

Questions from the Audience Answered



- How do you know how much people are spending in the neighbouring areas when visiting the national parks? Where do you get this data from and how do you know it's a result of visiting the parks? I work for a much smaller charity which manages nature reserves, I don't know how we could get this level of research for our area.

Bespoke surveys would perhaps be most useful for this purpose but even using data on average visitor spend from national surveys such as PANs would give something. This two research reports from Scotland may also be useful too –

<https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2022-08/final%20-%20Publication%202010%20-%20SNH%20Commissioned%20Report%20368%20-%20The%20Natural%20Heritage%20as%20an%20Economic%20Driver%20-%20Protected%20Areas%20Case%20Studies.pdf>

<https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1144-testing-natural-capital-approach-naturescot-land>

In Finland, visitor surveys have been conducted in national parks to gather data on visitor profiles, length of stay, activities, and spending both within the parks and in the surrounding areas.

- How easy/difficult was it to gather the numbers and are they „contested“ or „accepted“ by the broad public?

Public understanding of our natural health service is relatively good in many countries – see for example <https://www.nature.scot/doc/naturescot-research-report-1361-spans-scotlands-people-and-nature-survey-202324-health-and-wellbeing>.

In Finland, the [UKK Institute](#) has previously studied the societal costs of physical inactivity in the country. Based on these studies, calculations have been made to estimate how much public spending is saved when people engage in physical activity in nature areas. These findings provide a solid foundation for understanding the health-related benefits of nature visits.

The report is at this link: <https://oulurepo.oulu.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/45239/nbnfi-fe2023042638956.pdf?sequence=1>

- Are the Trails signed out? are there Inner core Zones for Wildlife to be undisturbed?

This depend on the specific management arrangements for Park and Protected Area in question.

In Finnish national parks, the trails are clearly marked in the terrain. In addition, there are quieter core areas within the parks where there are no recreational trails, allowing wildlife to remain undisturbed.

- In Scotland, do you work with locals in more remote Areas, or are they integrated if available?

The Scottish survey is considered a representative sample of the Scottish population and therefore includes Rural Scotland. The researchers are able to break the results down by Health Board area, which includes very rural health boards.

- Are there plans on how to motivate, reach and sensibillize younger generations for the importance of the cause?

To support Protected Areas in creating meaningful spaces for youth, the EUROPARC Federation has developed two dedicated programmes: the **EUROPARC Junior Ranger** and the **EUROPARC Youth+ Programme**. More information and an infographic are available at this [link](#). These programmes are essential tools for fostering a deeper and more lasting connection between younger generations and nature. A clear example of their impact was evident during the **2023 Cairngorms Youth Climate Camp**, where young participants devoted significant attention to the theme of **health in rural communities**, with a particular focus on **mental health**.

Furthermore, through the work of the [Youth Council](#), EUROPARC is promoting youth engagement in the decision-making of the network, empowering young people to actively contribute to shaping the future of protected areas and the whole network.

To conclude, examples of activities that could be done by young persons to improve health outcomes through conservation, are outlined in a recent web article: [From Consultation to Concrete Action for Young People and Climate Action](#).

- How did you count visitors? Did you use automatic systems, or do you charge an entrance fee?

This depends on the specific management arrangements for Park and Protected Area in question. The most common techniques are visitor counters, surveys and use of data available from Strava. Mobile phone records etc. A good guide was produced by Parks and Wildlife Finland – <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:702543/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

There is no entrance fee to Finnish national parks. In the country, visitor counters placed along the trails. Car counters are also used to estimate the number of visitors arriving by vehicle.

- In your experience, how are governments using these savings on health, deriving from green spaces? a) Health system gets less funding? b) more money goes into green areas? c) savings are applied elsewhere...?

The picture is mixed, complex and still developing, but some countries have made some progress towards shared funding .

In Scotland, both the [one health breakthrough partnership](#), the [Cairngorms 2030 project](#) and the [natural health service](#) programme (which included the piloting of Green health partnerships) have sought to bring together funding pots in the health and environment sectors in a more holistic way. We are also seeing greater investment in nature from the health sector on its outdoors estate as a result of the work Neil Chalmers introduced during the webinar.

On the other hand, Finland is facing a tight economic situation, and all sectors have been subject to budget cuts. While the health benefits of nature are recognized, the savings are not yet systematically redirected to support green spaces or health initiatives. However, the topic is gaining attention and may influence future funding decisions.

- Do you complement your quantitative data with qualitative? people's stories can also make a huge impact and add your brilliant numbers.

Yes. Some examples from Scotland in these videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bEJqGxvVC88>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WHzdVMO_WIk

<https://youtu.be/zUDg8TDyy2E>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQhfDndpk-8>

In Finland, the visitor surveys include open-ended questions where people can freely share their experiences in their own words. These qualitative insights complement the quantitative data and help illustrate the personal impact of nature visits.

- Are there studies/data about health effects in the context of “Protected Areas” compared to "other green spaces"?

Yes, we can share [PHS commissioned research highlights health benefits of NHS Scotland outdoor spaces - News - Public Health Scotland](#)