO GUIDELINES DEFINITION SHOULD BE: “Over a week, activity should add up to at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity in bouts of 10 minutes or more – one way to approach this is to do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week.”

What approach do you think would be most effective in terms of creating a campaign to encourage people to meet the CMO’s physical activity guidelines?

The importance of the 3 Ps (Place, People, and Purpose) in securing sustained benefits in behaviour change is well established. It helps to be in inspiring places (like National Park landscapes); to undertake an activity with other people; and to have a sense of purpose of why you are doing it (whether it is volunteering to build a bridge, or walking to a particular point, riding for the first time or taking on a triathlon). Doing this in a fun environment is key for motivation too – and this is what we seek to achieve in National Parks.

It is vital to connect and engage people with the natural environment to increase the benefits of sport and recreation. We work together with a range of partners to remove barriers in confidence, motivation, transport, information/knowledge and cost. Long term vision and investment is needed to make a real and sustained difference.

National Parks England is in discussion with Public Health England about how to promote the access to the natural environment as a primary health intervention. We would be interested in tripartite discussions on this with Sport England and Public Health England in order to progress this issue.

QUESTION 6: INCREASING THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE VOLUNTEERING IN SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

A key element of the Government's new strategy is to require Sport England to invest in and subsequently deliver upon the following key performance indicators:

- Increase in the numbers of people of volunteering in sport at least twice a year
- The demographics of volunteers in sport to become more representative of society as a whole.

What are the key interventions you think would increase both the number and diversity of new volunteers?

National Parks England welcome the recognition of outdoor recreation in the Sport Strategy. The widening of the definition of sport to include walking and other outdoor activities will increase the actual and potential number of volunteers. It will help by providing an entry level activity for many people and has the potential to attract people who might be deterred by the traditional view of 'sport'. Increasing activity levels and commitment of volunteers to suit their needs and lifestyles is key to both increasing activity levels and volunteering levels. Our efforts are focussed on getting people active outdoors, including through volunteering, with all the benefits for physical and mental wellbeing that can bring.

Structures and resources to support volunteering including training and coaching both at the start and on an ongoing basis. Treat volunteers as a valuable asset to be developed, not just free labour!

In our experience, targeted programmes working with underrepresented groups work well. We would be happy to share our experiences of working with the Mosaic programme (see Q1 above) to bring more people from BME communities and young people into National Parks.

The ability to tailor your volunteering to fit in with your life is important. Organisers should provide opportunities for regular and one-off and drop-in volunteering. Use on-line diary tools and other new techniques to enable volunteers to schedule sessions and help organisers plan ahead. Use of social media to engage with, organise and celebrate volunteers can be valuable.

Who are the key partners, (within or outside the sporting sector) Sport England could work with to deliver these targets?

National Park Authorities have experience of working with key partners such as the National Trust, Youth Hostels Association, a range of NGOs, businesses and community groups as well as landowners and land managers. NPA's also have wide experience in working with volunteers and working with underrepresented groups (see question 1). National Parks contain the country's premier resource for walking, cycling and other outdoor activities and have 90 million visitors a year. Over 50% of the population are within one hour of a national park. We are happy to share our experience and interested in exploring opportunities for new delivery programmes. We would welcome the opportunity to work with Sport England to deliver the objectives of the Sport Strategy.

QUESTION 7: FURTHER QUESTIONS

As explained in the opening paragraphs of this consultation, the questions above are focussed on limited number of issues.

If there are other issues or areas you wish to comment upon, please do so below:

Investment and funding to manage, maintain and improve recreational opportunities including the infrastructure of public rights of way and access land and to provide for new access is crucial to encourage and maintain activity such as walking, running, riding and cycling.