



Transcript: Episode 14

Sustainable Transport for Youth



Hello. Welcome to the EUROPARC podcast: Voices from the Parks. I'm Hermione Pocock and I'm a EUROPARC youth council member from England. Today we're going to be discussing Transport for Youth, which was the topic for our European Youth in Parks Day on the 15th of September 2024. In this podcast, I'll be talking to Lily Whitmarsh, who is the team and campaigns coordinator for Campaigns for National Parks.

Lily took part in the Race National Parks Challenge. Two teams of young people use public transport to race to a national park of their choice. They did this challenge as Campaigned for National Parks believes that everyone has the right to discover national parks. Young people, especially, face barriers in accessing national parks, though created for everyone, but only 6% of visitors to national parks in England are under the age of 25.

Children, teenagers grow up less connected to nature than other age groups. Young people are suffering through a mental health crisis without adequate support. National park communities are facing a lack of rural jobs and training opportunities. I will now speak to Lily and discuss her experience of the race to National Parks Challenge.



Hello Lily. Welcome to the EUROPARC podcast Voices of the Park. It's really nice to have you on and thank you so much for giving your time today.



Hello it's great to be here. Thanks for having me on.



How are you?



I'm good, I'm great. And how are you?



I'm really good thank you. Excited to talk to you and get to learn more about the Race to National Parks challenge. So, can you tell me what the Race to National Parks Challenge is?



So Race to National Parks is a challenge by Campaign for National Parks and we're an independent charity, campaigning for national parks in England and Wales and we've been around since before the first national parks were designated here and from campaigning for the acts that set them up, in 1949 to now where we work for National Parks that are better for people and nature and more equal and accessible.

At Campaign for National Parks we know that everyone deserves the right to discover national parks and the benefits of spending time in them. And we know that a key first step to that is transport and how people can get out into parks. So with Race to National Parks we set out to show the reality of that umm... So how you can get out into national parks in England and Wales without a car as a lot of young people in particular don't drive and do rely on bus and rail and just to show what needs improving as well.



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What we did is we had to race against the clock to get to national park destinations using just public transport. Three members of our team, went out and filmed how we got on. I was one team I went to London to Keyhaven in the New Forest (National Park) and versus team two, who planned to go from Cardiff to Valley of Rocks in Exmoor (National Park). And I won't tell you how they got on because that's quite a story. We filmed ourselves and you can see how we did in the film on our website.



Oh amazing! That sounds so interesting and definitely something young people that we need information on, because it's so difficult. Can I ask how much did it cost in total?



So we will probably get into this, when I tell you how I got on. But I actually had to rebook a train because I missed my first train, so it cost me a bit more than it should have. It cost me about £100, but the whole trip from London to... down to Keyhaven in New Forest . So quite a chunk?



Yeah, definitely. So I'll get on to my question. So the first one is what was the biggest hurdle you faced on your Race to National Park Challenge?



As I just touched on, I would say myself, just time management and I missed my first train and then just a knock on effect that that has when you're trying to make all those connections. I think I had three different trains. For young people and people with families as well, it's such a huge barrier, to know, your train's running to an hour, and if you miss it, you could be stranded somewhere. So yeah, that was the biggest thing. Although I did manage to get back on track, during the course of it.



Wow! So how long did it take you in total to get from where you started to where you finished?



It was about three and a half hours altogether, so not not too long, but it was a lot of waiting around at train stations, at bus stops, but that wasn't all on the route.



Yeah, yeah. It's a big like chunk of your day, though, isn't it? Because you think how long you spend at the national park itself, yet you've got 3 hours either side, it's such a long time.



Yeah, so if you thinking about a day trip and you mainly only have, 2 - 2.5 hours there, if you're aiming to get back, which is... Yeah, a really big thing. Definitely! So, you've spoken about your challenge, what did you enjoy most about it? Well I think the the obvious thing is going to a national park. Like... the reason that we, that we did this and that we launched this Right to Discover campaign, which gives every child and every young person the right to discover national parks because we know that they're great and we know that they're amazing! And we want all people to have the opportunity.



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So it was great, to go down to Keyhaven, to the coast and I'm a bird nerd, so I went and did some birdwatching. I'd say that was that's the obvious thing to say. But another thing that was great about it is just having the means and to try that could I don't think I'd have done that without the challenge. It really open my eyes to where I could go by myself with public transport a lot more and we would just think in our day to day life.



Yeah. No.. that's really useful to know and out of just my personal interest, what birds did you see?



There wasn't too many that'd be interesting. Lots of black headed gulls, but I did see a little egret (Yeah) which is really exciting, and lot of them which is quite fun!



Amazing! You'll just have to go back again. And so what do you think needs to change about public transport to make getting to national parks easier?



So, broadly speaking, the kind of change that we want to see is public transport getting young people to National Parks easily and affordably. So this means a few different things. And the first bit of that is just more infrastructure, whether that's more railways and actual physical infrastructure like that, or just more services that run on the timetables. More frequent busses and that join up as well, so when you're going such a long way, so you can change well. That being locally led, yeah that means local councils, local authorities and national parks all authorities having more powers to kind of have a say in town halls as well, because that really helps make things work for the people who live close to parks and then get...

The other part of this is just about making them accessible, making that information easier to find and making sure all the fares are low and that they are discounts to make sure that people can actually use them.



Yeah, no, that sounds really good. And as we've said, it's only like 6% of the visitors to National Parks are people under 25, it would be good to get people younger interested in it.



Yeah yeah. I think that comes back to the awareness to ensure that it's there and to show that it's fun and it's great. And that's a key part of what we want to do with Race to National Parks as well.



Yeah. So my next question is, at this current state of public transport to National Parks, would you rather take public transport, or private transport in planning an enjoyable day out?



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Ooh! This is quite a hard question, I would say. Because there are arguments both ways. Yeah. I think for me personally, I don't drive so for me public transport or having to grab a lift from someone. I think there are difficulties with public transport, however, I found. There are reasons from the National Parks point of view that private cars are not a good option that we should be investing in, from the kind of landscape to the pollution. Cars parked on the side of the road, umm that's something I would choose not to, kind of, add to.

But then again if someone offered me a lift I would rather do that, than do what we did on the way to the New Forest, so..



Yeah, definitely we... umm, I just did an active travel consultation with young people from my national park. The Yorkshire Dales and, umm it was quite ironic because active travel without getting a bus or walking or running all horse riding to the location and to get to the active travel consultation, we'd all taken private transport.

I think there definitely needs to change about it, but I think they were 10 of us all together and not one person had got there through public transport, which is very telling.



Yeah, but it shows that what you were doing was needed and useful. I think you've got to start having a conversation.



Yeah, Yeah. No, that's very true. My next question is how did you find filming yourself during the day? Can you kind of like a vlogger?



Yeah, umm it's quite nerve wracking to think about. I think, I think a lot of people, as I was, would be quite nervous about that, but just knowing that I was in a race and I had people I needed to beat, to get there helps and we knew it was a really good way of telling the story and that to kind of reach and the people you want to reach, umm it would just be such a fun an engaging way to do that. You've just got to think about the bigger picture, umm think about it as a duet.



I think it's a really good experience to build your confidence as well, like you can if it can do that.



Yeah, yeah.



So, obviously it was a race. Do you want to tell people if you won or not? Or, do you want people to go look at the Campaign for National Parks video to find out?



Well, all I'll say is that it was quite close. And... uhh, yeah... we both ran into some issues and yeah, check out the film to see who won.



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Yeah! Would the experience have been different, if you had a group of young people traveling with you, rather than it being solo?



I think absolutely. It really changes not just when you're doing something like that, but when you're out in the national park, changes your experience a lot and I think as we were just saying about the filming, it really builds your confidence, I think.

Something I do quite a lot is solo travelling, solo hiking as well and that kind of trust in yourself that you will see what you wouldn't get when you're in a group. But then it pays off in the kind of experience that you have when you get there.

And I was quite jealous of the other team as well, being a pair. They got to go through it all together. It's much easier to film when...



It is quite interesting umm because, what, leads on to my next question, is that I find traveling solo quite nerve wracking. I've gotten a lot better at it, but I know that myself and other young people struggle with anxiety when traveling on public transport. Do you have any tips for people if they want to stop using private transport and take like the local bus?



Yes I think first thing to say is, me too. Yeah, I find it really nerve wracking especially when it's new, when it's a place I've never been before. If I had to give you insight, saying we searched everything beforehand, really well on the transport websites. We also have a guide on our website. I know that national parks do as well. In terms of where you need to go, where you need to change.

I also like to just track my progress on the way I on maps and things. So I know if things are mixed up. I find that really helps me. And then the second thing I would say is don't be afraid to ask about the bus about. I had no idea whether bus stop was at New Milton and I to just ask, know, that can be quite anxiety provoking everything. So... (Yeah)

And I think my third tip would just being the more you do it, the more comfortable you get with it. Erm, so to try small first if you, if there's a local route that you can do and then you go big, like all across the country once you've got that.



No, that's really really helpful thank you for that though I don't have any more question for you. I'd like to give a really big thank you for joining me and speaking to about Race to National Park. And I think it's a really worthy cause and people should go check it out, really.



It's great to chat to you and yeah, people want to go and check out the channels, they can go to our website, which is www.cnporg.uk, thank you very much.



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Thank you, byeee!



Bye!



We will now hear from Alberto Madrassi, the EUROPARC Youth Council member from Italy. He has interviewed Nicola Ceschia from the Julian Prealps Nature Park to talk about an INTERREG project called "INDIALPS", which wants to develop sustainable tourism.



I am at the headquarters of the Julian Prealps Nature Park where I'm currently working, joined by an Nicola Ceschia, my coworker and former member of the Youth Advisory Board of the Julian Alps, Biosphere Reserve, and he is working on an INTERREG project called "INDIALPS" and he will tell us something about it.



Hi Alberto, and hi everyone. I'm very happy to be here with the opportunity to share some information about this INTERREG project. As you said, the name of the project is "INDIALPS", and it has the the important proposal to develop a sustainable tourism and a new innovative idea and the way, how to do this, this kind of sustainable tourism, And the region where this project is set is Alpia Adria.

Alpi Adria is at the at the east northeast border of Italy between Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Austria and Slovenia. In this project is directly linked with Austria. We are a six partners, so the lead to partner is Dobratsch Nature Park. And then we are one of the partners, as Julian Prealps Nature Park. Then you can find the Villach Tourism region, the Tarvisiano Tourist Promotion Consortium and two universities, for example, the FH Carinthia University of Applied Sciences are from Kärnten Terra Region and the University of Padua. That is a set in Veneto.

The project is made with different work packages. We have one that is analyzing and monitoring. Another one is an action, a pilot action and another one is maybe the most challenging to reach of that, is the development of a new sensor and idea of sustainable tourism across this border. But I think I here to talk about especially about the...



Yeah, the the bike event across the border between Italy and Austria that was organized to promote sustainable transportation and movement. The first stage happened around a Youth in Parks Day. We think that always nice to hear about what happens in the EUROAPRC network, since the Julian Prealps Nature Park and Dobratsch Nature park are both members. So Nicola, tell us something about the day.



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Okay, let's start saying it should be two days of this Bike for Peace tour. But due to the weather conditions, we had to move and postpone. One of the dates, especially the one that in particular the one in Austria to the next spring, because the last two weekends were pretty rainy.

Well, but talking about the date in Italy, we we have... we we were lucky because the weather was very cool and the also not so windy and we rode along the cycle way out the Adria that is a very famous and amazing cycle way that links and connects Salzburg in Austria to Grado on Maro Adriatico , the Adriatic Sea. So we rode around the 50 kilometers of from Tarvisio to Resiutta.

We were two teams one from Austria. They were around 16 people and around ten people from from Italy. During the ride, we discovered a lot about the particularity of the territory because we we arrived on Val Canale that is in German, is where, Kanaltal, and until at the end of the the first World War, that valley was under the empire from Austria.

So in that valley we have a very multicultural situation with a lot of people still are talking German or Slovenian too, not only Italian or Friulano. In fact, it's pretty funny when you've crossed some roads or some streets, because the signs on the streets are pretty impossible to read because that you will find every single name on the in the in the sign that is written in four different languages.

These, for example, is one of the the in the examples of this multicultural situation. But not only languages because in the same town such as Pontebba, that that where where the the ancient border between it or so Venetian, the Venetian empire and the Austro-Hungarian empire were settled in that town Pontebba or Pontafel, you can find two different kind of architecture, two different kind of churches.

If you see the church tower from the Italy side is in one architectural style and if you see the other one, looking at it has the typical onion towers from Austrian churches. But in that territory, not only the First World War, the war was, ahh, left some tracks, but also in the Cold War because Friulia-Venezia Giulia, and in particularly the east border of Friuli were directly connected with Yugoslavia.

So you can find a lot of different bunkers and all of this situation, luckily, it has changed a lot. And now you can breathe multicultural, ahh.. air, ... so to say and the people is very is very linked to the other cultures.



I just wanted to add that if you are passionate about bicycles and by doing that, you definitely have to do the Alpi Adria cycle way.



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I just wanted to add that if you are passionate about bicycles and by doing that, you definitely have to do the Alpi Adria cycle way. Since it is immersed in a wonderful and cultural and a rich environment and yeah, you go from the Alps to the Adriatic Sea. And also worth mentioning is that most of the cycle way is on the old train trucks and that this makes makes it even more scenic because you have a lot of tunnels and bridges and or coal stations that are re-, converted to restaurants and bars.



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And yeah, Nicola, you wanted also to talk about another project that involves bicycles, right?



Yeah, the project is called the “la scuola mette le ruote”. That means this school writes the wheel in a sort of way and we, we, we are involved in this project since 2019, so also before COVID situation and this project involves some primary schools and some middle schools of two towns of Biosphere Reserve that are Gemona and Artegna.

And with this this project, we teach, we teach to the kids, to the schoolmates how to use the bike not in a sportfull way, but as the... the best vehicle they can use to reach the school, up to reach the sports area, to reach and their friends, and to use the bike as a vehicle, avoiding maybe also some scooters or also the car. Especially moving within the town. We we teach them how to use the bike safely.

In fact, we learned from a teacher from England. Alan is his name. Alan worked a lot in in England, the UK ,with our program from the the health minister from from London and that they teached to in a, ... to the people how to use the bike in a safe way. For example, how to cross the roads, how to check the bike for some problems of mechanic or stuff like that.

And the program is called Bike Safe and it is split between levels from level zero up to three or four. I think we usually reach just the level of two with a primary school, then not then in a certain way we give to the kids for prize and after the the activities at school we lead them to some cycleways in in our area.

For example, to the first class of the middle school rides the Alpi Adria Radweg (cycle way) indeed. Then other classes, such as the primary school, as just the less than 20 kilometers ride from Gemona to Venzone, to visit some museums so that are linked also to the Julian Prealps Nature Park.



So thank you, Nicola, for telling us about this two umm projects that are happening in and around the Julian Alps Biosphere Reserve.



Thank you for listening to this EUROPARC podcast Voices from the Parks. If you want to learn more about Lily's Race to National Parks, go to www.cnp.org.uk. If you want to learn more about the EUROPARC Youth Council and the work we do for youth in parks, go to www.europarc.org and click on the youth tab.