

Wandering in the Woods

Enabling people living with dementia to benefit from visiting woodlands

VARIOUS LOCATIONS
AROUND THE UK



Wood if we Could

Summary

With the increase in human life spans, the demands of caring for large numbers of people with dementia have become more acute. It is important that people, and those who care for them, can live well with dementia. Anecdotally the therapeutic value of nature for people with this condition has been recognised, but several organisations have sought to gather evidence to give this credence.

In February 2011 Dementia Adventure published a report entitled "Living with dementia and connecting with nature – looking back and stepping forwards, exploring the benefits of green exercise for people living with dementia". This report was followed up through the VisitWoods pilot project undertaken together with the Woodland Trust and care home organisations. The evidence gathered has showed that when they can get out into woodland there are significant potential physical, social and emotional benefits for people living with dementia in care settings.

Outcomes

Raised awareness of the needs of people living with dementia

- Increased confidence of care home staff, carers and family members of the potential benefits of visits to the outdoors
- Connected local care home staff with environmental organisations
- Won a prize for the most innovative partnership at the 2013 Scottish Dementia Awards
- Some 4,000 copies of the advice booklet "Wood if we Could" report printed and distributed.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

In 2011 the Woodland Trust, a UK woodland conservation charity, with funding from a range of sources, established the VisitWoods initiative, which aimed to promote visits to woods. A key part of this project was to promote the health and social benefits of spending time in nature to under-represented groups including older people.

People living with dementia in care settings could perhaps be one of the groups in our society most in need of what woodland offers, namely space for stimulation, contemplation and restoration. Working with Dementia

Adventure, a social enterprise company, research and pilot activities resulted in the production of an advisory resource "Wood if we Could".

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Recognising that older people, people living with dementia and disabled people are often excluded from participating in and enjoying outdoor activity, the project looked at the currently limited research into the physical, social and emotional benefits that being active out in nature can bring. The research review was supplemented by a series of managed visits to woodland settings with dementia sufferers living in care homes, and associated before and after surveys of participants.

The project's findings indicated that there are potentially large cost-benefits, primarily from using the outdoors as a way of helping to reduce use of anti-psychotic medication

and reducing the frequency and severity of anxiety, apathy, anger and depression which all too commonly predominate in long term care settings.

The advisory resource provides practical advice for people working with or caring for these social groups on how to plan and manage visits to the outdoors. It also provides helpful suggestions on how to extend the memories of a visit to the outdoors by sharing photographs or using the trip to inspire artwork by the group or individuals. Advice is also given on how to make publically accessible nature sites more dementia friendly.



Helpful suggestions on how to extend the memories of a visit to the outdoors

POSTSCRIPT

The agency responsible for nature conservation in England, Natural England, conducted a comprehensive literature review "Greening Dementia", published in 2013:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6578292471627776>

The Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has started a new project called Mindscape that works with people with dementia; its progress can be followed on the Mindscape page:

<http://www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/index.php/mindscape/>



Date of Publication: June 2014

Case studies published with assistance from


Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdair air fad airson Alba air fad



METSÄHALLITUS



Key messages

- People living with dementia are often excluded from regular connection with nature.
- Those who care for people living with dementia can also benefit greatly from being active in the outdoors.
- Barriers to accessing woodlands and other natural places need to be addressed to help this growing group in society to enjoy being in nature and benefit, physically, socially or emotionally, from what that contact can bring.
- Although the idea of connecting with nature is well-received in principle, there are practical challenges once people sign up; many of these are addressed by the resource "Wood if we Could".

FURTHER INFORMATION

Working with people with dementia in nature is still a relatively new field of work and organisations are working to build an evidence base.

Details of the Wandering in the Woods pilot project can be found at: http://www.dementiaadventure.co.uk/research/visit_woods, while the advisory booklet "Wood if we Could" can be found at <http://www.dementiaadventure.co.uk/uploads/Wood%20if%20we%20could%20final%20version.pdf>.

The research report on green exercise undertaken by Dementia Adventure can be found at:

<http://www.dementiaadventure.co.uk/uploads/green-exercise-and-dementia-neil-mapes-february-2011.pdf>



The Health Challenge and a Label for
Gîtes de France:

Fitness, Nature & Well-being

REGIONAL NATURE PARKS
OF THE NORD
PAS DE CALAIS:
AVESNOIS,
CAPS ET MARAIS D'OPALE,
SCARPE-ESCAUT

FRANCE



**Bringing nature and sport together
to counter sedentary lifestyles**

Summary

Bringing nature and sport together to counter sedentary lifestyles, supported by online logbooks.

The regional nature parks of the Nord Pas de Calais are working on a collaborative project in the field of outdoor sport and health, together with the Regional Institute for Well-being, Medicine and Sport (IRBMS), the Mutualité Française (Health Insurance Fund) and Gîtes de France.

It involves countering the trend towards sedentary lifestyles and sets a range of challenges for people to undertake a variety of physical activities in the natural environments of the parks.

An internet site supplements the support available to participants.

Outcomes

The project is in its early stages so it's too early to present concrete results. Nonetheless the Health Challenge project is in itself the outcome of the initial meetings. The aim is to reach as many of the inhabitants of the Nord-Pas de Calais region who would benefit as possible.

- Objectives of the project are:
- to create a nature-health challenge to fight the increasing prevalence of sedentary lifestyles and to increase awareness of people's need for physical activity;
- to engage local authorities (communes) in the park;
- to link with sports bodies;
- to raise awareness among health professionals;
- to tailor the idea locally, for example Avesnois is looking at potential links with retirement homes to foster intergenerational links for health (Avesnois).

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

This “Parks, Nature, Sports and Health” initiative began in 2013 in order to examine the benefits of doing outdoor sports, and was led by the association Espaces Naturels Régionaux (ENRx), which brings together the three regional nature parks of the Nord Pas de Calais region in northern France.

Two meetings, the first in June and the second in November 2013, brought together a wide range of interested organisations from the environmental, sport, health and tourism sectors, including the three parks, Gîtes de France, the Regional Institute of Medical Well-being and Sport Health (IRBMS), the Regional Cardiological Federation, the Walkers Federation, the League against Cancer, tourist offices and thermal spas.

The aim of the first meeting was for participants to share, discover and acquire knowledge from each other, whilst the focus of the second was to build shared projects. Here the participants concentrated on fitness and the increasingly sedentary character of people's lives. With around one in two people in the Nord Pas de Calais overweight there was an emphasis on the benefits of exercise, the need for tools to measure fitness, and the possibilities for creating fitness ambassadors and fitness trails.



The Health Challenge

In 2014 the three parks are launching “The Health Challenge” (défi santé), together with the IRBMS and the Mutualité Française, to counter the trend towards sedentary lifestyles and the negative impact this has on health.

The health challenge consists of:

- A daily objective of 10,000 steps or three lots of 10 minutes of moderately intense activity. This could include hiking or Nordic walking.
- Defining the location of the challenge. Existing circular hiking trails of 1km, 2km, 3km and 6km are being adapted to highlight the well-being theme.
- A preventive approach of recreational sport while discovering nature. The use of pedometers and stopping points with interesting information on health, culture or gastronomy is also foreseen.

- Support from an internet site to accompany participants, who will have their own individual log book. Guides, employed by the parks, will also be on hand to help too.

The internet is particularly important in providing support and modes of evaluation. The unit for measuring activity will be the step, but each activity will be convertible to allow for cycling, canoeing, sea-walking (Longecôte) and other sporting challenges.

The challenge is being jointly led with Gîtes de France, with whom ENRx and the three parks are working on the development of a label to promote fitness, well-being and nature on the Gîte.

The Ministries of Sport and of Health are supporting the work of this initiative to ensure sustainability of the project and its activities.



Key messages

A new approach with the objective of enabling people to discover nature and biodiversity through physical activity is definitely a worthwhile endeavour.

Working with other organisations, notably the owners of Gîtes de France as ambassadors, serves to promote the project more widely.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact details:
Mélissa Desbois,
Project Manager at ENRx
m.desbois@enrx.fr

www.enrx.fr

Active Senior Tourism

Provision and design of training, consulting and implementation of health and leisure activities for the tourism sector, to improve health through nature, whilst strengthening rural development

EXTREMADURA
SOUTH WEST SPAIN

ALENTEJO
PORTUGAL



Nature can be the best of therapies

Outcomes

Development of therapies and activities based on specific resources in different territories.

- Training on caring for senior travellers in nature areas.
- Evidence of the conditions required to enhance wellness through health, leisure and culture in nature.
- A contribution to sustainable rural development.
- Agreements between different local actors in the tourism sector, conservation, health and other related services. A network of facilities and professionals that offer quality services and products based on health, nature, and recreation.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

People over 55 are well-informed expert travellers, looking to enjoy restful activities while at the same time developing their interests and actively participating in the development of the places they visit. Past so-called senior tourism programmes have not always involved a real adaptation of destinations to the needs of this type of tourist.

Creating a friendly environment is not just about technological design or its accessibility but also about awareness of the people who live in these spaces. Furthermore, the use of nature and tourism in natural areas as a tool for

active ageing is an opportunity for the social and economic development of large areas in Europe, placing value on environmental conservation to protect what is a source of health and wellness.

Summary

The project is about active ageing and linking health and rural development networks. Its aim is to train the tourism sector, and the sectors that indirectly work with it, in the creation of services and products aimed specifically at travellers over the age of 55.

The project's focus is on people looking for destinations with a high quality environment for developing activities in nature, either individually or as volunteers, and at the same time enjoying services of the highest quality

These are reasons why Ambianta 45, (Environmental Advisers and member of the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing, which promotes the enhancement of tourism in areas of high environmental value as an active ageing strategy) has carried out significant research in the tourism sector in Extremadura (Spain) and Alentejo (Portugal). These are two border areas with high biodiversity and great natural beauty, pollution-free, away from traditional

“sun and beach” destinations, but at the same time having the health infrastructure as well as the people with the social skills necessary for this group of travellers.

This however, is insufficient, because it is necessary to learn how to use all these resources for health and well-being. Nature can be the best of therapies, but it is necessary to know and, above all, know how to use its benefits.



Tourist destinations for the new reality of an older population

As a result of our research, (which included interviewing many tourism entrepreneurs, environmental NGOs, producing a study on tourism in natural areas, designing spaces for health, trends in the travel industry, active ageing initiatives worldwide, participation in active ageing networks, sustainable tourism and health), it became clear that there is huge potential in Spain for senior tourists but at the same time, there is a recognition of the lack of knowledge on how to use nature as a source of health and wellness for this group.

For this reason, ActivSeniors has been working in collaboration with Catalina Hoffmann Holding Group, promoters of the Hoffmann method, which has revolutionized the care and treatment of the elderly in Spain and which is expanding internationally. The Hoffmann Method, which is recognised by the Spanish government, is a rehabilitative and preventive treatment, with physical, cognitive, psychological and social benefits, aimed at older people. It was registered as a scientific work in intellectual property, created by Catherine Hoffmann in 2004.

Combining the experience and knowledge of both companies, they created a new concept of Active Senior Tourism (**ActivSeniors**), which aims to prepare tourist destinations for the new reality of an older population. This new concept integrates tourism in natural areas with the specific care and attention for people over 55 years, discovering the therapeutic potential of each territory and each resource. It seeks to network hotels, restaurants, rural farms, spas and nature conservation organizations, health professionals, and general tourism professionals with knowledge to meet senior tourists' needs, and make a complete tourist product.

In March 2014, the project is in a development phase for the different products that are part of this strategy: training, provision of advice, marketing, and development of activities specifically designed for tourists over the age of 55. Senior tourism will give a new impetus to the tourism industry and the territories that implement it. It will also enhance the knowledge of the general public about the new senior tourist profile and the challenges of an ageing European population.

CREAMOS DESTINOS ÚNICOS PARA LOS NUEVOS SENIORS

Unimos turismo, salud y medio ambiente.
El Método ActivSeniors convierte el turismo en la mejor opción para el bienestar y la salud de los mayores de 55 años. ActivSeniors hace posible disfrutar de los destinos más exclusivos y colaborar en la conservación de los recursos naturales, haciendo de esta una auténtica terapia de salud y bienestar.

¿Qué ofrecemos?

El sector turístico europeo tiene ante sí el reto y la oportunidad de convertir a Europa en el destino de referencia para los seniors.

Sin embargo, para satisfacer sus necesidades y demandas en turismo, necesitamos adaptar nuestros destinos.

Para lograrlo, debemos ofrecerles:

- Formación
- Adaptación
- Cooperación
- Nuevos mercados
- Nuevos modelos
- Selección de la oferta



Catálogo de Productos

A través del Método Hoffmann, los seniors podrán tener muchos beneficios físicos y psicológicos realizando una serie de actividades terapéuticas en el entorno natural.

- Talleres de Relajación
- Hidroterapia
- Pilates
- Escuela de Espirido
- Talleres de Activación Física

Key messages

- We consider as innovative elements the integration of health, nature and leisure in tourism destinations for active older people, focusing on training, the environment, and services that are offered to tourists.
- The project is based on the coordination of therapeutic activities of active tourism, and leisure and culture. The measure of success is the creation of a network of professionals able to host such tourist activities throughout the year.
- The consideration of active tourism and contact with nature as a strategy for improving the quality of life and therapy for specific age-related ailments, is a new way of understanding tourism and involving the creation of development opportunities, both for professionals in geriatrics, and for tourism professionals and local populations.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.ambianta45.es/activ-seniors/
(only in Spanish)

The project began in Extremadura (South West Spain) and Alentejo (Portugal).
A new “Iberian working group for healthy territories: CARE LAND” has been set up to promote and research the effect of nature on health and well-being.

Following the Healing Bonanza



Uniting nature and health related products into one joint tour

Outcomes

Cooperation with tourism businesses increased the number and effectiveness of interpretation measures normally used by the protected area's managing body when explaining natural values and the importance of their conservation. In addition to the existing interactive and exciting ways of communicating the purely biological aspects, it became possible to tell a more holistic story, including personal, and thus more convincing, experiences of "how this relates to me" (mud treatments, walking exercises etc.). For the first time tourism businesses became aware of protected area managers as stakeholders in health-related matters, which in turn increased their interest in nature-related matters.

Partnership on this practical project laid a deep foundation and generated interest from all sides for cooperation and further development of health and nature-related matters, so far resulting in:

- Health-related products offered by tourism businesses as part of nature education events in the area, including activities such as "dosed walking", Nordic walking, barefoot walking, demonstrations of mud treatments, and excursions exploring mineral waters;
- Demonstration of "dosed walking" approach to members of the Kemer National Park tourism forum by a physiotherapist from the "Jaunkēmeri" recreation centre. The expert explained the important aspects and health benefits of walking in nature and the reasons behind the establishment of special trails of different length so that the doctor can "prescribe" each of their patients at the recreation centre the right "dose" of daily walking. This can be very different depending on the patient's age, physical condition and overall health.
- Wider international discussion/seminar on nature and health matters was organized within the framework of a cooperation agreement between the Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia and Finland's Natural Heritage Services. The seminar, held in KNP (Latvia), for the first time brought together nature and health experts from the main protected area management bodies in Finland and Latvia, the EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic Section, the Ministry of Environment of Latvia, Latvian Health Tourism Cluster, as well as local tourism businesses. Many useful experiences were shared and contacts forged, laying the basis for future cooperation.

The tour was awarded as one of the most successful new tourism products by the National Tourism Development Agency of Latvia in 2012.

ĶEMERI NATIONAL PARK

LATVIA

Summary

This project delivered a process by which local stakeholders (protected area managers in the Pierīga Regional Administration of the Nature Conservation Agency, the NGO Ķemer National Park Foundation, and tourism businesses) joined forces to create an educational tour featuring health issues.

The tour highlighted Ķemer National Park's unique values of sulphurous mineral waters and curative mud forming under the area's virgin raised bogs, as well as other gifts of nature. Cooperation on this tour triggered subsequent action on health and nature and helped to unite a variety of people and interests in the park.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Process of Creating the Tour

During the process, all tourism products in the Kemer National Park related to the theme of nature and health were listed and their providers brought together: treatments involving local mineral waters and mud, "dosed walking", Nordic walking, barefoot walking, meditation labyrinths, further spa and medical treatments and other physical activities including cycling and snow-shoe walking.

All these offers were and are provided mainly by three businesses within the Kemer National Park, the resort recreation centre "Jaunķemeri" www.jaunkemeri.lv, the sanatorium "Jantarnij Bereg" www.sanatorij.lv, and the recreation centre "Valguma Pasaule" www.valgumapasaule.lv. All were functioning perfectly on their own before the tour was established, concentrating on and highlighting local natural resources. Yet, cooperation and a sense of belonging to one common area – the Kemer National Park – was somehow lacking, especially in the case of the two big sanatoriums. The creation

of the tour brought all the stakeholders together enabling the expansion and further development of the health and nature topic in many directions: nature education and awareness-raising on the interrelation between health and nature, a better image for the region, the improvement of the quality of services and joint tourism products. The core achievement of the joint effort resulted in a tour starting of just a few hours in length but potentially stretching into a two day or longer activity experiencing everything the Kemer National Park has on offer to improve and/or maintain people's health and well-being.



The creation of the basis of the tour took about half a year, but it is being constantly up-dated in the light of new product developments. The core version of the tour was published in the Kemer National Park Tourism Product Manual issued in the framework of the EU Baltic Sea Region Programme project "Parks & Benefits". No other separate financial funds had been attracted either to the creation of the tour or its maintenance, apart from the staff-time invested.

The main benefits, also partly described in the "Outcomes" section, are not so much linked to direct health benefits but rather to raising awareness about the possibilities of acquiring them with the help of nature. To those already using nature and its resources for health purposes, the tour provides the opportunity to find out more about where these natural values are created and what measures are being taken to ensure their preservation for future generations.



Key messages

The perception of protected areas and their managing institutions as stakeholders in the health sphere is still very new.

As such it might require quite a lot of time and effort to explain the idea, and it is always good to have a few general introductory presentation materials at hand about previous experiences within the EUROPARC network and other areas in this sphere.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact details: Agnese Balandina,
Nature Conservation Agency
Pierīga Regional Administration
State Environment Inspector

e-mail: agnese.balandina@daba.gov.lv

phone: + 371 26424972
+ 371 67146824

www.daba.gov.lv/kemeri/eng
www.kemerunacionalaisparks.lv

The Health Benefits Experienced by Visitors to Protected Areas

A survey to gather visitors' experiences on the health benefits provided by state-owned protected areas.

KEVO STRICT
NATURE RESERVE

REPOVESI
NATIONAL PARK

PATVINSUO
NATIONAL PARK

KURJENRAHKA
NATIONAL PARK

FINLAND



Hikers in the Pyhä-Luosto
National Park, Lapland.

Summary

Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services (NHS) created and field tested a survey designed to gather visitors' experiences on health benefits provided by the state-owned protected areas.

Results published in March 2014 show that recreation and contact with nature have diverse and profound health-enhancing effects that are highly valued by the visitors of protected areas.

Outcomes

Preliminary results were presented at the Healthy Parks Healthy People Finland seminar in Oulu in March 2014, with the main report to be published in May 2014. They indicate that the benefits perceived by visitors were very positive in all aspects of health and well-being – physical, mental and social. They also provide new evidence on the benefits and importance of human contact with nature.

The benefits match visit motivations well, since more than 80 percent of respondents considered relaxation, mental health and well-being and being together with their own group important. The impacts were independent of respondents' characteristics, such as education level, age, body weight or reported health. According to the results of the web questionnaire, visitors in groups perceived more health and well-being benefits than lone visitors. In addition, an increase in the duration of a visit had a positive impact on the long-lasting effect of the visit. The results indicate that visiting protected areas can be considered as a health-enhancing activity for the whole population. The findings are consistent with conclusions made in other studies.

Table 1. The health and well-being benefits perceived by the visitors of the parks. Question: How did this visit to the protected area influence the state of your health and well-being in the following sectors? (5 = fully agree – 1 = fully disagree). Source: on-site visitor surveys in 2013.

	Responses		Evaluation, %					Average
	n	%	totally disagree	some-what disagree	no opinion	some-what agree	totally agree	
Social well-being ¹	2011	98	0	2	14	40	43	4,24
Psychological well-being ²	2007	98	0	1	8	39	52	4,41
Physical well-being ³	2010	98	0	1	9	38	52	4,41

1. strengthened social relations, improved working capacity, enjoyed doing things alone or together
2. satisfaction with life, improved mood, recovery from mental stress, learned something new
3. enjoyed sensing the nature, maintained the fitness, learned new skills, physical well-being

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

As part of the OPEN project (Oulu Parks, Enjoying Nature), Metsähallitus NHS produced an extensive web-based survey to gain insights and knowledge of the health benefits experienced by visitors to protected area;

- Data on the health benefits experienced by visitors was gathered by Metsähallitus standard field surveys in summer 2013. The surveys covered four protected areas managed by NHS and yielded just over 2,000 responses.
- The respondents of the standard field surveys were asked whether they would be willing to answer a larger survey focusing on health benefits of nature. Those who agreed to give their e-mail address for this purpose received a link to a web-based survey. The web-based surveys resulted in 873 responses.
- Data gathered by the surveys was submitted to experts at the Oulu Deaconess Institute for analysis, statistical testing and reporting.



A group of employees participating occupational wellbeing therapy in Syöte.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact details:

Veikko Virkkunen, Senior Advisor, Metsähallitus, NHS Ostrobothnia Regional Unit
email: veikko.virkkunen@metsa.fi, tel +358 40 765 5153

Visitor surveys were undertaken in Kevo Strict Nature Reserve, Repovesi National Park, Patvinsuo National Park, and Kurjenrahka National Park.
Analysis of the data and reporting of the results took place in the Oulu Deaconess Institute.

Finnish protected areas: <http://www.outdoors.fi>
Metsähallitus: <http://www.metsa.fi>



Key messages

Exploration of health benefits can be a very useful addition to visitor monitoring implemented in natural settings and a very useful addition to visitor survey questionnaires. This enables a systematic, long-term and nationwide approach in monitoring the benefits.

The web survey provides important additional data to estimate the benefits in depth and to enhance services on-site. Recreation and contact with nature have diverse and profound health enhancing effects that are highly valued by the visitors of protected areas. Evidence provided by the surveys has helped to demonstrate and communicate the importance of nature experiences, e.g. how important it is to provide citizens with opportunities to experience nature, and to increase the possibilities for those who have had limited access.

In addition to the health benefits perceived by visitors, it is increasingly important to obtain information on the economic significance of health benefits related to recreation in protected areas. International and cross-sectoral expert co-operation and scientific research is essential in developing new approaches to exploring the various dimensions between nature and health.

Encouraging the Use of the Outdoors

Open: Oulu Parks – Enjoying Nature



OPEN – OULU PARKS –
ENJOYING NATURE;
AIR – ACTIVATION,
INTERACTION,
RECREATION

THE OPEN AND
AIR PROJECTS
ARE CARRIED OUT
IN THE OULU REGION
OF FINLAND

Summary

OPEN and AIR form a project unity.

OPEN focuses on providing quality natural outdoor environments for the citizens of Oulu, aiming to activate people towards spending time in the outdoors and engaging in regular physical activity in green spaces. Communicated as a form of preventive medicine, it is hoped to replicate the model across Finland.

AIR is finding new ways to provide therapy in natural environments and protected areas for different target groups, utilizing “OPEN” locations, and involving nursing students.

Outcomes

OPEN: *The Oulu Parks concept brings together different types of sites in the region in a green continuum, from large park-like nature sites in the city centre to the national parks in wilderness, regardless of the site owner.*

- Development of the concept launched in the project will improve information and physical accessibility, visitor management and also the attractiveness of the sites, for both local people and tourists.
- Individual sites will all be a part of a network under a common brand – “Oulu Parks” - that will be communicated and marketed, raising the profile and increasing appreciation of the sites.
- The project and the concept will promote awareness of the significance of green spaces as environments that enhance physical activity.
- The concept will be communicated as a part of preventive health services in the project region.
- The project has established a model to make information about the site network accessible, which will be reproduced in other areas in Finland.

AIR:

- Actions in the AIR project include modelling use of the natural environment and nature-related activities in various forms of rehabilitation to prevent social exclusion. Participants – rehabilitation groups at the Oulu Deaconess Institute - are taken on nature trips. The aim is to bring different outdoor experiences to the lives of young people and immigrants on rehabilitation programmes.
- Another pilot action involves outdoor activities and nature management work in nature reserves related to occupational therapy.
- One action of the project is to develop training for health care professionals, in collaboration with the health sector. The purpose of the study module is to increase the capacity of practical nurse students to utilise the natural environment and outdoor activities in their future work.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

OPEN: Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services (NHS) carries out the OPEN project in the region of Oulu, in collaboration with municipalities and the University of Jyväskylä. The two year project started in April 2012 and has a total budget of €380,000, including funds from the European Regional Development Fund.

The Oulu Parks concept will provide better conditions for health-enhancing physical activity at the sites as well as improving accessibility. According to many studies, access to good quality green spaces is positively associated with individuals' physical activity levels, and the results of the project should serve to reduce health inequalities.

The concept is intended for many target groups and there are a number of differentiated communication actions to match.

AIR: The Air project was launched in April 2012 as a two-year project managed by Metsähallitus together with the Oulu Deaconess Institute.

Its total budget is €160,000 and it is funded by the European Social Fund and supervised by the Council of Oulu Region, Metsähallitus and the Oulu Deaconess Institute.

Trips have involved engaging in various forms of physical activity in natural settings and taking part in nature management work in nature reserves, visiting cultural heritage sites, and observing nature. Feedback has been gathered from the participants. Another pilot involves activities related to occupational well-being. The objective is to utilise the effects of green spaces on health and wellbeing in maintaining and improving participants' capacity to work.



**Air: Activation,
Interaction, Recreation**

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact details (AIR):

Riikka Mansikkaviita, project manager,
Metsähallitus, Natural Heritage Services,
email: riikka.mansikkaviita@metso.fi,
tel +358 40 6734 020

Metsähallitus: www.metsa.fi/openair

Oulu Deaconess Institute: <http://www.odl.fi> (in Finnish)

Contact information (OPEN):

Tapio Lepikkö, Senior Advisor,
Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services;
e-mail: tapio.lepikko@metso.fi
tel +358 40 6736 433



Key messages

OPEN

- From a (potential) visitor's point of view, it is necessary to provide up-to-date and accurate information of the sites in one place, regardless of the site owner. This is an efficient service for people, but it is also an extremely good way to encourage physical activity in the outdoors.
- It is important that policy- and decision-makers, as well as other stakeholders, understand the meaning of green spaces, and what actions are needed to provide and improve conditions for health-enhancing physical activity.

AIR

- Multi-sectoral cooperation is necessary for the creation of new and concrete ways to promote health and well-being through the encouragement of outdoor recreation and physical activity among different target groups.
- Such cooperation utilises nature and outdoor experiences, for example in preventing social exclusion among young people undergoing rehabilitation, among other special target groups, and also in improving occupational therapy.
- The experiences and feedback of the participants have been positive and nature-based activities are seen as an important part of health and well-being.
- The experience, confidence and abilities of Natural Heritage Services' staff in working with different target groups have increased.

A Path Accessible to All

Healthy walks for everybody in a natural park, especially people with disabilities



NATURAL PARK
FUENTES CARRIONAS Y
FUENTE COBRE-MONTAÑA
PALENTINA

PROVINCE OF PALENCIA,
CASTILLA Y LEÓN

SPAIN

Summary

This project has brought together actors in the environmental, health and social fields in the region of Castilla y Leon, to provide opportunities for people with physical disabilities or mental impairments to access nature and improve their health.

It has provided opportunities to demonstrate the social benefits of protected areas, enhanced the well-being of people with disabilities and brought social and economic benefits to the communities where the activities take place.

Outcomes

This activity is part of a programme supported by the government of Castilla y Leon to promote natural parks. This "Health and Parks" theme is quite new, and is related to other social programmes oriented towards older people such as "Programme Golden Spaces", which was created in 1991 with the "Club of the 60s" and which currently has more than 150 members. This programme is a joint effort involving the participation of several regional administrations (Environment, Health and Family Affairs). It is therefore an opportunity to raise the profile of the benefits of protected areas to society, involving not only the environment departments but also the social ones.

The activity offered at Fuentes Carrionas is a joint collaboration between the park and the association Pandetrave, a sports association working at regional level and affiliated to the Spanish Federation. They promote mountain sports and nature, with the main purpose of facilitating their practice by people with sensory (especially visual), physical or intellectual impairments, with certain activities assisted by specialized volunteers, and values such as solidarity, effort and personal development being promoted.

Members of the park staff, particularly guides and instructors from the Centre for Interpretation, have found this to be an extra incentive to their daily work, coordinating efforts with the association's volunteers and guides. It also supports local jobs through, for example, the hiring of local transport and purchase of local food.

This project was included as part of the first report on this issue in Spain, with the collaboration of EUROPARC Spain, enhancing the promotion at regional and national level, and inspiring other protected areas to develop similar projects.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

The specific activity is an excursion along a path with the guide and the disabled participant connected by a rod. Interpretation of cultural and natural features is provided along an eight kilometre path. The walk includes a picnic with local food and fresh fruit.

Participation is with groups of up to 40 people with mental impairments, physical disability, blindness, or deafness. These people belong to mountain associations and the Spanish Confederation of People with Disabilities and are aged between 8 and 65. The activity takes five hours in total. The day before the event, the association and the park offer a short talk at the visitor centre in the village where local people are invited to know more about the values of the park and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

This project illustrated cooperation between public administrations (administration of the park) and civil society. Each partner provided their resources, and it was also supported by

a project funded by two public foundations (Fundacion Patrimonio Natural of Castilla y León, Fundacion Biodiversidad).

The target group were people with physical or sensory disabilities or intellectual impairments. They gained health benefits through physical activity in a natural environment, whilst self esteem and emotional intelligence of the individual is also promoted. The activity provides cardiovascular and muscular benefits, and also sensory benefits: auditory, olfactory and visual enjoyment through the songs and sounds of wildlife, vegetation smells, panoramic views, as well as stimuli such as temperature changes along the route.



Enjoy the Senda del Oso



Key messages

- Opportunity to work together (Park administration, Associations)
- Opportunity to highlight the social benefits of protected areas
- Opportunity to strengthen family and social ties
- Opportunity to develop personal independence of people with disabilities
- Opportunity for local economic development linked to the production and marketing of local products
- Strengthening the role of the visitor centres as multipurpose community centres and social revitalization

FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://pandetrave.blogspot.com.es/search?q=salud>

http://www.patrimonionatural.org/ver_proyecto.php?s_titulo=salud&id_proyecto=78

http://www.redeuroparc.org/img/Eje_4/AP_y_salud.pdf

Walkability Project

Exercise Referral Scheme: Walkability Project uses group based walking to reduce sedentary behaviour, develop participants' fitness and improve health



**Pembrokeshire Coast
National park**

PEMBROKESHIRE COAST
NATIONAL PARK
AND
SURROUNDING
LOCALITY

WALES

Summary

As a 'health asset' securing benefits for the community, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority hosted the Walkability Project, which sought to use walking as the basis for ameliorating or preventing a number of mild to moderate medical conditions.

Demand has been high and the cost of this therapy has been less than other comparable medical interventions.

There are significant challenges in ensuring the sustainability of the project.

Outcomes

This work developed from previous projects funded by Sport Wales that recognised the value of walking as a health intervention for cardiovascular health in adults. In 2011 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority hosted the Walkability Project, which brought together interested bodies including the Local Health Board, Leisure Services and the County Council. The Walkability Project is now formally recognised as part of the Exercise Referral Scheme.

- The demand for the service outstrips the supply and this situation is anticipated to continue.
- Based on 2013/14 budget, the cost per annum for a regular participant is approximately £300; this compares extremely favourably with other known medical preventative and rehabilitative interventions.
- Despite recognition of the value of this scheme, the signposting of walking as a therapeutic activity by GP surgeries, physiotherapists and other medical services has been poor.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Exercise Referral Scheme is a programme of activities designed for those who are currently not active or are exercising less than three times per week. It is also for those who suffer with one or more mild to moderate medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, arthritis, and depression; or have been identified as being at risk of developing these conditions.

It involves a referral from a health professional, who believes that exercise will help in the prevention, management and improvement of the patient's condition. People can choose between gym based exercise or the Walkability Project. The project has provided a programme of fortnightly walks over a period of 12 months at a range of walking venues. The details are distributed to interested and potential participants by the Exercise Referral instructional staff operating through (Pembrokeshire County) Leisure Services. Participants are all registered with the Exercise

Referral Scheme and relevant medical details are held by the instructors.

The principle aims of the project in relation to the exercise referral group have been:

- To encourage and support individuals to walk as an alternative beneficial exercise
- To provide participants with the skills and confidence to go walking in addition to the group sessions
- To achieve progression in capacity for longer and/or more intense walking routes

An active, healthy and inclusive Wales



Key issues identified to date are

- The importance of improving the physical environment to encourage physical activity; here, the national park authority has a responsibility to the network of public rights of way (footpaths).
- The National Park is a 'health asset' and has a key part to play in public health.
- More Exercise Referral Instructors and emerging volunteers will be trained as walk leaders as appropriate to increase the flexibility for increasing session numbers.

- To enhance independence and self led recovery groups will be shown a selection of 'doorstep' walks that they will be able to repeat themselves as an informal group on alternate weeks.

Funding for the Walkability Project is reliant on bids to a variety of central government, health board, private enterprise and charitable sources, year on year, with no guarantees of sustainability.



Key messages

- The evidence indicates that walking is an effective and enjoyable way to improve health outcomes for participants.
- Provision of minibus transport and driver remains a key to the success of the project as a flexible, relevant service to the identified client base.
- Travel costs for participants to the walks themselves needs to be kept at a minimum
- Volunteers have been a vital part of project delivery
- Improved recognition, support and use by medical practitioners is needed to aid the sustainability of the scheme.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact details:
Hannah Buck,
Health and Tourism Policy Officer,
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Authority

Hannahb@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk

Promoting 'Green Health' in Scotland

Encouraging greater use of the natural environment for better health and quality of life in Scotland.



ACROSS ALL OF
SCOTLAND



Nature and the environment
are a health resource

Outcomes

Linking the Environment and Health sectors through establishment of a Green Exercise Partnership and turning policy into practice

- Increased profile of the benefits of Green exercise in the Health and Environment sectors
- Demonstration project showing how to maximise the health-promoting potential of environmental assets surrounding healthcare settings

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Scotland's health record is poor, often being described as the sick man of Europe, but over recent years a strong policy framework which recognises the value of the environment in public health has been developed.

The Scottish Government's key mechanism to steer and monitor delivery of its outcomes-based approach is its [National Performance Framework](#). This has established five Strategic Objectives e.g. a Healthier Scotland; a Greener Scotland, and a set of National Outcomes which guide central and local government planning.

National Performance Indicators are used to monitor performance, and for Delivering a Healthier Scotland, indicators include: Increase people's use of Scotland's outdoors; Increase physical activity and Increase the proportion of journeys to work made by public or active transport.

Summary

Scotland has a poor record when it comes to public health, but in recent years has developed a policy framework embracing the natural environment and the health sector in order to change the status quo.

The Green Exercise Partnership brings together a range of actors so that a Natural Health Service can complement the National Health Service.

Nature and the environment are increasingly promoted as a health resource and progress in a number of health indicators is being made.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Supporting this top-level objective, there are a range of Government, Agency and NGO policies which build on the growing evidence base regarding the physical and mental health benefits of being active in the outdoors – for example, Scottish Natural Heritage's statement on [Health & the Natural Heritage](#).

The Green Exercise Partnership (GEP) in Scotland brings environmental organisations Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland together with the national health promotion organisation NHS Health Scotland.

Scotland has a stunning environment, progressive access legislation and a wide range of assets including national and local nature reserves, and path networks which provide access close to where people live. The GEP works to raise the profile and develop better understanding of how to use these assets for public health benefits by: influencing health policy and government strategy; making briefing material available to politicians and policy-makers, and producing online resources including case studies for practitioners.

The value of the environment in public health has been developed



A key work stream for the GEP is working with the National Health Service to make use of environmental assets surrounding health-care settings as a health-promoting resource. A demonstration project started in 2010 which has enabled the green space around a number of hospital sites to be developed for therapeutic purposes for patients, and for physical activity and relaxation for staff, visitors and neighbouring community. Landscape and access improvements bring a range of health benefits, as well as enhancing biodiversity and delivering more cost-effective estate management systems. At some sites, information about other green exercise assets such as local paths or Health Walk Groups is being collected so that health practitioners can promote nearby opportunities to their patients.

In contributing the Health agenda, Scottish Natural Heritage has adopted a broad definition of health-promoting natural assets, and is championing the role of a Natural Health Service to help tackle poor health and health inequalities. Urban parks and green corridors; woodlands and greenspace around settlements; path networks; National Parks and other protected areas managed by the public, voluntary or private sectors, can all contribute to healthier lifestyles and improved quality of life. Local partnership working between health and environment sectors can help to link people and place.

The experience Scottish Natural Heritage has developed through its work on Green Health is being fed into a Europarc Federation Working Group on Health & Protected Areas, and an IUCN task force which is currently drafting best practice guidelines on Healthy Parks Healthy People.



Key messages

- It's important to stimulate broad recognition of the value of the environment as a health-promoting resource
- A robust policy context for connecting public health & the natural environment is important, helping to increase cross-sector understanding and make the case for resources
- Work to turn policy into practice has been supported by Scotland's Green Exercise Partnership which is helping make Green Health a key element of the Government's wider physical activity agenda
- Maximising health benefits means looking beyond protected areas, and helping people to connect with nature as a part of their daily lives – but protected areas also have their part to play
- Progress is being made in Scotland, but there are still challenges - for example achieving cross-sector co-ordination; and the size and complexity of the health service and the time required to embed new initiatives
- Environmental and health sector organisations should be encouraged to share their examples of good practice.

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.snh.gov.uk/land-and-sea/managing-recreation-and-access/healthier-scotland/

National Performance Framework:
www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Performance/scotPerforms

Photos: © Lorne Gill/SNH

Date of Publication: June 2014

Case studies published with assistance from



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdair air fad airson Alba air fad



METSÄHALLITUS