

# **'I like to think when I'm gone I will have left this a better place'**

## **Environmental volunteering: motivations, barriers and benefits**



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The environmental volunteering sector in Britain and abroad could benefit from the findings of this research which was undertaken to provide a better understanding of the motivations for, barriers to and benefits of environmental volunteering for volunteers and the organisations that manage them<sup>1</sup>. In addition to reviewing the literature, quantitative and primarily qualitative approaches were employed to address this aim. Primary interview data were collected between August and October, 2007, and involved 12 organisations across Britain comprising a total of 88 volunteers (volunteering for 10 different organisations), 11 national/regional organisation representatives and 15 local organisation representatives.

Traditionally, environmental organisations have focused on environmental management to improve the state of ecosystems and biodiversity. Environmental volunteers play a vital role in supporting organisations to achieve this objective and the desire to improve landscapes and live more sustainably are strong motivating forces for many volunteers. The interest in environmental volunteering is increasing in part due to growing community concern over climate change and other environmental threats and people are realising they can play a positive role through actions such as reducing material gain, recycling, choosing alternative transport options and environmental volunteering. In some regions of Britain the demand for environmental volunteering has exceeded organisations' capacity to manage the numbers of willing contributors. More could be done if resources were increased to support the organisations and their volunteers. Environmental volunteering not only benefits the environment but also the associated communities and volunteers.

The research found that volunteers are not only motivated for environmental reasons but also by the personal benefits they gain from the outdoor opportunities and the social nature of environmental activities. Volunteers learn new skills and meet others while improving their health, well-being and quality of life. Environmental volunteering offers a range of opportunities to suit people with diverse interests and abilities. The environment provides a common language for all and a shared purpose independent of gender, ethnic background, age, physical ability, mental functioning, socioeconomic status or knowledge of environmental management. The diverse nature of volunteers provides organisations with a myriad of skills to draw from while also challenging organisations to accommodate differences in the backgrounds, abilities and interests of the volunteers. Organisations need to ensure they involve volunteers in decision-making while providing them with a range of opportunities, choice, rewards, recognition, flexibility, support and adequate resources to complete the environmental activities.

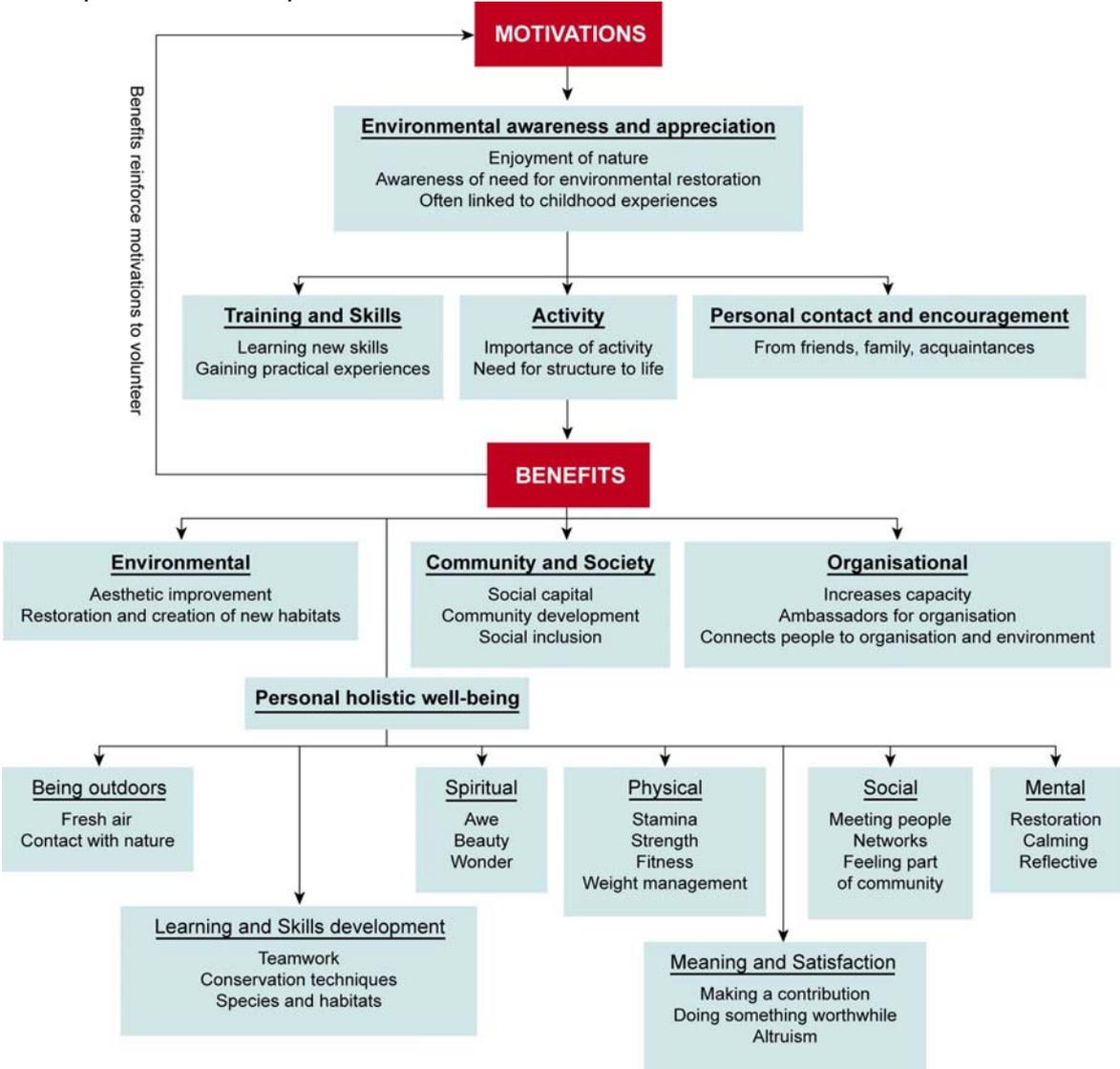
In addition to the personal benefits gained by volunteers, communities also benefit from environmental volunteering with improved cohesion and access to green spaces. Organisations that foster broader and deeper community involvement in decision-making and participation will be in the best position to increase capacity, respond to change and sustain a vital role in the community. This involves developing partnerships with local volunteer centres, other environmental organisations and other sectors within the community. Partnerships have become an increasingly important aspect of contemporary volunteering practices. This reflects a new focus and collaborative dynamic in the environmental volunteering sector. It provides opportunities to move beyond traditional types of volunteering and volunteers who have an interest in the environment; to reach new groups who may have specific needs and aspirations such as attaining improved mental and physical health, social connections, skills and abilities, and a greater purpose in life. The sector is also increasingly focused on the delivery of a range of broad government agendas including community development, health, and education and skills.

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<sup>1</sup> An eight page summary of the research findings are available at <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-7GDHD3>

The conceptual framework below outlines the key motivations and benefits identified through the research. The motivations highlighted in this framework are based primarily on the findings from individual volunteers. Environmental awareness and appreciation provided an overarching motivation for many (although not all). The benefits section outlined in the framework are those identified by volunteers and organisational representatives (both national and local) and focus on benefits to the individual person, to the environment, to local communities and wider society, and also benefits to the organisations that manage and develop volunteers. The benefits people described were not hierarchical they related to the context in which people volunteered and to their own previous experiences. The volunteers generally talked about the benefits they gained in a number of ways rather than stating that one benefit was more important than another.

There appears to be a continuum from what could be termed the more altruistic aspects of volunteering through to volunteering that is focused on gaining new skills that will lead to future employment. This broad spectrum of volunteering can be viewed as both a potential strength and weakness. Its strength lies in the wide range of opportunities that are on offer to people with a range of abilities; however a weakness is that this variety is potentially difficult to manage and can be confusing to those who have not volunteered before. It also makes it harder to publicise and promote a coherent picture of what environmental volunteering is. Implications and potential ways forward, based on the findings of the research, are discussed in Chapter 12 of this report.



## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

This research was undertaken with funding from the Scottish Forestry Trust (SFT) and Forestry Commission (FC), with considerable in kind support provided by Deakin University in Melbourne Australia and Forest Research, the research agency of the Forestry Commission. Researchers, Mardie Townsend and Matthew Ebden, from Deakin University have explored volunteering in a number of contexts in Australia (Townsend and Ebden, 2006). A partnership between Deakin University and Forest Research was created and it was decided to research volunteering issues in Britain and explore the motivations to volunteering, and the benefits that people can gain from it. Volunteering has risen up the political agenda in Britain over the past few years and therefore due to mutual interests between researchers this was seen as a timely point at which to undertake a research project in Britain. Although there has been a growth in the literature on volunteers and volunteering this has not been synthesised and integrated to easily enable organisations to access and utilise it. Little of the work is specifically related to volunteering in the natural environment. Research concerning the motivations for environmental volunteering and volunteers' perceptions of the benefits they gain will enable organisations and land managers to develop strategies that can attract and motivate volunteers. The original focus of the research was on volunteering in woodland; however after initial discussions, web and literature searches, it was agreed with the SFT that environmental volunteering was a more appropriate focus for the study as many organisations that manage volunteers do so in a variety of habitats including, but not limited to, woodlands.

The aim of the research was to provide a better understanding of the motivations for, barriers to and benefits of environmental volunteering for those volunteers and organisations involved. Through a mixed methods approach with emphasis on qualitative aspects, context specific and bottom up explorations were undertaken of environmental volunteering to explore relationships between different benefits and motivations. The original idea of the work was to focus on those who volunteer; however after discussions amongst the researchers it was decided to gain an understanding from organisational representatives of some of the key issues connected with developing, running and managing volunteers. To do this the researchers included interviews with representatives of organisations at a local level (those leading the volunteer group) and interviews with representatives of organisations who manage volunteers at a national level, to gain an understanding of strategic and policy issues.

This research focuses on formal volunteering taking place through government, non-government and charity organisations. The research is focused on environmental volunteering that takes place outdoors and involves primarily practical conservation work. Environmental volunteering can include both indoor and outdoor activity, the primary focus being an interest in the environment and nature in urban or rural areas.

This research explores the benefits to the organisations that manage volunteers and to the volunteers themselves. It also discusses the potential benefits of environmental volunteering to local communities and society. The challenges of recruiting and managing volunteers are also discussed. Links to policy agendas in Britain are made, and to a range of relevant theories, including theories of social capital, values, and community development.

### 3. BACKGROUND: DEFINITIONS, DEBATES AND POLICY

Volunteers provide a major source of labour in the service sectors of many nations, and without them many service organisations would be unable to function effectively. In the United States of America (USA), for example, the efforts of volunteers were valued at \$272 billion (Rotolo and Wilson, 2006a). In the current political and economic climate in Britain the government is devolving responsibility to local levels and to volunteers for a range of activities. The voluntary sector is seen as a strategic partner in the delivery of services of many government departments. A recent audit of public sector support for volunteering in Britain highlighted the enormous economic significance of volunteering and the importance of government investment to enable the full benefits to be realised (Institute for Volunteering, 2005).

Research indicates that 38% of the adult population in the USA is involved in volunteering (Ruiter and De Graaf, 2006). According to Eisner (2005) the number of volunteers in the USA is increasing, with larger numbers of Americans volunteering each year since 2002 (perhaps in response to the 2001 terrorist attacks). However, this *'multiple-year climb in civic engagement is extremely unusual'* and can be expected to reverse over time (Eisner, 2005 p.51). While Australian data suggests that between 33% and 41% of adults are involved in volunteer activities (Pope, 2005) data from three waves of the European Values Surveys/World Values Surveys indicate that, in the 53 countries included, volunteering rates vary from as low as 5.5% to 74.2%; for the United Kingdom it suggests that 16.6% of the adult population is involved in volunteering (Ruiter and De Graaf, 2006). However differences in survey methods and questions can lead to the presentation of different figures. Kitchen (2006) found that 44% of people in England and Wales took part in formal volunteering at least once in the previous twelve months. Recent research commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage found that a sample of 204 'volunteer involving' organisations in the natural heritage sector in Scotland involved over 23,000 volunteers and achieved over 91,000 hours of voluntary effort in an average month. The value of this was calculated at over £14,246,706 per annum (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2007).

Accordingly, issues relating to volunteering are very important and building sustained involvement through volunteering is seen as key to addressing a range of government priorities such as fostering social justice, enhancing biodiversity, building communities and improving health. Information about the motivations for environmental volunteering and volunteers' perceptions of the benefits they gain would enable organisations to develop strategies to attract and motivate volunteers.

The Scottish Executive produced a Volunteering Strategy in 2004 that sets out how it will work with the voluntary, public and private sector to provide volunteering opportunities and encourage and support existing volunteers. It highlights the importance of volunteers and the contribution they make to society as a whole. What has not been much studied in Britain is practical volunteering in woodlands and green spaces and what motivates people to get involved, stay involved and what benefits they may gain from this. Those who recruit and manage volunteers could gain valuable insights into how to attract new volunteers and maintain the interest of their existing volunteers through a more comprehensive understanding of why people volunteer.

### 3.1 What do we mean by volunteering?

The volunteering code of good practice defines volunteering as *'an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives'* (Home Office, 2005 p. 4).

However, there is a range of meanings and definitions of volunteering and these can be different between diverse countries across the globe. The diversity of understandings of volunteering is highlighted by the sheer number of definitions of volunteering. For example, volunteering has been variously described as:

*'an unpaid activity where someone gives their time to help a not-for-profit organisation or an individual who they are not related to'* (Volunteering England Information Team, 2006).

*'any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organisation'* (Wilson, 2000 p. 215).

*'unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group'* (Wilson et al., 2005 p. 32).

*'effortful, sustained, and non-remunerative'* (Clary and Snyder, 1999 p. 156).

*'pro-social behaviour, a sustained commitment to helping others, involving personal sacrifice to the volunteer'* (Black and Living, 2004 p. 526).

*'long-term, planned pro-social behaviour, especially behaviour intended to benefit strangers'* (Gillath et al., 2005 p. 425).

*'ongoing activity aimed at improving the well-being of others'* (Mowen and Sujan, 2005 p. 170).

Stebbins (2004 p. 5) defined volunteering as *'uncoerced help offered either formally or informally with no or, at most, token pay done for the benefit of both other people and the volunteer'*. This definition was based on the findings of Cnaan et al. (1996, cited in Stebbins, 2004 p. 4) who had identified four dimensions of volunteering: *'free choice, remuneration, structure and intended beneficiaries'*. Within the scope of this definition, Stebbins identified three main forms of volunteering: *'serious, casual and project-based'* volunteering (p. 5). Serious volunteering was seen as requiring the development of *'special skills, knowledge and experience'* (p. 5); casual volunteering was seen as being more short-lived with no particular specialist training required; and project-based volunteering was defined by Stebbins (p. 7) as a volunteering activity which is *'short-term, reasonably complicated, one-off or occasional, though infrequent [and which] requires considerable planning, effort and sometimes skill or knowledge'*.

Another framework for understanding volunteering comes from a report on Volunteering and Social Development for the United Nations Volunteers (Davis Smith, 1999). This report discussed what might be included in the term volunteering, and a conceptual framework was developed.

Five elements to the framework were identified by Davis Smith (1999) and are presented here with environmental volunteer examples:

## 1. Reward

It is argued that most volunteering is not purely altruistic but that it includes elements of reciprocity and exchange. For example volunteers can be rewarded through training and reimbursement of expenses or by an honorarium. The key aspect of volunteering is that it is not done for financial gain. For example, Project Scotland<sup>2</sup> young volunteers receive subsistence funding to undertake full time placements for a range of organisations.

## 2. Free will

The idea is that there should be no compulsion to volunteering. However there may not necessarily be clear boundaries; for example in Offender and Nature Schemes<sup>3</sup> a prison officer can identify an offender who they put forward to get involved in the scheme. The offender may feel unable to decline. However the majority of offenders in the schemes want to get outdoors and gain real benefits from getting involved. The key issue is that there should be no coercion to volunteering.

## 3. Nature of the benefit

There should be someone (or something) who benefits from the voluntary activity other than the volunteer themselves; which differentiates the activity from leisure. The idea is that there is a beneficiary, group of people, or the environment that benefits other than, or in addition to, the volunteer or people known to the volunteer.

## 4. Organisational setting

Voluntary activity can take place through a formal organisation (charity, public or corporate) or on an informal one to one basis such as helping a neighbour.

## 5. Commitment

Is a certain level of commitment required? Some volunteering is regular and long term while other volunteering may only include a single day's activity; however it is suggested that the commitment of volunteers should be allowed to range from a high level to sporadic engagement. An interesting issue concerning time and how long people should volunteer for is the Big Garden Bird Watch organised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in which people are asked to spend one hour in their garden on a particular weekend of the year (annually) and count the number of birds and different species they see. At present the RSPB does not class this as volunteering

The detailed definitions and frameworks for understanding volunteering set out above illustrate the challenges of deciding what might be included in the term. For example, the Davis Smith definition specifies some level of commitment from volunteers, whereas the Stebbins definition allows for 'one-off' volunteering with no longer term commitment.

In 1996, Volunteering Australia conducted a national consultation which resulted in the development of a definition and principles of volunteering in Australia. The resulting definition varied from those detailed above in that it specified that volunteering is undertaken '*in designated volunteer positions only*' (Maher, 2005 p. 3). In discussing this particular element of the definition, Maher (p. 4) states:

*'Ensuring that volunteers have position descriptions which are written specifically for them ensures that both paid and volunteer staff are aware of the differences between their respective roles. A position that is defined as volunteer marks a number of things':*

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<sup>2</sup> Project Scotland is a volunteer placement programme for 16-25 year olds. The young people receive a subsistence allowance for undertaking a minimum of 30 hours per week of activity for between three and twelve months.

<sup>3</sup> These are schemes in which prisoners and probationers undertake practical environmental volunteering work to gain new skills that may lead to future employment as well as a range of other benefits.

1. That there is clarity between the two roles
2. That the organisation acknowledges those differences
3. That both roles add value to the organisation and its mission.

Such an approach may alleviate concerns expressed by some that volunteers may undermine the job security of paid workers.

Eleven principles of volunteering were articulated, many of which reflect the ideas outlined above in the other definitions (Box 1).

**Box 1: Principles of volunteering (taken from Maher, 2005 p. 3)**

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- Volunteer work is unpaid
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers and do not constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

A distinction is sometimes made between ‘formal volunteering’ and ‘informal volunteering’. Formal volunteering takes place through groups, clubs or organisations whereas informal volunteering is activity that takes place independently of these structures, by the individual (Kitchen et al. 2006; Low et al. 2007). Maher (2005 p. 3) notes that:

*‘One of the main differences between the two is that formal volunteering is carried out through a not-for-profit organisation or project, while informal volunteering is a more fluid activity that occurs without the protection of incorporation and the standards of organisational practice’.*

Davis Smith (1999) suggests that in industrialised countries there will, primarily, be more formal volunteering structures and more of a focus on philanthropic volunteering than in non-industrialised countries.

**3.2 Policy context surrounding volunteerism in Britain**

According to the Institute for Volunteering Research *‘the context for volunteering is changing rapidly through globalisation, technological and demographic change, and the political drive to promote voluntary action as central to civic responsibility and democratic regeneration’* (Gaskin, 2004 p. iv; IVR, 2004). Linking civic responsibility and social inclusion in this view of volunteering is aimed at engaging those who are currently disengaged, and who are not viewed as contributing to society. In other words volunteering is seen as a solution for some of society’s major social and economic problems (The Commission for Future of Volunteering, 2008a). Volunteering has also been highlighted as essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Volunteers, 2003). According to Burns (United

Nations Volunteers, 2003 p. 21) '*Volunteering is no longer seen as a nice to have optional extra, but as the must have building block of communities and civic society*'. Davis Smith (1999) identifies the major benefits of volunteering as economic and social capital. Volunteering makes an economic impact, although very little is known about the scale of this. The approach to identifying this is usually to find out how many hours people are volunteering and convert that into an average wage as though they were an employed person. The term social capital is used to describe the social networks, contacts and relationships that people have. Volunteering makes a contribution to social capital through reciprocity and by building trust between people. However, what is the contribution of volunteering to people's well-being, their identity both individual and collective? Can volunteering bring people and communities together? What impact does environmental volunteering have on conservation and biodiversity? These are some of the questions that are of interest in current environmental volunteer agendas.

Volunteering has been high on the government's policy agenda for a number of years and millions of pounds have been provided for initiatives such as the Experience Corps funded by the Home Office that aims to involve volunteers over the age of fifty in using their experience and skills for the benefit of local communities. 'V', an independent charity, has also been set up to champion youth volunteering in England. Volunteering England was set up to rationalise volunteering infrastructure, create a database of volunteering opportunities and modernise local volunteering development agencies. Volunteering Wales carries out similar work as does Volunteer Development Scotland. 'Do-it' was launched in 2001, supported by the Cabinet Office and Volunteering England; it is a national database of volunteering opportunities in the United Kingdom (UK). The volunteer opportunities come from local volunteer centres and these centres can upload vacancies on to the database (Do-it, 2008).

In 2004 the Russell Commission was set up by the then Home Secretary (David Blunkett) to develop a national framework for youth action and engagement. The focus for the government was to increase civic service and youth volunteering. Research was undertaken to explore volunteering issues and benefits relating to young people; and a consultation was launched calling for responses from young people, voluntary and community sector organisations and businesses. The recommendations of the Russell Commission were released in 2005 and included raising awareness of volunteering, improving quality of advice about volunteering, celebrating the achievements of those who volunteer, providing a range of opportunities including overseas opportunities, and increasing the number and diversity of young volunteers. (Russell, 2005). Funding was made available to recruit one million new young volunteers and 'V' (mentioned above) was created with the aim of getting more 16-25 year olds to volunteer.

A Commission on the Future of Volunteering was set up in 2006 to develop a long term vision for volunteering in England as part of the legacy of the Year of the Volunteer in 2005 which aimed to raise awareness of volunteering and increase the numbers of people who volunteered. The vision of the commission is '*that volunteering becomes part of the DNA of society – it becomes integral to the way we think of ourselves and live our lives, and we are inspired to contribute in this way*' (The Commission on the Future of Volunteering, 2008 p. 2). However the Commission emphasises that volunteering faces a number of challenges such as: declining trust in institutions; risk averse attitudes; cash rich, time poor society; and a lack of neighbourliness and community. Despite this, the Commission believes that many of the obstacles to volunteering can be mitigated or removed to enable a broader range of people to get involved.

Within the Cabinet Office is the Office of the Third Sector; *'government defines the third sector as non-governmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperative and mutuals'* (Communities and Local Government, 2008). The Office of the Third Sector's vision is *'of a society where voluntary activity flourishes and where all individuals and communities are enabled to play a full part in civil society'* (Office of the Third Sector, 2008). Another new programme is the GoldStar volunteering and mentoring exemplar which was a £5 million 2 year programme launched in November 2005. This was focused in England and on spreading good practice throughout the voluntary sector in terms of recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers. Forty-six exemplar projects have been funded in the priority regions of London, North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber. GoldStar also involves dissemination of good practice through conferences, and publications.

The Volunteering for All programme was set up in 2006 with £3 million and two years in which to identify and tackle barriers to volunteering, fund exemplar volunteering opportunities and fund work to raise awareness of voluntary activity (Cabinet Office, 2008). The programme aims also to meet the Public Service Agreement target of increasing volunteering by adults at risk of social exclusion in England. There is a specific focus in the programme on people with limiting long term illness or disability, those without formal qualifications, and Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

In Wales, grants allocated from the Russell Commission implementation budget are being administered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action to increase youth volunteering options and pilot opportunities for the 'less usual' volunteer. The Minister for Health and Social Services has approved funding for a development officer to take forward the 'Volunteering for health and social care' partnership project. This fits into the Welsh Assembly Government's Building Strong Bridges (BSB), as well as the Russell Commission initiative. The BSB publication (NHS Wales, 2002) outlined and identified opportunities to improve and strengthen links between the National Health and the voluntary sector. £3 million was provided to support action and after an evaluation another £3 million was made available over three years from 2006. BSB identified the need to appoint a national facilitator and local health and social care facilitators for every local health board to improve working between the voluntary and statutory sectors.

According to Volunteer Development Scotland (2003 p. 1) *'volunteers make a substantial contribution to life in Scotland through engaging with voluntary, community and public sector organisations, and by being active in their own communities of interest and place. This contribution has an important role to play in helping to shape Scotland as an active, successful and socially just society'*. Issues of volunteering are currently politically important as building sustained involvement through volunteering is seen as key to addressing a range of government priorities such as social justice, biodiversity, building communities and health.

All of the above highlight that the British Government, Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government are providing financial support to build the capacity of the voluntary sector; raise awareness of the importance of volunteering; and make people aware of the range of opportunities that there are, as well as encourage more people within society to volunteer. However, the question remains: where does environmental volunteering fit into this?

#### 4. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING'?

As well as fulfilling the criteria for volunteering in general, 'environmental volunteering' has additional aspects which relate to the context in which it is undertaken. According to a Scottish Government report (Scottish Government, 2007 p. 6), environmental volunteering can be defined as *'the engagement of volunteers to achieve environmental gains'*. The report goes on to note that the common feature distinguishing environmental volunteering from other types of volunteering is the environment. Church (2007 p. 5) refers to *'practical environmental action'*. A Volunteer Development Scotland report (2006) uses the term *'volunteering in the natural heritage'* which it defines as *'activities which encourage and support the conservation and improvement of, education and learning about, access to, and enjoyment of the countryside, coastal waters and green spaces around cities and towns'*.

Volunteering in the environment<sup>4</sup> takes place through many organisations in Britain such as the Forestry Commission (FC), the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Natural England (NE), Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), National Trust (NT), Groundwork (GW), The National Trust for Scotland (NTS), Border Forest Trust (BFT) and the Wildlife Trusts (TWT), as well as many others. National and regional organisations are involved as well as small local groups and associations. This voluntary activity takes place in a wide range of habitats including woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, urban parks, green spaces, country parks, green infrastructure or coastal areas as well as a range of indoor environments. National surveys on volunteering or those that include questions on volunteering sometimes have an environment category. The percentage of people stating involvement in this category is, however, generally low. Recent government citizenship surveys suggest that there are changes to volunteering taking place, such as a lack of growth in regular volunteering, even though the total number of volunteers appears to be increasing (Ockenden, 2007). There are more opportunities for one off volunteer activities and there appear to be more people who want to engage in short term or time limited volunteering (Ockenden, 2007). A large scale volunteer survey in 2006/7 in England of 2,700 adults (aged 16 and over) found that 95% of regular volunteers were positive about their volunteering experience (Low et al., 2007). Eight per cent of current volunteers who answered the survey were volunteering in the category known as 'conservation, the environment and heritage sector'. More men than women were volunteering in this sector, and those with higher socio-economic status were more likely to volunteer in this sector.

Within environmental volunteering there has been a shift away from a traditional view and approach to volunteering that was based primarily on those who had a specific interest in the environment and whose image was that of white middle class volunteers who like to get muddy. Today there is a much broader view of environmental volunteering and a greater appreciation of the wide range of benefits that can be gained by volunteers, as well as a more diverse range of people volunteering. There has also been a move to a stronger environmental volunteer programme in urban areas, and community action and development. More recently there has been a focus on health and well-being. The Green Gym run by BTCV highlights this link specifically and encourages people to think about volunteering as a way of getting fitter and becoming healthier. Doctors can refer their patients through the GP (General Practitioner) referral scheme for exercise to the green gym or other outdoor activity, as well as to a leisure centre. The Tomorrow Project report

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<sup>4</sup> Recently defined by the Countryside Recreation Network report (2008) as volunteering in the natural outdoors.

(Countryside Recreation Network, 2008) highlights that many players are involved in outdoor volunteering including resource providers, regulators, funders, policy makers, government, intermediaries as well as the volunteers themselves.

Environmental volunteer activity can fall into a number of different categories and involve a diverse range of people and groups; not all of the activities will necessarily take place outdoors. The range of activities is outlined in Table 1. The research in this report however focuses on practical environmental volunteering outdoors. The types of activities that are carried out can include restoration of degraded habitats, clearance operations of rubbish or invasive species, conservation of existing habitats, maintenance of amenities such as footpath and trails, the creation of new habitats and habitat networks, and potentially the creation of new cultural landscapes. The work undertaken by volunteers is often much needed and important work that would often not have been undertaken if volunteers did not get involved. Ryan et al. (2001) suggest that many of the improvements made in environmental quality over the preceding decades have been made by volunteers.

**Table 1: Types of volunteer activities people can get involved in with environmental organisations**

Office and administrative activity	Including fund raising, coordinating other volunteers, recruiting volunteers, creating and sending out newsletters.
Education/training and awareness raising activities	Including community and family activities, preparing information, creating newsletters, promotional work, working with schools or leading walks and community outreach.
Campaigns	Campaign work – writing to organisations, members of parliament, raising awareness about key issues, political lobbying.
Practical activities/habitat management  (these are broken down into sub-groups here, as this research primarily focuses on practical conservation activities)	Including managing or improving habitats, checking the boundaries of sites particularly those with fencing, improving or creating access, construction or gardening for wildlife, clearing rubbish, planting trees. This can take place through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Volunteer holidays – spending time away (often for a week or weekend) with a group of other people undertaking a range of practical conservation work. Sometimes volunteers have to pay to be part of a working holiday; this will cover food and accommodation costs.</li> <li>b. Residential placements – spending time living at a specific site e.g. a nature reserve, undertaking warden or ranger duties or working within a particular organisation.</li> <li>c. Day activities that can take place on a weekly or monthly basis</li> <li>d. One off day activities such as tree planting or litter picking.</li> <li>e. Project based activity – where funding is available</li> </ul>

	<p>to carry out a particular project over a specified time scale which may be a few weeks/months or years.</p> <p>f. Full time placements – e.g. Project Scotland which is a new type of volunteering that offers full time (30 hours minimum per week) placements. These last between three months and a year and involve young people aged 16-25 who receive an allowance and can get financial support for their future.</p>
Biological recording - citizen science activity	Including surveying sites and habitats, counting wildlife and managing data, inputting survey data on to databases. The British Trust for Ornithology has a long history of engaging people to collect information on birds. Tree Wardens who monitor trees within a specific area would also fall into this category.
Property and leisure activity	Assisting in built properties i.e. National Trust houses, manning tea rooms, restaurants, visitor centres.
Health focused activity	Green Gym and the Walking the Way to Health Initiative (England) or Paths to Health (Scotland) all involve volunteers. BTCV run the Green Gym and volunteers carry out practical tasks but are made aware of the physical and mental health benefits of the activities and warm up and cool down for each session. Walking the Way to Health and Paths to Health generally involve volunteers leading others in health walks to improve or maintain fitness.
Governance and participation activity	Including becoming involved in decision-making processes about the management or conservation of the environment. This could be through being involved in a Community Woodland or potentially being involved with a FC forest design plan. It may involve sitting on a steering committee for an environmental community group or social enterprise.
Ranger or warden activity	Individuals take on the role and tasks of a typical ranger or warden e.g. FC New Forest Volunteer Ranger Service.

The above table links in with the modes identified by Measham and Barnett (2007 p. 7), who suggest that there are *‘five principal modes of environmental volunteer activity: activism, education, monitoring, restoration and sustainable living’*. However, they go on to point out that *‘any single volunteer programme or group may engage in more than one mode of activity in any given context’*. Volunteer Development Scotland (2006 p. 18) classified environmental volunteering activities into four types: *‘practical work, biological recording, education/training/awareness, and organisational support’*.

### **Activism**

Brunckhorst, Coop and Reeve (2006 p. 265) highlight the importance of *‘civic engagement in local affairs, including resource use issues’*. According to Measham and Barnett (2007 p. 1), volunteering *‘represents an important means of participating*

*in civil society*'. Environmental volunteering through activism offers 'a *pro-active approach to bring about change and empowerment*' (Bell, 1999, cited in Measham & Barnett, 2007 p. 8). The Wesley Mission Sydney report (Hoogland, 2001) quotes Davidson (1997 p. 248) as saying '*it is what a person does rather than what they get which makes them a citizen*'. Activism may occur at a variety of levels, ranging from local (for example, action groups campaigning on local environmental issues) to international (for example, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth campaigning on whaling). In many countries, including Australia and Canada, environmental activists have been involved in voluntary activities designed to change forest policies and management practices (McFarlane and Hunt, 2006).

### **Education**

The study undertaken by Measham and Barnett (2007) identified that education was seen primarily as volunteers assisting with community education. They give the example of '*Friends of Lane Cove National Park*' [which] are focussed on community education through the use of interpretive displays and hosting workshops' (p. 9). However, one of the groups in their study also highlighted volunteers' skill development as an important aspect of their activities. This is similar to the 'Employability' impact of environmental volunteering highlighted in the Scottish Government (2007) report. Other writers put the different aspects of learning under the banner of broader titles such as the 'education/training/awareness' classification within the Volunteer Development Scotland (2006) report. Gooch (2004), for instance, highlights the role of Landcare groups in Australia in both raising individual and community awareness and developing individual skills.

### **Monitoring**

Environmental monitoring (or 'biological recording' as it is termed by Volunteer Development Scotland) is another important aspect of environmental volunteering. According to Savan, Morgan and Gore (2003) the US EPA keeps records of over 700 such programmes. Cohn (2008 p. 193) claims that between 60,000 and 80,000 volunteers participate in the 'annual Christmas bird count', undertaken by volunteers of the National Audubon Society in the USA. In Australia, volunteers with the Australian Threatened Bird network contribute on average 2550 hours per year on census and surveys of birds (Weston et al. 2003). The benefits of involving volunteers in environmental volunteering are obvious. Cohn (p. 193) state that: '*Using volunteers...allows scientists to gather data on a larger geographic scale and over a longer time period than is possible in more traditional scientific research*'. However, a key issue often raised in relation to volunteer environmental monitoring (also referred to as 'citizen science' (Cohn, 2008 p. 193) is the question of data reliability. This highlights the importance of appropriate training and the development of appropriate research protocols for such volunteer researchers (Cohn p. 194). Ellis and Waterton (2004) raise questions about the intersection between volunteer identities and expectations with those of biodiversity policy makers with whom they may be collaborating. They highlight the need for both volunteers and policy makers to reflect on and recognise the perspectives and 'knowledges' of the other in order to optimise the outcomes from such volunteer involvement.

### **Restoration**

Perhaps the most obvious form of environmental volunteering is 'ecological restoration' (Measham and Barnett, 2007), or as Volunteer Development Scotland (2006 p. 18) puts it: '*managing or improving habitats*', '*improving access*', and '*gardening for wildlife*'. Measham and Barnett (p. 10) state: '*Generally, the involvement of volunteers in environmental restoration focuses on removal of noxious weeds, replanting of vegetation and providing habitat for wildlife*'.

### **Sustainable living**

According to Measham and Barnett (p. 10), the ‘most recent mode of environmental volunteering relates to recent interest in reducing ecological footprints by implementing effective modes of energy use and reducing waste at the household level’. This mode of volunteering is closely related both to activism and to community education.

### **Organisational support**

Volunteer Development Scotland (2006 p. 18) reports that organisational support is ‘the most frequently reported group of activities that volunteers are involved in’. It includes involvement in management committees/steering groups, co-ordinating other volunteers, fundraising, administration/office activities, campaigning, marketing and driving (p. 19).

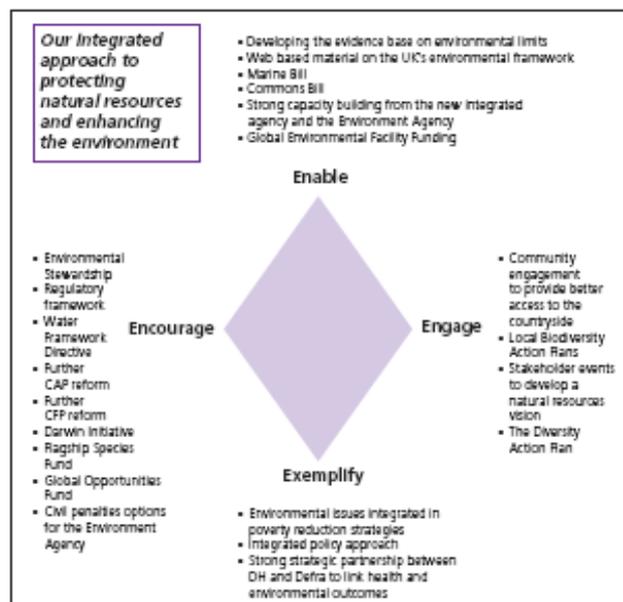
## **4.1 Potential contribution of environmental volunteering to wider policy agendas**

Volunteering in the environment can contribute and link into a range of current government policy agendas. Highlighting linkages with different policies can raise awareness of the wide range of benefits that can be gained from this type of volunteering.

### **Sustainable development**

Securing the future (HM Government, 2005 p. 97) describes how ‘natural resources are vital to our existence. Our health and well-being are inextricably linked to the quality of our air, water, soils and biological resources’. Our landscapes, seascapes and wildlife are inseparable from our culture and sense of identity’. In terms of biodiversity a key target is to bring ninety five per cent of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) into favourable condition by 2010; at present only two thirds meets the target. Environmental volunteers can contribute to maintaining or improving biodiversity through their activities such as coppicing, thinning, creating suitable habitats or maintaining suitable habitats for a range of species. Figure 1 highlights government thinking on its integrated approach to environmental protection and enhancement.

**Figure 1: Integration to protection and enhancing environment (taken from Securing the future, HM Government, 2005 p. 113)**



### **Health and well-being**

While the terms 'health' and 'well-being' are frequently used, the way they are defined is not always clear. Health is often seen in quantitative terms, such as the absence of illness or disease, whereas well-being is seen as a more qualitative concept. Yet the World Health Organization (1946), in its Constitution, defined health as *'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'*, highlighting the inter-relationship between the two concepts. This inter-relationship is also emphasized in a paper entitled 'Measuring Well-being' from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001 p. 6), which stated: *'From birth to death, life enmeshes us within a dynamic culture consisting of the natural environment ..., the human made environment ..., social arrangements ..., and human consciousness ... . Well-being depends on all the factors that interact within this culture and can be seen as a state of health or sufficiency in all aspects of life.'*

The need to increase levels of activity and fitness in the British population is a key strategic policy of the three countries. There are increasing concerns about obesity, and the numbers of people not meeting the recommended level of 30 minutes of activity on at least five days of the week (Department of Health, 2005). Only twenty four per cent of women and thirty seven per cent of men are meeting this recommendation. Also three out of ten boys and four out of ten girls are insufficiently active to gain a health benefit, and rising obesity in young people is causing concern in Britain (Department of Health, 2005). Research that was undertaken into the Green Gym run by BTCV, in which people become involved in environmental volunteering, highlighted the health benefits of practical conservation work (Yerrell, 2008).

There are also concerns about rising levels of mental ill health and there is an increasing body of research outlining the restorative benefits of nature and green spaces (e.g. Hartig et al., 1991; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan, 1995; Taylor, Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). In Australia, a project involving people who were experiencing depression, anxiety and/or social isolation in hands-on environmental activities demonstrated significant improvements in mood for all participants (Townsend and Ebdon, 2006).

However, it is not only in the restoration of those suffering mental ill health that nature and green spaces have something to offer. According to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (1999), mental health extends beyond the absence of mental illness to include the realisation of individual potential and the building of capacity within individuals and groups to relate to one another and to the environment in health promoting ways. Environmental volunteering has been shown to contribute to achieving these goals (Moore, Townsend and Oldroyd, 2007).

Another aspect of environmental volunteering which contributes to health (both physical and mental) is physical activity. Research has indicated that physical activity may be as effective as medication in treating depression in elderly people (Blumenthal et al., 1999). In a study which compared the incidence of depression in people undertaking indoor aerobic exercise, being treated with antidepressants, or a combination of both, Blumenthal et al. (1999) found that after four months, around 65% of patients in all groups were no longer classified as clinically depressed. More recent research has explored exercising outside in a nature-based setting, such as a park (termed 'green exercise') to identify its effects on depression and overall mental health. Reporting on a study comparing simulated green exercise (indoor exercise while viewing photographs of green spaces) with similar exercise while viewing other photographs, Pretty et al. (2005) found green exercise to be beneficial for both

cardiovascular health and mental health. Subsequently, Peacock, Hine and Pretty (2007) compared outdoor exercise (in a 'Country Park') with indoor exercise (in a shopping centre). They found that the outdoor exercise had more positive outcomes for mood, and was associated with increased vigour or energy.

### ***Formal education and informal learning***

Education, skills, training and life-long learning are key foci for governments in Britain. Education is seen as a way of enabling people to move out of poverty into employment; being adaptable so that changes in career direction can be made; building a portfolio of skills that provide an important foundation for identity and self esteem. Formal education takes place in many areas of volunteering, where people can attend specific courses, or can gain qualifications and certificates. Informal learning can also be an important component of volunteering as those leading activities impart knowledge and enthusiasm and as the volunteers share their own knowledge and experiences with others.

### ***Regeneration***

Urban regeneration and restoration are important components of building sustainable communities. It is argued that green spaces can provide attractive places for businesses, and for creating community and social enterprises; promoting healthy living; contributing to the culture of a community; supporting environmental sustainability and encouraging education and learning (Lucas et al., 2004). New woodland planting and green space creation in urban areas often takes place on 'brown field' sites that may have previously been sites of industrial activity. With community engagement in decision-making and active involvement, these spaces can prove to be important resources for local communities. A key government objective is to create safe and healthy local environments with well designed green spaces (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003).

### ***Community development and cohesion***

'Community Action 2020 - Together We Can' is the public engagement element of the government's sustainable development strategy. Together We Can is a campaign that aims to bring people together and is led by the Department of Communities and Local Government (Together We Can, 2008). The campaign is also linked to the government's aim of giving people more influence and power to improve the quality of their lives. As part of this, 'every action counts' emphasises the importance of local action at many levels. The website for this initiative provides advice and support to community and voluntary groups who are trying to improve their local area and reduce their impact on the environment (Every Action Counts, 2008).

### ***Social and environmental justice***

Social justice aims to give individuals and groups fair treatment and an impartial share of social, environmental and economic benefits. Environmental justice deals with the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens people experience, whether at home, work or where they learn, play and recreate. Environmental benefits include attractive and extensive green space, clean air and water, and investment in pollution abatement and landscape improvements. Environmental burdens, on the other hand, include risks and hazards from industrial, transport and municipal pollution. In the UK 'environmental degradation' is a problem for many of the most deprived communities (HM Government, 2005). Both social and environmental justice work are sensitive to power issues, such as who causes pollution and who suffers from pollution. A recent review (Lucas et al., 2004) on environment and social justice found that ethnic minorities, women and young people were underrepresented in their use of parks and green space. In terms of volunteering there is an increasing amount of work being undertaken in urban areas

where the majority of the British population lives and where there can be high levels of deprivation, and where people may suffer from 'environmental deprivation' (Townsend and Ebdon, 2008), for example through lack of access to good quality green space.

### ***Climate change***

Increasing concerns about changes in climate are leading governments to encourage change in attitudes and behaviour in their citizens. Examples include encouraging and making easier the recycling of waste and packaging, and encouraging the use of public transport rather than taking a car or plane travel. There have been a number of research projects which suggest that contact and involvement with nature through, for example, volunteering can potentially lead to more concern for the environment and changes in people's behaviour to more pro-environmental activity. Curtis (2000 p. 48), for example, notes that voluntary participation in Landcare groups in Australia has '*increased awareness of issues, enhanced landholder skills and knowledge, and contributed to increased adoption of best management practices*'. In an urban setting, the Calthorpe Project in London (Church, 2007 p. 71) was shown to have heightened participants' awareness of environmental issues and enabled them to '*contribute to the environmental change through actions such as composting*'.

## **4.2 Who becomes involved in environmental volunteering?**

A whole range of groups and individuals can and do get involved in environmental volunteering either through their own initiative or through encouragement from others or specific projects that are set up. Individuals and groups include:

- Civic environmentalists – when a group of people within a community decide to take social action to solve an environmental problem or take action focused on a site or number of sites to either improve the area or prevent a specific activity happening (such as losing green space to business or housing development). These activities are often bottom up approaches started from a grassroots level.
- Offenders – people in prison or on probation that get the chance to become involved in environmental volunteer work as part of a specific work experience or rehabilitation programme, such as the Offenders and Nature Schemes (Carter, 2007).
- Corporate volunteers – an organisation may allow its employees to volunteer, often for one day a year for a particular cause. This is often linked to the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda (Countryside Recreation Network, 2008).
- Specific groups – these can be mental health groups, excluded groups, asylum seekers, refugees who get involved in environmental volunteering through their group provider/organiser e.g. the service provider working in partnership with the environmental organisation. This category could also include groups of mountain bikers who get involved in creating or improving many of the trails that are available around the country (MIND, 2007).
- Schools and universities – pupils and students may get involved on a one off or more regular basis through their institutions.
- Individuals – who decide themselves to join a group or get involved in any of the activities outlined above. These people may come from a range of backgrounds and be employed, retired, unemployed, self employed or a parent or carer.

- Community woodland volunteers – individuals and local communities may take partial or complete control of a woodland and its management. The woodland may also be owned by the local community (Edwards et al., 2008)
- ‘Friends’ groups e.g. Friends of Chopwell Wood; these groups may have a wider interest and membership and a core group of people who are regularly involved in a range of practical and administrative activities.

The Dalgleish report on Environmental Volunteering, to deliver Scottish Government policies, discusses what distinguishes environmental volunteering from other types of volunteering (Dalgleish, 2006). Dalgleish highlights that the environment is the common factor; it can have a particular appeal giving people a chance to connect or reconnect with nature, to understand nature better and contribute to its well-being. Individuals who volunteer in the environment can also gain new skills, improve their social networks by meeting people, as well as improve their physical and mental well-being. She also outlines that volunteering in the environment can lead to a greater sense of ownership and contribute to sustainable futures for local communities. The Scottish Government’s response to the Dalgleish report highlights the need to develop a more strategic framework for environmental volunteering (Scottish Government, 2007). In mid 2007 a package of £250,000 was announced in parliament to encourage more volunteers to get involved in environmental projects.

The Forum of Environmental Volunteering Associations (FEVA) in Scotland is a network of approximately twenty organisations that seeks to share information and best practice in the environmental volunteering sector. FEVA also aims to promote collaboration and co-operation between its members (FEVA, 2008).

A recent report commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage presents an interesting review of volunteering in the natural heritage (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2006; Scottish Natural Heritage, 2007). The aim of the report was to identify the scope of natural heritage volunteering in Scotland and examine ways of supporting and developing it. A database of 553 organisations involved in volunteer work in the natural heritage in Scotland was developed. A survey of 204 of these organisations was undertaken to analyse their work with volunteers. These organisations were identified by non-random methods<sup>5</sup>. As a result caution needs to be exercised when interpreting the results.

Out of the 204 organisations, it was calculated that there are a total of 23,340 volunteers who collectively volunteer for at least 91,149 hours in an average month. The estimated economic value of this time is £14.25 million per annum. This value was calculated by converting the number of volunteer hours worked into Full Time Equivalents (FTE) weeks and then multiplying this by the average weekly wage for Scotland (£379.90 - excluding overtime). An extra 20% was added to represent the costs of ‘employment overheads’ to cover employee costs such as national insurance, holiday pay and other benefits (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2006).

A survey in 2006 by Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) found that 12% of respondents to the survey classified their formal volunteering as working in the environment (VDS, 2006). The ‘Forestry for People’ research project was a valuation undertaken by Forest Research of the social and economic benefits of woodlands in Scotland that are derived by the people of Scotland (Edwards et al., 2008). Through the research it was estimated that the number of volunteers in forest related work in Scotland was 7,500 and the number of volunteer days (mid 2006 to mid 2007) was

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<sup>5</sup> A sample of organisations was selected from the database using a sampling matrix based on annual income (small – up to £50,000 per annum, medium - £50,001 to £500,000 per annum and large – over £500,000 per annum).

estimated at 47,500<sup>6</sup>. It is believed that this is the first estimate of volunteers related to forestry to be undertaken in Scotland.

BTCV set up the Environments for All programme (through a Community Fund grant – now the Big Lottery Fund) in 1999 to encourage BME and marginalised groups to become engaged in environmental volunteering. A report 'Changed places, Changed lives' has recently been published by BTCV (Church, 2007). BTCV staff were employed to work with these groups in eight locations. Asylum seekers, refugees, disabled groups, BME communities, Chinese community and low income groups were included in the programme which ran for 3 years. Some of the key benefits of the programme were that 1,176 community groups and over 38,000 people directly benefited from the work; 50% of these were unemployed, 13% were disabled and 44% were from BME groups. Two hundred and fifty new partnerships were formed and BME representation in BTCV's paid staff increased from 3% to 5% (Church, 2007). The report acknowledged that, looked at from an environmental perspective, the impacts were limited; however the report argues that the social impacts were potentially significant particularly for those who took part. The work outlines how engaging with the environment can help to shape social identities and improve people's self esteem and confidence.

The Scottish Government (2008) provided BTCV Scotland with a three year grant in 2001 to re-launch the BTCV Scotland Community Local Action Network (CLAN). The purpose of the project was to support groups who wanted to influence and shape their surroundings. Groups that became part of the CLAN network could gain access to BTCV's insurance scheme. CLAN gatherings (which continue) provide opportunities to share best practice and experience. Training is usually run alongside the meetings which often end in a social activity such as a Ceilidh. By 2004 there were 447 members and 102 groups that had BTCV insurance.

In 2002 TWT received heritage lottery funding to deliver the 'Unlocking the potential' volunteer project (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2005). The aims of the project were to encourage more people to volunteer; involve underrepresented groups in volunteering; ensure volunteers receive benefit from their involvement; and deliver conservation improvement through volunteers. Ten Wildlife Trusts ran diversity projects and within the umbrella organisation, volunteer development work sought to promote best practice in volunteer management across all the Trusts. An evaluation of the project found that the numbers of volunteers for TWT grew and 500 new recruits from the target groups were recruited through the ten projects focused on increasing diversity. It was found that working in partnership was an effective way of reaching some of the underrepresented groups.

Timbrell (2006 and 2007) researched issues of volunteering and social inclusion and the impact on space and place. One of her main findings was that volunteering could lead to social inclusion although this was not an automatic outcome. However volunteering can be a strategy used for inclusion for people moving into an area for example.

Weldon et al. (2007) devised a typology of levels of access to woodlands. It is also applicable to wider green spaces in urban areas and the countryside in general. The typology has been adapted for this work (Table 2). The typology moves beyond physical access and introduces a broader schema, from viewing woodlands to being

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<sup>6</sup> This comes from the F4P survey of activities and included FCS, community woodland groups, NGOs, local authorities, public bodies, private woodland owners, research organisations and a small number of forestry companies. 151 responses were received. The results were multiplied up using conservative estimates to cover the known population size for each sector (Edwards et al. 2008)

involved with their management. One of the levels in the typology is ‘active hands on’ engagement through voluntary practical work, which it is argued provides a very different experience through physically digging, clearing or planting than that experienced through recreational use such as walking or cycling. It could be argued that people may experience all or only some of the levels in the schema and that different levels provide people with different experiences and benefits. For example, active engagement and ownership or management might provide people with greater learning opportunities, through their engagement or involvement in decision-making.

**Table 2: Levels of access to woodlands and greenspaces** (adapted from Weldon et al., 2007)

Level of access	What can be accessed?	Benefits of access
<b>Level 0 – Knowing woods and green spaces exist</b>	Knowing that trees, woodlands and green spaces exist for others and future generations can be important for some people. For example, knowing that tropical rainforests exist can be important for people even if they know they will never visit one.	Mental well-being from satisfaction of knowing that trees and woodlands exist and their role in the global climate, biodiversity and enjoyment of them by others.
<b>Level 1 - Virtual access</b> At this level the subject is distant from an actual greenspace or woodland. He/she can only access a virtual or mental image, a TV programme, a picture, story or a memory.	As Morris and Urry (2006:31) point out in their analysis of access to the new National Forest: ' <i>the range, or reach of forest affordances is not limited to the confines of forest areas but may also affect embodied experiences within other, unforested locations</i> ' <sup>7</sup> .	Mental well-being – enjoyment of memories, pictures, stimulation, fascination, development of interest in places.
<b>Level 2 - A view</b> Access to a view requires proximity to green space or woodland but does not require one to be 'in' the landscape. This can be a view from a window or the view while driving, cycling or walking past woods or green spaces.	The changing scenery, contours of the landscape. Kuo and Sullivan (2001) and Taylor et al. (2002) highlight that access to a view of the countryside from a window is a positive benefit.	Mental well-being – aesthetic enjoyment of views, relaxation, stimulation, enjoyment of colours.
<b>Level 3 - Use and 'being in'</b> Access afforded by being in, or passing through, a green space/woodland environment. An activity is usually part of this, which may be active such as cycling or more contemplative by sitting on a bench, or social such as picnicking with friends or family.	Being in, by walking or cycling through green space/woodlands, gives one access to a greater level of sensory amenity. These include sights and sounds and smells of flora, fauna and the environment.	Physical well-being – feeling fitter and more energetic, improving stamina, gross motor skills development, adrenalin rush.  Mental well-being – restoration, calm, fascination, stimulation, sense of place, relaxation, smell, fresh air, changing seasons.  Social connectedness – enjoying space with friends and family, or meeting new people and being part of a group (through joining a health walk or cycle group).

<sup>7</sup> They use the example of schoolchildren who, after a day spent in their local woods, had later participated in a range of activities featuring woodland and connected with their experiences.

<p><b>Level 4 – Active ‘hands on’ engagement</b> Being actively and physically engaged in working within green space or woodland</p>	<p>Active engagement, by digging, clearing or planting gives access to a two-way physical and mental interaction with the environment and can also effect changes in the environment, e.g. conservation or restoration.</p> <p>Leading nature or health walks for a range of participants and actively encouraging people to enjoy nature and become more aware of nature.</p>	<p>Social connectedness<sup>8</sup> – meeting and interacting with new people, being part of a team (through voluntary practical activity). Rootedness in a place.</p> <p>Physical well-being – being active, improving fitness and gross motor skills, lifting, bending.</p> <p>Mental well-being – from physical activity, working with others, enjoying activity and environment. Learning skills and improving confidence and self-esteem. Meaning and fulfilment from getting involved.</p>
<p><b>Level 5 – Participation in decision-making</b> Being involved in decision-making – this could be on a one off basis or on a sporadic basis (not the frequent involvement associated with ownership and/or management)</p>	<p>Involvement in the creation or development of woodlands and green spaces in local area (e.g. Forest Design Plans).</p>	<p>Social connectedness – exploring with others the potential for local green spaces, working with others.</p> <p>Mental well-being – increasing sense of place, interest in local spaces, sense of ownership.</p>
<p><b>Level 6 - Ownership and/or management</b> Being in a position of responsibility. Able to determine the future management of the green space/woodland</p>	<p>Involvement in, and responsibility for, the management and maintenance and use of the area (including commercial uses). Involvement in decision-making and governance issues related to woods and green spaces.</p>	<p>Social connectedness – contribution to developing networks, taking part in decision-making, organising, taking responsibility. Attached to place and community. Contribution to community resource.</p> <p>Mental well-being – increase in confidence and sense of achievement at involvement, intellectual engagement.</p>

### 4.3 Purposes and motivations for volunteering (including environmental volunteering)

In a paper published by Volunteer Development Scotland (Jarvis, 2007), it is stated:

*‘Every potential volunteer will have a motivation for wanting to give time to your organisation. Identifying these motivations will allow you to match the needs of the volunteer with those of the organisation.’*

The paper goes on to draw on information from Volunteering England to provide some examples of the motivations that potential volunteers might have:

- commitment to the organisation/cause
- meeting people
- gaining skills
- utilising existing skills
- keeping active.

Davis Smith (1999) developed a broad typology of what might be termed the ‘purposes’ of, or motivations for, volunteering, which is outlined here with examples of environmental volunteering activity:

- **Mutual aid or self help** – this can be from informal groupings to more formal associations and groups. Buddy systems are an example of this, in which

<sup>8</sup> Social connectedness is a psychological term describing the relationships people have with others in terms of quality and quantity.

individuals may go out into a woodland or green space with someone else to encourage and enable them to become more physically active. This happened at Chopwell Wood in Northeast England as part of the Chopwell Wood Health Project (O'Brien & Snowdon, 2007). Mountain bikers may get involved in volunteer activity in creating new trails and routes in woodlands, which benefits themselves, their friends and other mountain bikers.

- **Philanthropy or service to others** – the main beneficiary of this is a third party and this often takes place through organisations. Improving the local environment in which the whole community can benefit, particularly the users of the green space, is an example of this.
- **Participation** – this is the part played by individuals in governance processes, for example being involved in decision-making in relation to a community woodland or green space, including involvement in how it is created or managed.
- **Advocacy or campaigning** – this might include lobbying, or raising awareness, for example writing letters to organisations or ministers about conservation issues and the protection of species. Lobbying to protect green space from business or housing development is an example.

This last category relates to the first of the motivations identified by VDS (above).

A report prepared in 2001 by Wesley Mission Sydney's Strategic Planning and Development Unit (Hoogland, 2001) noted that volunteering is often undertaken as a 'pathway':

*'...today individuals volunteer with a greater focus on specific purposes that will assist them in their life's journey. Hence, volunteering has become a pathway to success for many people, including:*

- the unemployed who seek volunteer opportunities to re-skill and retrain themselves
- those undergoing some form of rehabilitation
- students [who] view volunteer activity as an integral part of vocational guidance
- those on special pensions [who] view volunteering as an opportunity to contribute to society, to give meaning and direction and social contact to their lives.

Clary et al. (1998) developed an inventory of individualistic functions served by volunteering, and suggested that volunteering is maintained provided that one or more of these functions is being fulfilled. Anderson and Cairncross (2005) list the six functions of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) model as:

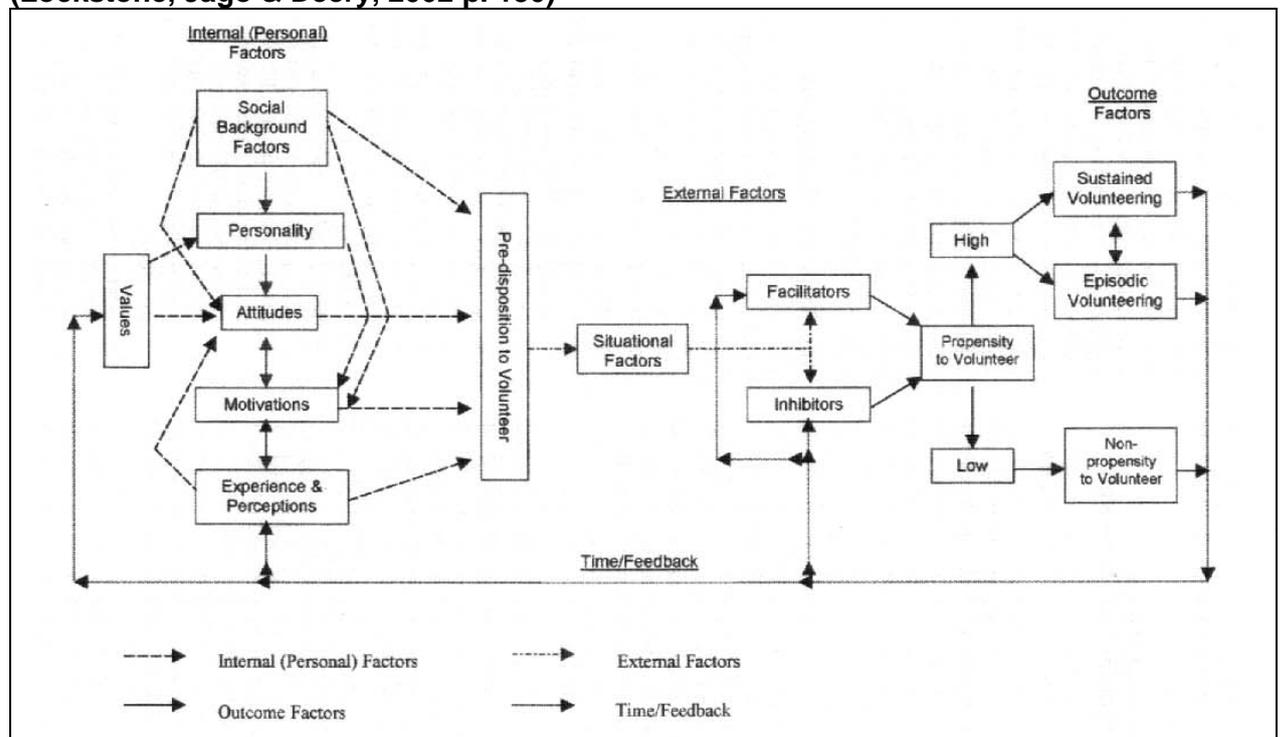
1. Values – altruistic concern for others, or opportunities to use skills and knowledge
2. Understanding – opportunities to practise existing skills or learn new skills
3. Social – opportunities to create new friendships and/or sustain existing relationships
4. Career – opportunities to enhance career prospects
5. Protective – overcoming the risk of negative thoughts about being better off than others
6. Enhancement – opportunities for growth and development of the ego in a positive way.

In two case studies in Australia involving predominantly older volunteers, of whom 80% were retired, Anderson and Cairncross (2005) found that the understanding, values and enhancement were the motivations of greatest importance. The findings of Erlinghagen and Hank (2006 p. 572) that *'the desire to contribute something useful'* (70%) and *'the pleasure derived from volunteering'* (61%) seem to echo the findings of Anderson and Cairncross.

Building on the work by Clary et al. (1998), Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005) combined functional analysis with Role Identity Theory and Pro-social Personality Orientation to explore the predictors of volunteering. What they found was that *'the individuals who are most likely to engage in ongoing, discretionary helping are those who have internalised a pro-social role and who strongly feel that others expect them to continue in a manner consistent with that role'* (p. 414). However, they were unable to determine the direction of the influence: that is, whether it was that *'a volunteer role identity lead[s] to longer and more active volunteering'* or the other way around (p. 414). This issue of expectation is related to the issue of the 'social contagion' of volunteering and the related issue of being specifically encouraged to undertake volunteering explored by Hustinx et al. (2005) in their study of Belgian university students. They report (p. 532) the importance of *'Having at least three acquaintances volunteering and being stimulated to volunteer'*. They go on to say (p. 532): *'On the other hand, if a student reports to have no (former) volunteers among his/her closest relatives, and has never been encouraged to participate in volunteering, the probability of being among the non-volunteers increases'*.

Perhaps the most comprehensive model for understanding volunteering has been provided by Lockstone, Jago and Deery (2002). Their model (see Figure 2 below) suggests that motivations are but one aspect of a range of internal and external factors contributing to varying levels of engagement in volunteer activities.

**Figure 2: Hypothesised conceptual model of the propensity to volunteer (Lockstone, Jago & Deery, 2002 p. 130)**



According to Lockstone, Jago and Deery (p. 129), *'Internal (personal) factors are depicted in the model as directly determining an individual's predisposition or general character to volunteer. ... External (situational) factors may act to promote or hinder predisposition to volunteer based on an individual's status in terms of available free time, work and commitments. ...The hypothesised model incorporates a time/feedback loop acknowledging that non-propensity to volunteer may change over time or if certain situational variables are modified'*.

Penner (2002 p. 464) identifies a further element influencing volunteering behaviour: the treatment of the volunteer by the organisation. Penner states (p. 464): *'Of equal – if not more – importance is what service organisations might do to retain volunteers ...how a person is treated by the organisation. ...Thus, service organisations must do more than simply recruit volunteers; they must work to maximise the volunteers' involvement with the organisation. If the initial level of volunteering can be maintained, a volunteer role identity should develop. Once this identity has emerged, the organisation has a volunteer who should remain a long-term and active contributor'*.

While the motivations for volunteers in general also apply to environmental volunteers, there are also specific motivations that apply to this group. According to Dalglish (2006 p. 8), *'for many environmental volunteers, the environment is the main motivation'*. This relates to the concept of *'place attachment'* at a local level which is an important factor underlying environmental concern (Vorkinn and Riese, 2001). Dutcher et al. (2007) used the more abstract concept of *'connectivity with nature'* or *'environmental connectivity'* in their study of riparian landholders in Pennsylvania. They report (p. 490) that *'our connectivity scale was significantly and positively associated with both environmental concern and environmental behaviour'*. However, Ryan (2005) highlights the fact that place attachment may be different for users of particular environmental settings than for volunteers in those same settings. Ryan (p. 25) reports: *'the volunteer group was significantly more likely to seek another park to fulfil their needs should this park change in a negative manner than would the frequent park users. This suggests that the park volunteers were less attached to their respective natural areas as particular places and more attached to them in a conceptual way, for instance, as ecosystems'*.

Bruyere and Rappe (2007) explored the motivations for environmental volunteering through a survey of 1214 volunteers in Colorado. The strongest motivations identified were *'helping the environment'* (p. 510) and the expression of personal values. This view is supported through research by Campbell and Smith (2006) who explored the underlying values of volunteers involved in conservation of sea turtles, on the basis that such values are a key factor in motivations. They found that *'conservation'* (that is, valuing something for its conservation status, for example in terms of it being an endangered species) and *'scientific'* (valuing something for its interest or scientific properties) values were predominant, with *'aesthetic'* values (relating to the sensory response to the particular environment or species) the next most common. In a study of environmental activism in the forest sector in Canada, McFarlane and Hunt (2006) found a link between value orientations, attitudes and involvement in activism but noted that social context may influence how this is played out. *'Environmental organisations may find support in natural resource-dependent communities; however, local citizens may be reticent in participating in public displays of activism. They may, however, be more supportive of behind-the-scenes activities such as donating funds to an environmental cause'*.

Martinez and McMullin (2004) similarly distinguished between *'active'* and *'nonactive'* members of groups, the latter typically being people who donated funds rather than

playing an active hands-on role. They state (p.122): *'Nonactive members may have had the motivation to volunteer, but, lacking the confidence of active members that their participation could make a difference, competing commitments became the issue dictating their lack of participation'*.

Nerbonne and Nelson (2008) highlighted the fact that environmental volunteering may have more than one set of motivations associated with it: the group motivations (such as the desire to impact directly on policy or to build community awareness), as well as individual motivations. Koehler and Koontz (2008 p. 145) highlight the links between group and individual goals or motivations, saying: *'Group goals can affect citizen participation. Some groups with clearly defined, realistic goals have proven successful in motivating citizen participation'* (Byron and Curtis, 2002; Schindler & Neburka, 1997). *Importantly, group goals that match individual goals encourage participation among those individuals'* (Clary and Snyder, 1999).

#### **4.4 Benefits of volunteering (including environmental volunteering)**

Closely related to the motivations for volunteering are the benefits perceived to flow from volunteering. Moreover, Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan (2005) report that when volunteers perceive that their motivations for undertaking volunteering are matched by the benefits they gain, the outcome of volunteering is more positive and more satisfying. The opportunity to choose tasks matching their motivations also contributes to positive outcomes (Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan, 2005).

However, there is a second level at which benefits of volunteering occur: the practical level, at which benefits flow to the organisation, the community or the environment. The following discussion of benefits is largely restricted to the former (individual) category of benefits, except where practical benefits to the organisational, social or physical environment are linked to benefits for volunteers.

##### ***Benefits for social capital, social inclusion and citizenship***

The issues of 'social capital' and 'social inclusion' both have direct links to involvement in volunteering. The term 'social capital' is commonly used to refer to social structures (e.g. networks, trust, and social norms) which foster co-operation and cohesion within communities, and result in benefits for members of the community (Kawachi et al., 1997; Putnam 1995). As this definition implies, social capital is both an antecedent to and an outcome of volunteering. According to Wilson and Musick (1997), volunteering appears likely to reflect existing levels of social capital. For example, Brown and Ferris (2007 p. 96) state: *'individuals with higher levels of norm-based social capital volunteer more'*. Similarly, Liu and Besser (2003 p. 358) reporting on elderly rural people's voluntary community participation note that *'those with more informal ties are significantly more likely to report higher levels of community involvement'*. However, other research has indicated that *'volunteering directly connects individuals to their communities and breeds the sense of social obligation needed for action at the local level'* (Narushima, 2005 p. 569). Moreover, specific research into voluntary involvement in environmental management indicates that such an activity may have spin-off benefits in terms of creating social capital (Pretty and Smith, 2004; Moore, Townsend and Oldroyd, 2007).

Two sub-types of social capital have been identified: bonding social capital, which strengthens the bonds between like individuals, and bridging social capital, which strengthens the bonds between unlike individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000). In their analysis of Flemish data on membership of voluntary associations, Coffé and Geys (2007) developed a ranking system based on socioeconomic diversity of members, as a measure of organisations' bonding social capital. Using this system, they ranked organisational types from the ones with most bridging potential (Rank 1)

to least bridging potential (Rank 16). *'Environmental and nature associations'* were ranked 10<sup>th</sup> out of 16 on this scale, indicating that they have some bridging potential but are more oriented to bonding social capital. A subsequent paper by Coffé and Geys (2008), which used membership of multiple groups as a measure of bridging social capital, reported that environmental and nature associations were ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of 20.

However, Coffé and Geys (2008) also highlight what is known as the 'darker side' of social capital: groups high in bonding social capital which have the effect of excluding people with different characteristics. This leads us to the concept of 'social exclusion', defined as *'The process whereby certain groups are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, low education or inadequate lifeskills'* (Combat Poverty Agency, Ireland, undated). As well as being closely related to poverty, social exclusion *'also results from racism, discrimination, stigmatisation, hostility and unemployment. These processes prevent people from participating in education or training, and gaining access to services and citizenship activities'* (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003 p. 16). This seems to be borne out by Healy (2007 p. 63) who reports on an analysis of the 2006 Australian Census data on volunteering and notes *'the negative impact of ethnic diversity on volunteering and, by implication, the formation of social capital'*.

However, volunteering has the potential to overcome social exclusion. Davis Smith (1999 p. 19) notes that

*Volunteering brings particular benefits to those suffering from social exclusion. For people with disabilities participating in volunteering can aid social integration and challenge negative stereotypes of disabled people as passive recipients of care. For unemployed people volunteering can improve employability by providing essential work experience and opportunities for skills development and training. For young people volunteering offers opportunities for self-development and risk-taking and provides a valuable grounding in the practice of citizenship. For older people volunteering has a positive contribution to make to the process of 'active ageing' by helping the newly retired adjust to life without the structure of the workplace, by providing opportunities for life-long learning and by improving physical and mental well-being'.*

This is particularly true of environmental volunteering, according to Dalglish (2006 p. 12) who states:

*Environmental volunteering offers the potential to engage people who had previously not been engaged with the environment, including the excluded, with a focus on the environment as a common language and a common baseline for all. ...for both the excluded and the non-excluded the common ground can expose people to individuals who challenge their stereotypes, and provide a platform for genuine integration. Working in the physical environment breaks down the categories into which people are placed and the opportunity to make a contribution is genuinely equal.*

The theme of inclusion is also related to the concepts of 'citizenship' and 'empowerment'. Under the heading 'Citizenship and Nationhood', Dalglish (p. 16) suggests that *'Environmental volunteering can forge a physical link with Scotland. This matters most, perhaps, in the case of newcomers to Scotland, who have seen the common interest that they can gain through the environment as a starting point for integration in the community and in the country'*. A report prepared on behalf of

Wesley Mission Sydney (Hoogland, 2001) highlights the links between volunteering and citizenship:

*As early as 1831 Alexis de Toqueville (Democracy in America) discussed the phenomenon that critical decisions were made by common people coming together in small, self appointed groups to solve problems, create new approaches to production and celebrate local society. 'The members were not individuals, clients or consumers. Rather they were citizens. Acting together they were powerful tools of social production.*

The notion of 'empowerment' associated with volunteering has been picked up by Gooch (2004) in her report on volunteering in Catchment Management Groups in Australia. Gooch (p. 204) reports:

*Some volunteers spoke of participation in voluntary activities as being personally empowering, as the experiences gave them the opportunity to develop personal skills and confidence, including the ability to speak to influential people. ...Many volunteers commented on the training provided by the group as being personally empowering. ...Empowering individuals by using a range of common-sense and self-help strategies helps to develop resilience in individuals, and this has positive benefits for the whole group and the wider community.*

Davis Smith (1999 p.13) suggests that 'volunteering as an essential element of good governance and civic society requires a separation from the state. Whilst volunteering brings significant benefits to society in terms of social integration and economic advance it also serves the vital function of safeguarding citizen liberty from an over powerful executive'. This is supported by the findings of a study by Measham and Barnett (2007 p. 16) whose environmental volunteer respondents highlighted 'political outcomes, most notably as preventing or reducing the impact of residential development as well as influencing the type of development that occurred'.

### **Benefits for health and well-being**

Among the major benefits of volunteering are improvements in health and well-being. Dalgleish (2006 p. 10) cites the Scottish Executive Volunteering Strategy (2004):

*Volunteering can help those experiencing difficulties in their lives, such as addiction, homelessness and mental health problems, to get back on their feet and become fully integrated into communities. For older volunteers in particular, volunteering can improve physical health and mental well-being, providing a means to keep active and contribute to communities.*

This claim is supported by a range of literature. For example, Li and Ferraro (2006 p. 511) say: 'we found that volunteering contributes to better mental health in the older age group, and at the same time, reduces the pace of functional decline'. Similarly, Harris and Thoresen (2005 p. 749) 'found that more frequent volunteering is associated with delayed mortality' and Oman, Thoresen and McMahan (1999 p. 310) identified a '44 percent reduction in mortality associated with high volunteerism'. However, it is not just in terms of mortality but also in perceptions of health that volunteering has been shown to have benefits for older people (Van Willigen, 2000).

The health benefits of volunteering, however, are not limited to older people. A study of volunteers aged over 18 years in four different organisations in the UK (Black and Living, 2004) found that involvement in volunteering had positive outcomes for mental health and well-being across the sample.

Volunteering also results in secondary health benefits resulting from improved social capital. Research shows that differences in social capital may contribute to differences in morbidity and mortality both within and between different population groups (Kawachi et al., 1997; Putnam, 1995 and 2000; Runyan et al., 1998; Baum, 1999; Leeder and Dominello, 1999; Lynch and Kaplan, 1997). At a population level, people with low levels of social integration experience death rates two or three times higher than well integrated people (Berkman, 1995, cited in Wilkinson, 1999; House et al., 1988). At an individual level, a USA study by Kawachi et al. (1996, cited in Baum, 1999) found that people experiencing social isolation *'were 6.59 times less likely to survive a stroke, 3.22 times more likely to commit suicide and 1.59 times less likely to survive coronary heart disease'*.

Another secondary health benefit flowing from volunteering is via improved self esteem and pride. Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) explored the links between volunteering, the benefits for volunteers in terms of personal pride and respect, and the flow-on effects in terms of commitment of volunteers to the organisation. They found that volunteer work was associated with a sense of pride for volunteers, and that the support they receive from the organisation/s in which they volunteer makes them feel respected within the organisation. In turn, that pride and respect contribute to increased self-esteem and flow back as ongoing commitment to the organisation/s. Given that low self-esteem has been identified as being associated with problems such as alcohol abuse (Pritchard, Wilson and Yamnitz, 2007) and *'self-esteem can buffer the impact of stress on psychological distress'* (Marcussen, 2006 p. 6), the importance for health of activities such as volunteering which can boost self-esteem are obvious.

As indicated in the section above on the contribution of environmental volunteering to wider policy agendas, the health benefits of volunteering are increased when that volunteering takes place in the 'natural' environment. Miles, Sullivan and Kuo (2000), for example, noted that respondents to their survey of volunteers in prairie restoration groups in the Chicago region reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with their activities. They reported that the opportunity for volunteers to be involved in *'meaningful action'* and to feed their *'fascination with nature'* were key sources of this satisfaction. Lawrence (2005) also reports personal meaning as an outcome for volunteers involved in biological monitoring, and links this to *'the empowering potential of participation in nature'* (p. 12).

In related research, Ojala (2007) studied worry about environmental problems and its impact on young volunteers. She reports (p. 739) that worry was seen as *'a constructive force'*, a motivator for engagement in environmental volunteering, which in turn led to feelings of self-efficacy and acted *'as a buffer against excessive feelings of guilt-mixed worry'*.

#### ***Other benefits (including organisational and environmental benefits)***

There are also benefits to be gained for organisations who manage volunteers in helping them to achieve their objectives. Tacticos and Gardner (2005 p. 17) reported that in their study of two Australian community health services, *volunteers were involved to extend and enhance service delivery where insufficient funding led to paid staff being over-stretched'*. While this was seen as helpful in terms of reducing pressure on paid staff and improving outcomes for service users, it did lead *'to tension ... regarding the delineation between the roles of paid and unpaid staff'* (p. 22). Tacticos and Gardner (p. 17) raise important questions: *'there are contentious questions surrounding volunteer activity. Is it exploitation of the volunteers? Is it condescending to the people being assisted to have a volunteer instead of a paid staff person; and are volunteers replacing paid workers?'* They go on to comment (p.

22): *'Volunteering Australia's policy that volunteer activity only occur in designated volunteer positions to avoid volunteers replacing paid staff seemed a good ideal but difficult to achieve in practice, especially in an environment of reduced funding and increased service delivery expectations'*.

In the New Forest, the Forestry Commission (FC) has developed a volunteer ranger service which provides extensive training for volunteers. After training the volunteers commit to working two days a month for FC: they get FC clothing and can drive official FC vehicles. Not only do the volunteer rangers help FC staff undertake important work; they also act as another visible presence within the Forest of the FC's on-going management (Garner, 2002).

Environmental benefits have also been identified as flowing from environmental volunteering. For example, Cline and Collins (2003) reported on a study of volunteer involvement in watershed associations in West Virginia, USA. They noted (p. 381 and 382) *'the observed ability of watershed associations to coordinate collaborative efforts among different organisations and government agencies to address major watershed problems. By engaging in partnerships, technical and financial resources can be obtained to undertake large-scale watershed protection actions that may have been unavailable to one organisation or government agency acting alone'*.

In a review of two programmes through which support was channelled to voluntary environmental groups (McCulloch and Moxen, 1994 p. 16) reported that they *'produce practical environmental improvements at a relatively low cost'*. This is borne out by Church and Elster (2002 p. 32) who say: *'while the direct environmental impacts of most local projects are indeed limited and are mostly restricted to improvements in their own localities ...the collective impact of such projects on national targets for sustainable development is increasingly significant'*. Likewise, Foster-Smith and Evans (2002 p. 207) reported that the biological monitoring by volunteers through the Earthwatch Institute produced data that were *'not significantly different'* from that collected by scientists, indicating that volunteers who are appropriately trained have the ability to collect data accurately and thereby make valuable contributions to environmental knowledge. Lawrence (2006 p. 291) states:

*Volunteers' data can be used to change housing development plans (Bathe, 1993; Key, 1993), to protect livelihoods ..., to prosecute environmentally neglectful governments ..., and to change policy (Evans et al., 2000).*

A related benefit of environmental volunteering is the impact it has on the environmental awareness, knowledge, attachment and sense of responsibility of volunteers (Evans and Birchenough, 2001, cited in Foster-Smith & Evans, 2002). It is hard to believe that such a change will not impact positively on individuals' behaviour towards the environment, and there is research evidence to support this. Research undertaken by BTCV found that volunteering changed attitudes across a broad range of environmental and social issues (2008b). According to Ryan, Kaplan and Grese (2001 p. 644), *'volunteers are transformed in their outlook toward the environment, becoming more likely to landscape with native plants, more apt to want to protect natural areas and more attached to local natural areas'*.

## 4.5 Barriers to volunteering (including environmental volunteering)

### **Time pressures**

One of the most obvious barriers to volunteering is lack of available time. According to Warburton and Crosier (2001), the dual trends to increasing work hours and growth in female workforce participation are likely to pose a barrier to participation in volunteering. However, they emphasise that time constraints are just one of the factors impacting on potential volunteers' decision to participate. A telephone survey of 800 people in Victoria, Australia in 2005 explored levels of volunteering, reasons for volunteering/not volunteering, and barriers to volunteering (Pope, 2005). Pope (p. 30-31) reports: *The most common barrier to volunteering reported by Victorian non-volunteers is that they are too busy*.

A related issue highlighted by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008 p. 16) is the perception that volunteering requires a long-term commitment. The report says: *People can be afraid to start volunteering because they do not want to let people down if they are unable to turn up regularly*. In particular, the report refers to people with young families, but there are undoubtedly other groups for which this is also a deterrent.

### **Gender**

While not of itself a barrier to participation in volunteering, gender differences are evident in the profile of volunteers. Taniguchi (2006 p. 91) reports that *women are significantly more likely than men to volunteer*. While there is evidence from previous research that being married and having children is associated with higher levels of volunteering (Taniguchi p. 87), Taniguchi's analysis of data from the 1995-1996 National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States indicates that the eldercare-giving role undertaken by many women in addition to paid work may, however, undermine their capacity to volunteer.

### **Management**

The costs of planning for volunteer involvement, recruiting volunteers and supporting volunteers may discourage organisations from having volunteers (Tacticos & Gardner, 2005). Tacticos and Gardner (p. 22) report that in one of the community health services they studied *...changes in funding resulted in disintegration of the volunteer programme as the co-ordinator no longer had time allocation for volunteer support and instead had to focus on meeting client targets*.

Particularly in the context of citizen or volunteer involvement in *'co-management of natural resources'*, perceived differences in the purposes or intentions of some other participants, and *'past negative experiences with collaboration'* may pose barriers (Plummer and Arai, 2005 pp. 228 and 229).

Another issue of concern to some potential volunteers (and thus, a barrier to volunteering) is risk and liability. A report published by Volunteering England and The Institute for Volunteering Research on risk management and volunteering (Gaskin, 2006) highlighted the issues of risk, risk management and liability. Gaskin (2006 p. 5) noted that:

*In more than half the organisations in the survey volunteers have expressed anxiety about risk and around a fifth say that potential volunteers have been deterred from joining them. A similar percentage have lost existing volunteers for these reasons.*

This may be of particular concern in relation to corporate volunteering. McGregor-Lowndes (2005) highlights that while civil liability laws have been reformed in all Australian jurisdictions, there may still be concerns for corporate volunteering. For example, corporate volunteers who receive pay while volunteering may not fit the definition of 'volunteer' and therefore may not be covered by laws to protect volunteers from civil liability.

Gaskin (p. 6) points out that the voluntary sector faces a choice between being 'a sector that does things just to be on the safe side and one that is allowed to take certain risks to improve the quality of life for individuals and society'.

### **Information/awareness**

According to Pope (2005), lack of information about opportunities for volunteering, and a lack of awareness of what is involved in volunteering commitments pose barriers to participation by young people, people who are overseas born/non-English speaking at home, and people in low socio-economic groups. A report by The Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008 p. 15) confirmed this, highlighting the perceived 'low profile' of volunteering information and access difficulties, stating:

*For disabled participants and those from black and minority ethnic communities, this barrier can be compounded by the fact that what information is available is often not in accessible formats, such as Braille or community languages.*

Another group affected by lack of information is people who perceive that they do not have the health, physical fitness or strength to become involved in volunteering. For this group, the problem is a lack of information about the range of activities involved, including activities which require little in the way of strength or fitness (The Commission on the Future of Volunteering, 2008).

### **Other barriers**

Other barriers identified in the study undertaken by Pope (2005), in addition to time constraints, were 'being unable to volunteer due to disability, remoteness or lack of transport' (p. 33). Pope also highlighted barriers identified by other researchers as relating to particular groups:

*For young people these have been found in other studies to include a lack of confidence in capabilities, difficulties with unfamiliar formal structures and organisational attitudes towards young people (Ferrier, Roos and Long, 2004). For the overseas born/non-English speaking at home, the barriers have been found to include gender roles that make volunteering inappropriate in some circumstances, cultural differences with volunteering organisations and a lack of skills or experience (DVC, 2005). For low socio-economic groups, the barriers have been found to include costs, ill health/disability, a lack of confidence and cultural differences with organisations (Gerard, 1985; Lasby, 2004; IRV, 2005).*

Another barrier to volunteering which particularly relates to maintaining volunteer involvement, is the issue of 'burnout, in the form of low personal accomplishment'. (Byron and Curtis, 2002 p. 66). This is similar to the notion discussed by Ojala (2007 p. 736) who alludes to 'a feeling of helplessness about the fact that it is very hard to reach concrete results when it comes to global environmental problems'.

## **4.6 Strategies to address barriers to volunteering**

A range of strategies to address the barriers to establishing and/or maintaining volunteer engagement emerge from the literature. This section highlights a few key strategies for addressing some of the most pertinent barriers. In addition to the

specific strategies highlighted below, Dalglish (2006 pp. 28) outlines a range of strategies, under the headings:

- Leadership in the Landscape;
- Coordination and Partnerships;
- Training;
- Research;
- Networking;
- Targets, Measurements and Outcomes;
- Funding.

Appropriate expectations and acknowledgement appear to be key strategies for volunteer retention. Byron and Curtis (2002 p. 66) say '*Clear and realistic expectations ...including intermediate indicators of success*' may be critical in maintaining volunteer involvement and avoiding volunteer burnout. Similar views are expressed by Boezeman and Ellemers (2007 p. 783) who state: '*volunteer organisations can provide volunteers with concrete feedback about the successes of their joint efforts*'. Bruyere and Rappe (2007 p. 514) express similar views: '*Managers need also to provide volunteers with appropriate acknowledgement and recognition for their work*'. Jarvis (2007 p. 4) says: '*retaining volunteers is largely a matter of making them feel valued and important*'.

According to the Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008 p. 22), a key strategy should be '*tailoring volunteering opportunities to people's lives and needs*'. This has several important aspects: flexibility; the opportunity for family volunteering; accessibility (including for people with disabilities and/or language barriers); and matching opportunities with skills and interests.

Organising activities that address the motivations of volunteers (as suggested above) will assist in retaining volunteer commitment and engagement. Anderson and Cairncross (2005 p. 15) suggest that managers of volunteers need to create '*more meaningful and fulfilling tasks for volunteers*'. Ryan, Kaplan and Grese (2001 p. 645) couched this in terms of providing '*learning opportunities that appeal to a range of volunteer experience*' and providing '*people with the opportunity to help the environment in a very tangible way*'. Another way of putting this is '*letting volunteers perform tasks with benefits that match their primary motives*' (Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan, 2005 p. 343).

A growing issue is that of risk management. Gaskin (2006 p.6) suggests that care needs to be taken that perceptions of risk and risk management procedures do not pose such huge barriers to volunteers that they ultimately undermine volunteer willingness to participate and/or undermine the opportunities for paid staff to facilitate volunteer involvement.

## 5. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The aims and objectives of the research are outlined below.

### ***Aim***

To provide a better understanding of the motivations for and barriers to, and benefits of volunteering in woodlands and green spaces for those individuals involved.

### ***Objectives***

- Identify the motivations of those who volunteer in the environment.
- Identify the barriers preventing or discouraging people from volunteering in the environment.
- Identify the benefits people perceive they gain from their volunteering activities.

In order to address the aims and objectives, through social research, the researchers discussed various methods of data collection. The methods used are outlined below:

There were four levels to the research including (Table 3):

- 1) A review of literature on volunteering with particular reference to environmental volunteering and the policy context for volunteering in Britain.
- 2) Interviews with representatives at a, primarily, national level of organisations that recruit and manage volunteers.
- 3) Interviews with local representatives of organisations that manage volunteers (e.g. the person leading the volunteer group).
- 4) Interviews with volunteers - including the gathering of demographic information, quantitative data through a quality of life questionnaire and an emotional state scale used before and towards the end of the volunteer activity.

There were three main stages to the research process:

- 1) Desk research focusing on the literature surrounding environmental volunteering, other volunteering, contact with nature and health and well-being associated with nature – this was an ongoing task throughout the project.
- 2) Interviews with national representatives of organisations.
- 3) Spending the day with a volunteer group, working with them and interviewing them, and the person leading the group who was usually a representative of an organisation working at a local level (Appendix A).

The idea to spend the day with volunteers and interview them was undertaken for primarily research reasons, but also pragmatic ones. In terms of the research it was thought critical to the data collection process to spend time with the volunteers to develop rapport, hear their stories and learn about their experiences, to observe what they were doing, to explore their interactions with others in the group, and to gain a feel for what their volunteer day was like, and what it consisted of.

In addition to the interviews, the researchers also invited participants to complete the Emotional State Scale (ESS), adapted from the Osgood Semantic Differential Scale (Tyerman & Humphrey, 1984), before and after the environmental activities took place (Appendix B). A variation of the ESS was used by Townsend and Ebdon (2006) in an Australian study 'Feel Blue touch Green' to monitor emotional change in people who were experiencing mental health problems and who had become involved in environmental volunteering. The scale indicates changes in emotional state across twelve parameters such as happy/unhappy, bored/interested, worthless/worthy. The scale is sensitive to emotional change experienced during a

short period of time. The ESS does not control for dependent variables such as natural fluctuations in mood. The impact of these variables however is reduced with the changes measured by the ESS occurring across a short period of time with little opportunity of external factors influencing emotional state.

The volunteers were also asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix C) asking them for demographic details, and about the length of time they have been volunteering for the organisation, how many hours they volunteer a month, and whether they volunteer for any other organisation. The last part of the questionnaire was about the volunteers' satisfaction with their quality of life as a whole as measured by the Personal Well-being Index (PWI; Australian Centre on Quality of Life, 2008). Despite there being many measures of quality life, only a few, such as the PWI, are targeted for general population use or provide information on subjective well-being. The PWI also has demonstrated validity and reliability (The International Well-being Group, 2006). In comparing the results of the PWI to normative data, it is assumed that comparative Australian data would be similar to British data, as no British comparison data was available at the time the study was conducted, this being one of the limitations of using this measure.

In pragmatic terms it was felt that one of the easier ways of reaching volunteers was when they were undertaking their activities. This approach was piloted with a volunteer group for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HWT). The day went well and the volunteers and local organisation representative stated that they did not find the approach intrusive. In fact the volunteers expressed interest in knowing what other volunteers felt and whether they would be different or similar to other groups.

The sampling approach taken for this research was a 'purposeful' one (Table 3). In other words the organisations invited to be involved in the research were chosen to cover a range of organisations in size and scope, to include urban and rural volunteering, to cover volunteers from a range of ages and different socio-economic backgrounds; also to cover a range of practical voluntary activities. The groups (except HWT) were located in northern England and southern Scotland. Twelve organisations were involved in the research.

**Table 3: Organisational representatives interviewed at a local and national level**

Organisation	Abbreviation used in report	Local Reps	National Regional Reps	Type of organisation
The Wildlife Trusts	TWT	Yes Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)	RSPB	Yes Baron's Haugh nature reserve, Motherwell	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	BTCV	Yes Glasgow	Yes and FEVA <sup>9</sup> representative	Limited company and registered charity
Forestry	FCS	Yes – four	Yes	Government

<sup>9</sup> Forum for Environmental Volunteering Activity in Scotland

Commission Scotland		FC staff members working on Project Scotland		body
National Trust	NT	Yes Northumberland	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
Forestry Commission England	FCE	No	Yes	Government body
The National Trust for Scotland	NTS	Yes	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
Borders Forest Trust	BFT	Volunteers with Carrifran Wildwood Group (CWW)	Yes	Limited company and registered charity
Scottish Natural Heritage	SNH	No	Yes	Government Body
Natural England	NE	No	Yes	Government Body
Durham Bird Club	DBC	No	N/A i.e. no national Rep for this body	Registered charity Membership organisation
Friends of the Lake District	FoLD	Yes	N/A	Registered charity Membership organisation
Gateshead Council	GC	Yes – three staff members	N/A	Local government

Data collected	Numbers interviewed
Volunteers	88
National/regional representatives	11
Local representatives	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>

### 5.1 How the data was collected

The researchers would meet up with the volunteers and leaders at the site of the day's activities. After the leader of the activities had outlined what work was going to be undertaken that day the researchers would briefly introduce themselves and outline what the research was about. The volunteers were asked to look at the project's plain language statement (Appendix D) which outlined in a bit more detail what the research was about and were then asked to fill in a form stating that they were happy to be involved or to tell the researchers that they wished to decline involvement in the research. Out of all the groups visited only one person declined to get involved in the research. On the form was a place for the volunteer to request a

copy of the final report and to state whether they were happy if their photograph was taken and used in any reports that were written. They then filled in the ESS questionnaire. Groups would then proceed to the specific area where they were carrying out their activities. Each of the two or three researchers on site would then interview volunteers separately at convenient moments; this could be at tea break or during a rest in the activities. All interviews were audio-recorded onto dictaphones. When not interviewing the researchers would join in with whatever activity was being undertaken. At the end of the day or morning's activity the volunteers filled in another ESS questionnaire. None of the volunteers seemed to think that the methods of data collection were onerous or too intrusive. In fact many seemed to enjoy, or were surprised about, being asked for their views and experiences. As might be expected, for such a wide range of people from different backgrounds, some volunteers were more forthcoming and willing to share their experiences than others.

## **5.2 Data analysis**

### ***Qualitative data***

All of the interviews with representatives of national organisations were transcribed verbatim; the majority of interviews with volunteers were also mainly transcribed verbatim or detailed notes were taken of what respondents said. These were imported into NVIVO which is a qualitative software package used in the management and analysis of qualitative data. The interviews were coded, with the volunteers, local representatives and national representatives being coded separately. Emergent themes were identified from the coding process. These themes formed the basis for the conceptual framework developed to explain motivations and benefits.

### ***Quantitative data***

The Emotional State Scale (ESS) questionnaires were used to explore any changes in the volunteers' emotional states before and after their activities. The volunteers marked on a line that spanned each parameter how they were feeling at that moment. The difference between each parameter at the beginning and completion of the volunteer day was measured in millimetres. The differences between the before and after measures were calculated, averaged and compared between parameters and volunteers. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used to determine significance and correlations within the ESS data. Quality of life data were compared and averaged to obtain scores indicative of how satisfied volunteers were with various aspects of their life. SPSS was used to compare the data with Australian norms. SPSS was also used to identify correlations between demographic data, the ESS and quality of life data.

## **5.3 About the organisations involved in the research**

A number of representatives from organisations agreed to be part of the research as outlined in Table 3. There are many more organisations that recruit and manage voluntary activity; Britain has a particularly rich diversity of organisations involved in environmental activity. The organisations were chosen to provide a range and diversity of activities, opportunities and opinions. Seven of the organisations operated at a national level, while others were specific to a region or county.

In 2007/8 the NT had 52,000<sup>10</sup> volunteers that gave time equivalent to £22.3 million (M. Crosby personal communication National Trust, 2008). The NT has 3.5 million members and protects and opens to the public 300 historic houses and gardens, and

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<sup>10</sup> The figures and numbers given in this section are estimates. It was not always clear how the organisations arrived at these figures and different pages of an organisation's website could sometimes provide slight differences in overall figures.

49 industrial monuments and mills (The NT, 2008a and b). There are 47 local Wildlife Trusts in the UK, with 726,000 members and 135,000 members in Wildlife Watch, the junior branch of the Wildlife Trusts (TWT). TWT is the umbrella organisation for the 47 local Trusts. TWTs manage 2,200 nature reserves (TWT, 2008). TWT also operate a separate grants unit that administer funds on behalf of the Big Lottery Fund and Landfill Communities Fund. TWTs have 33,000 regular and casual volunteers. The RSPB has over 1 million members and 170,000 youth members and 200 nature reserves. It has over 14,000 volunteers; at least ten volunteers for every paid member of staff (RSPB, 2008). The NTS has 297,000 members, 2,500 volunteers and manages 128 properties and 76,000 hectares (ha) of countryside (The NTS, 2008).

BTCV supports 140,000 volunteers and 300 volunteer officers. It also supports 2225 local community groups directly or indirectly and in 2004 operated 210 UK conservation holidays and 72 International conservation holidays (BTCV, 2008). The FoLD have 7,000 members. In 2007 FoLD volunteers carried out 760 hours of work and the FoLD own five areas of land in Cumbria (Friends of the Lake District, 2006).

The FC in Britain manages the 766,000 ha public forest estate, it has 55 visitor centres. FC is the largest land manager in Britain and the biggest provider of outdoor recreation (FC, 2007a). The UK Public Opinion Survey of Forestry (FC, 2007b) found that 77% of respondents had visited woodlands in the past few years. Of these respondents 83% visited woodlands in the countryside and 60% visited woodlands in and around towns. The number of people volunteering for the FC is not known at present, however recent work in Scotland suggests that 1312 people volunteered for FCS in the year from August 2006 to August 2007, accounting for 3334 volunteer days (Edwards et al., 2008). The BFT is an umbrella organisation that co-ordinates the activities of community based woodland groups in the Scottish Borders. BFT projects include Ettrick habitat restoration, the Carrifran Wildwood project, education and arts projects, wood school, community woodlands, ancient woodlands and ancient trees. BFT has responsibility for managing 2,000ha of land in southern Scotland. DBC was consolidated in 1974 and currently has 350 members (DBC, 2008). The club undertakes projects, surveys, recording of bird species and conservation work. Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council (GMBC) Countryside Service cares for over 20 nature reserves and country parks and runs educational programmes, it also organises voluntary activities and highlights that over half of Gateshead is countryside (Gateshead Council, 2008).

#### **5.4 About the volunteer groups and their activities**

The groups involved in the research are outlined below (and in Figure 3). The number of days on which volunteer activity took place differed for different groups and sites. The activities described are those that were undertaken on the day the researchers were carrying out their interviews. The habitat was that which was visited on the day; these and the activities can differ from week to week. For some groups only one site is visited such as the Carrifran Wildwood group or FCS/Project Scotland work which took place mainly in Galloway Forest.

##### ***Pilot group volunteers***

A pilot group was set up to test the methodology for the research. It was hypothesised that spending the day with the volunteers and working with them before interviewing them would be a way of developing rapport and encouraging responses. Also, it was thought by being outdoors and involved in the activities volunteers would more readily be able to articulate the benefits they gained from their activities. The pilot was successful and the data from this is included in the main study as the methods and approach used in the pilot were not changed for the other groups.

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust</b>
Date	22/08/07
Location	Blashford Lakes, Hampshire
Weather	Dry and sunny day
Number of volunteers	Four volunteers
Number of staff	One staff member
Habitat	Flooded gravel pits
Activity	Clearing a footpath near to the lake to open up this area of the site to the public. Use of chainsaws and brush cutters
Frequency of meeting	Wednesday and Friday weekly

***Main groups of volunteers***

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds</b>
Date	18/09/07
Location	Baron's Haugh RSPB reserve, Motherwell.
Weather	Dry but cold day
Number of volunteers	Six volunteers One carer and young man One teacher and pupil
Number of staff	One RSPB staff member and two Greenlink staff members <sup>11</sup>
Habitat	RSPB community nature reserve: marshland, woodland, water body, meadows
Activity	Creating a fence for the tree nursery and some tree planting.
Frequency of meeting	Tuesday weekly

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Forestry Commission Scotland</b>
Date	19/09/07
Location	Galloway Forest
Weather	Sunny and dry day
Number of volunteers	Fourteen men as part of Project Scotland Three older men
Number of staff	Four FCS staff members (3 staff members were with the young men and 1 staff member was organising the older men)
Habitat	Forest and woodland
Activity	Cutting branches from small trees close to forest drive and draining water away from forest drive
Frequency of meeting	Five days a week for the young men and one or two days a week for the older men

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council</b>
Date	20/09/07
Location	Pelaw Quarry Bank, Gateshead
Weather	Sunny but windy day
Number of volunteers	Five volunteers
Number of staff	Three members of staff
Habitat	Pelaw Quarry Bank Pond local nature reserve, a former quarry supporting an established wetland and herb rich grassland

<sup>11</sup> Greenlink staff worked for Central Scotland Forest Trust

Activity	Clearing up broken glass from a tarmaced area and raking a field of cut grass to encourage wildflower growth, taking out fence posts.
Frequency of meeting	Tuesday and Thursday

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Durham Bird Club (Charity – no paid members)</b>
Date	22/09/07
Location	Pages Bank, County Durham
Weather	Sunny but cold day
Number of volunteers	Five
Number of staff	None
Habitat	Grassland owned by a private farmer
Activity	Scrub management – removing willow to stop tree growth on the site
Frequency of meeting	When needed – potentially a day every month or two

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Carrifran Wildwood and Border Forest Trust</b>
Date	25/09/07
Location	Carrifran, Moffat hills
Weather	Sunny and cold day
Number of volunteers	Six – one person declined to be part of the study
Number of staff	None
Habitat	Mountain valley
Activity	Tree planting – aim is to recreate a wildwood that would have covered this area six thousand years ago
Frequency of meeting	Every Tuesday

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>British Trust for Conservation Volunteers</b>
Date	26/09/07
Location	Outskirts of Glasgow
Weather	Sunny and cold day
Number of volunteers	Eight volunteers
Number of staff	One
Habitat	Urban strip of woodland
Activity	Clearing Japanese knotweed and treating stumps
Frequency of meeting	Three days a week

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Friends of the Lake District</b>
Date	27/09/07
Location	Eskdale
Weather	Sunny and cold
Number of volunteers	Four FoLD volunteers Ten Environment Agency staff volunteers (i.e. corporate volunteering) Two Lake District National Park Volunteers Two Staff from West House (three residents of West House – who were not interviewed directly)
Number of staff	One member of staff FoLD
Habitat	Woodland
Activity	Thinning of trees
Frequency of meeting	Every few months

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>National Trust for Scotland (Thistle Camp)</b>
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Date	28/9/07
Location	Castle Douglas, Dumfries
Weather	Cloudy but pleasant
Number of volunteers	Eight volunteers
Number of staff	One member of staff
Habitat	Threave Garden 25 hectare ornamental garden
Activity	Rhododendron clearance, path work, ditching, meadow raking.
Frequency of meeting	Conservation Holiday for a week

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Northumberland National Trust Volunteer Group</b> (volunteer support group who help NT carry out conservation activities at its properties in the Northumbria region)
Date	30/09/07
Location	Wallington Estate, Morpeth, Northumberland
Weather	Cloudy with sunny periods
Number of volunteers	Eleven volunteers
Number of staff	One
Habitat	Garden/woodland
Activity	Clearance work in the garden of the estate
Frequency of meeting	Twice a month

### 5.5 Demographic information for the volunteers

Of the 88 volunteers, 25 (28.4%) were female and 63 (71.6%) were male. The average age of the volunteers was 43 years (SD = 17.6), and they ranged from 16 to 76 years. Of the 88 volunteers who stated their ethnic background, all (100%) identified themselves as white.

The length of time volunteering at each of the environmental organisations varied widely amongst volunteers as Figure 4 indicates.

**Figure 4: Length of time volunteering**

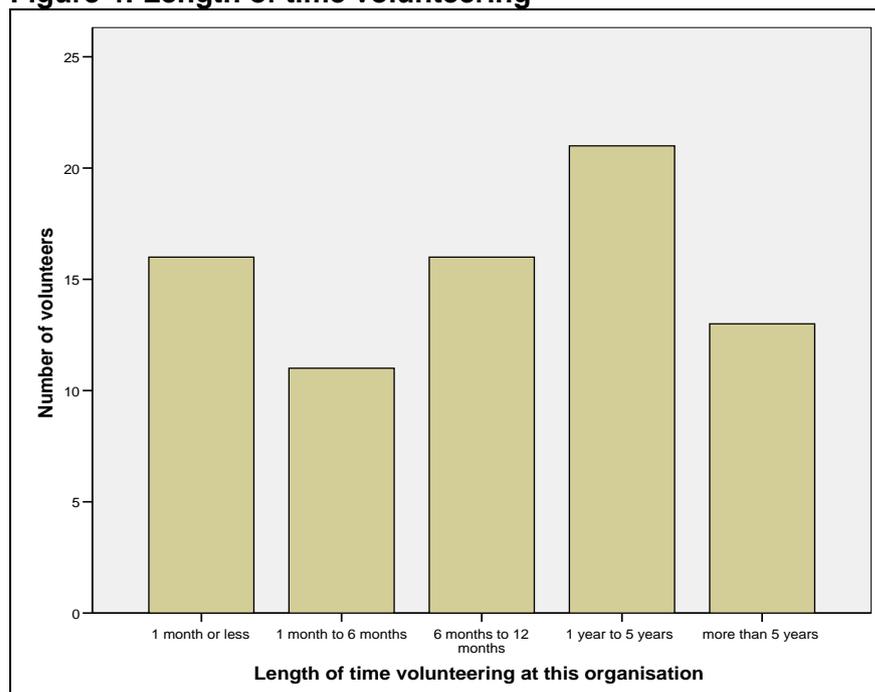
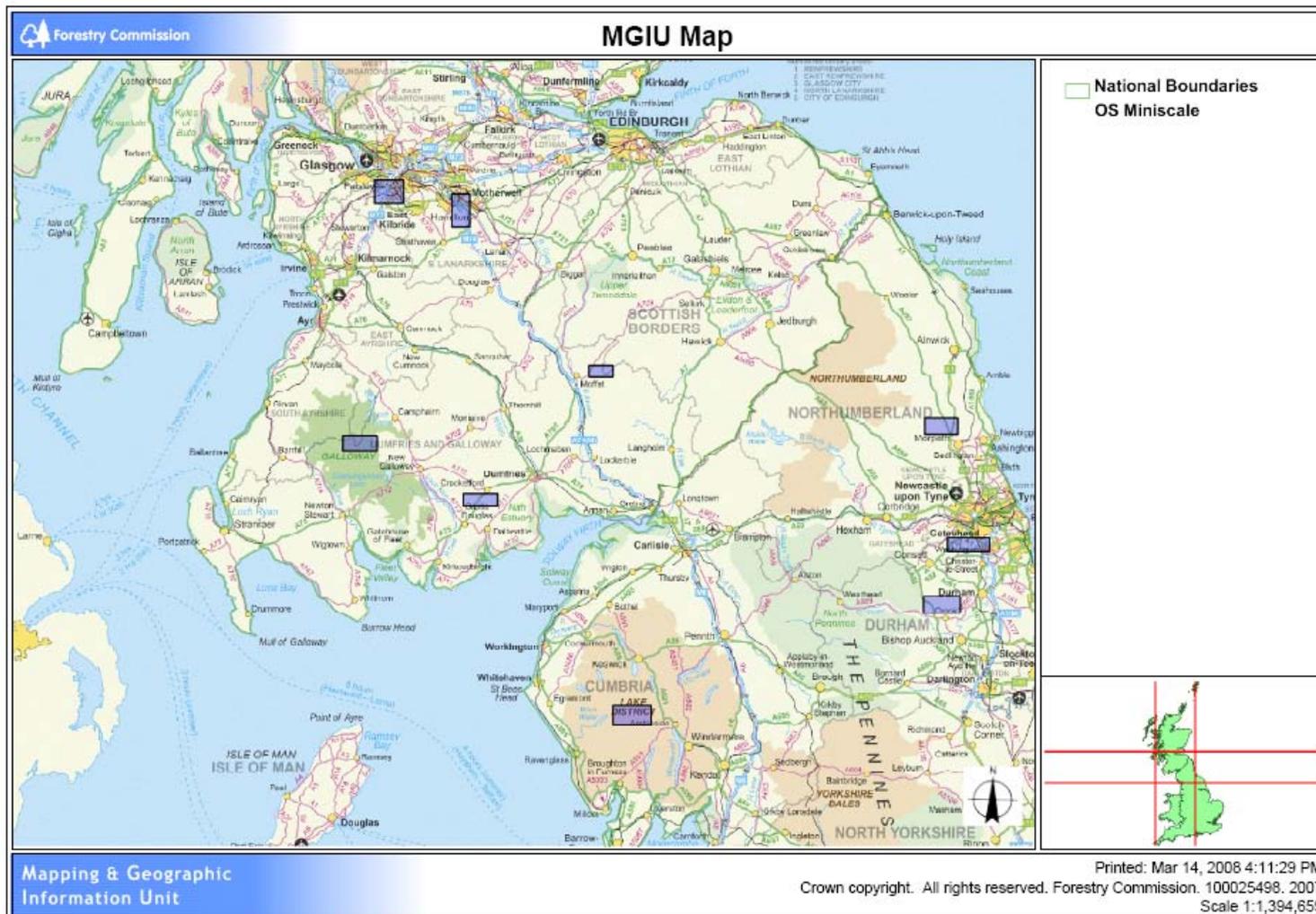


Figure 3: General locations of the environmental volunteer groups in southern Scotland and northern England



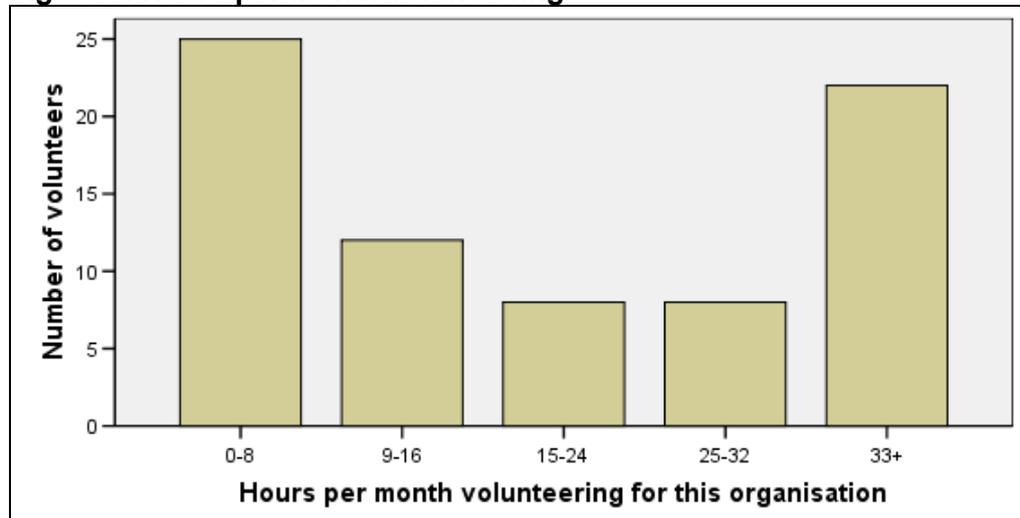
**Groups (highlighted in purple)**  
Location, group and habitat  
 Clydebank – BTCV – urban wood  
 Motherwell – RSPB – marsh, wood, water body, meadow  
 Galloway Forest – FCS (Project Scotland) - Forest  
 Castle Douglas/Dumfries – NTS (Thistle Camp Holiday) Formal garden  
 Moffat – CWW – mountain valley  
 Morpeth – Northumbland NT - woodland  
 Gatshead – GMBC – wetland, herb rich grassland  
 Durham – DBC - grassland  
 Eskdale – FoLD - woodland

Ringwood - HWT group is not shown on this map as it is in southern England. Flooded gravel pits.

### **Hours per month volunteering for this organisation**

Figure 5 represents the hours per month volunteers contribute to the activities of the organisation. Most volunteers contribute less than 10 hours per month, and the number of volunteers contributing more hours than this decreases except for a number of volunteers who contribute over 33 hours per month. The jump in number of hours contributed is the result of the environmental programmes that provided full-time opportunities to young adults.

**Figure 5: Hours per month volunteering**

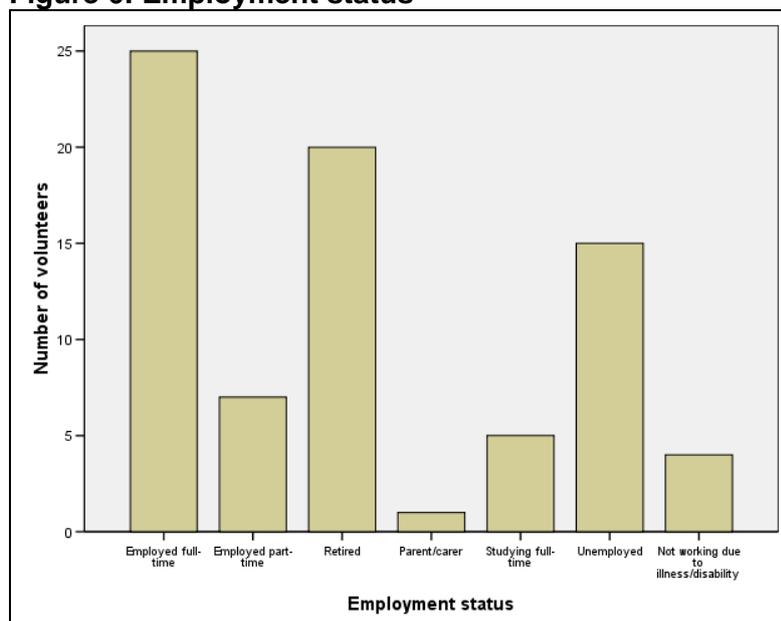


Of the 88 volunteers interviewed 34 were also volunteering for other bodies such as local community groups, other environmental organisations and church groups. Twelve people out of the 34 were volunteering for more than one other group or organisation.

### **Employment Status**

Of the 77 volunteers who provided their employment status, 25 (32.5%) stated that they worked full-time, followed by 20 (26%) who were retired, 15 (19.5%) indicated they were unemployed, 7 indicated they were employed part-time, 5 indicated they were studying full-time, 4 indicated they were not working due to illness or disability, and one indicated their primary role was as a parent or carer. The employment status of each of the volunteers is represented by Figure 6.

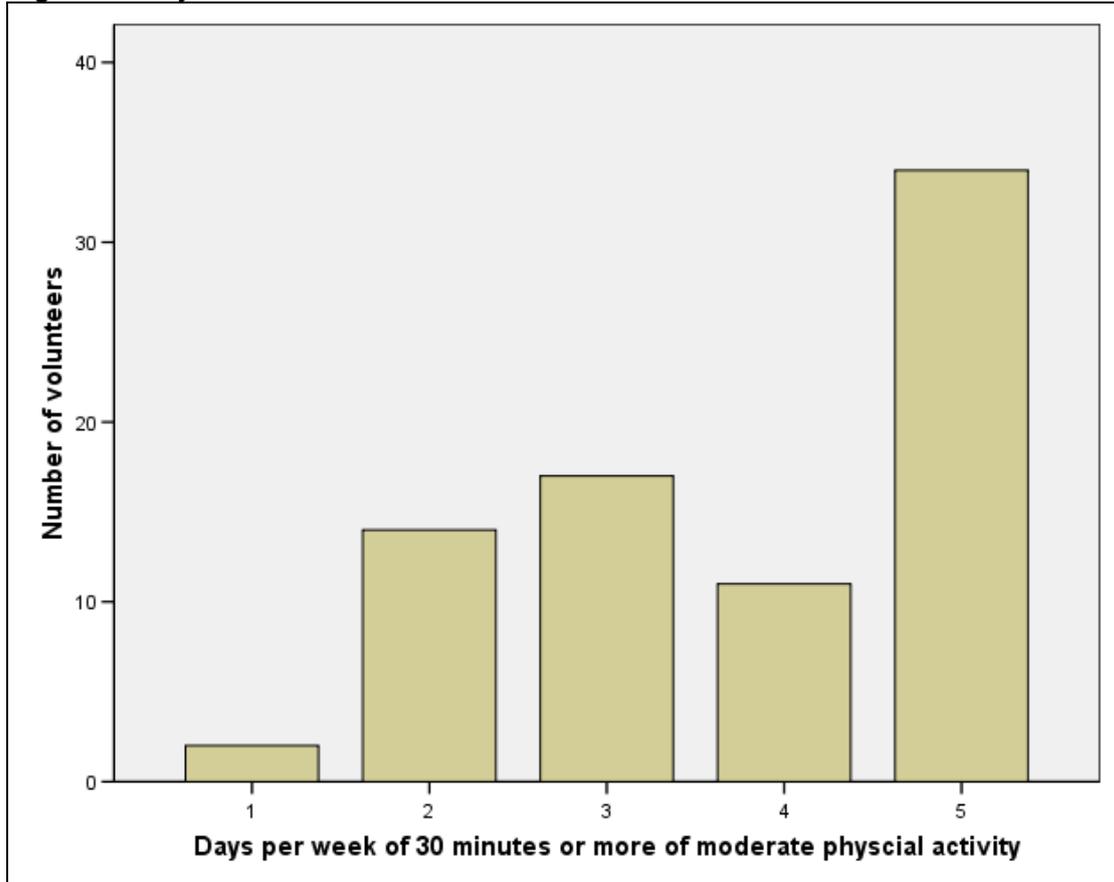
**Figure 6: Employment status**



### **Physical activity**

The Chief Medical Officer in England recommends adults do at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, on five days of the week to maintain health (Department of Health, 2004). 'Moderate intensity physical activity means at a level where you experience an increase in heart rate and your breathing becomes faster'. The Health Survey for England shows that just 37 percent of men and 24 percent of women met the physical activity targets in 2003 (Department of Health, 2005). Approximately 35 volunteers stated they were meeting the recommended levels of activity (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Physical exercise rates of the volunteers**



### **Difficulties faced by a number of volunteers**

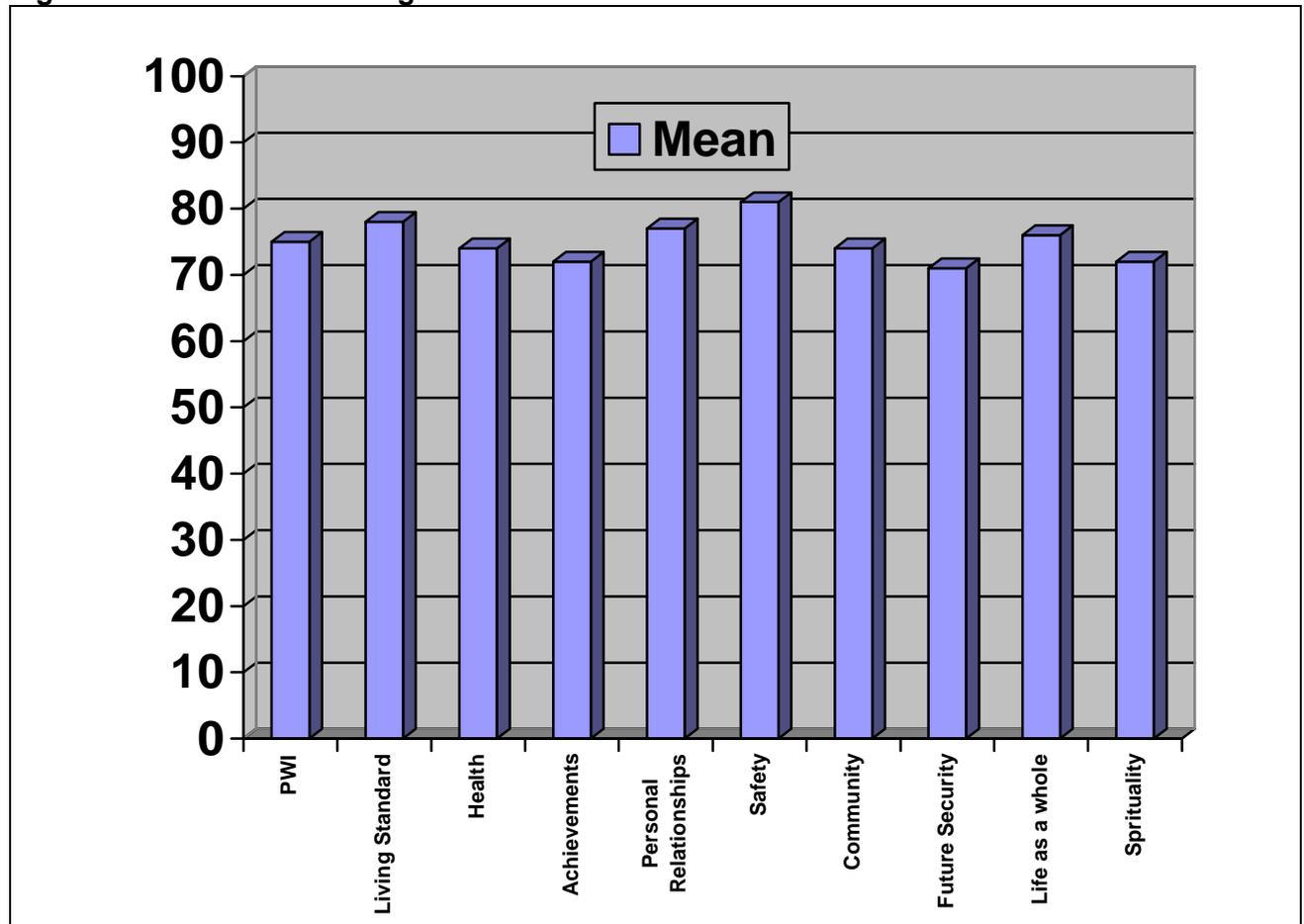
Some of the volunteers suffered from a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties, mental health problems, general health problems, learning difficulties and developmental challenges. For example, with the FoLD there were three people who attended from a care home with two care workers. At the RSPB group in Motherwell, one young man came with a care worker, one young woman had been referred to the group by her social worker, and a young pupil from a special school attended with a teacher. A number of the volunteers talked about suffering with depression at various times of their lives. One older man with FCS had a care worker, however he was able to attend the volunteer activities without his carer. Some of the young men with FCS had been involved in trouble with the police. This illustrates the diversity of people that the organisations were working with.

## 6. RESULTS: ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERS QUANTITATIVE DATA

### 6.1 Quality of life and the Personal Well-being Index (PWI)

The quality of life results as measured by the Personal Well-being Index (PWI) and associated factors indicate that on average, the environmental volunteers reported to be very satisfied with life. The means of each factor provided in Figure 8 are scores out of 100. The means were compared to norms in Australia, as no norms for Britain were available at the time of analysis. In comparison to Australian norms, no statistically significant differences were noted for any of the quality of life factors, indicating that volunteers reported their quality of life as no better or worse than Australians have indicated. No gender differences were found across the factors. The Personal Well-being Index is calculated by averaging the results from the following factors: Living Standard, Health, Achievements, Personal Relationships, Safety, Community and Future Security.

Figure 8: Personal well-being mean scores for all volunteers



### 6.2 Emotional State Scale (ESS)

At the commencement of the environmental activity, volunteers recorded a mean of 68.6 out of a maximum of 85 across the total number of parameters on the Emotional State Scale (ESS), indicating that in general, volunteers felt emotionally positive prior to volunteering. At the completion of the activity, volunteers recorded a mean of 72.3 out of 85 indicating that they were feeling even more positive. The mean difference of 4.4 (T test=3.81, Df=75,  $p < 0.001$ ) between the before and after measures indicates that in general volunteers experienced a statistically significant positive emotional shift during the period of environmental volunteering; that is, volunteers felt

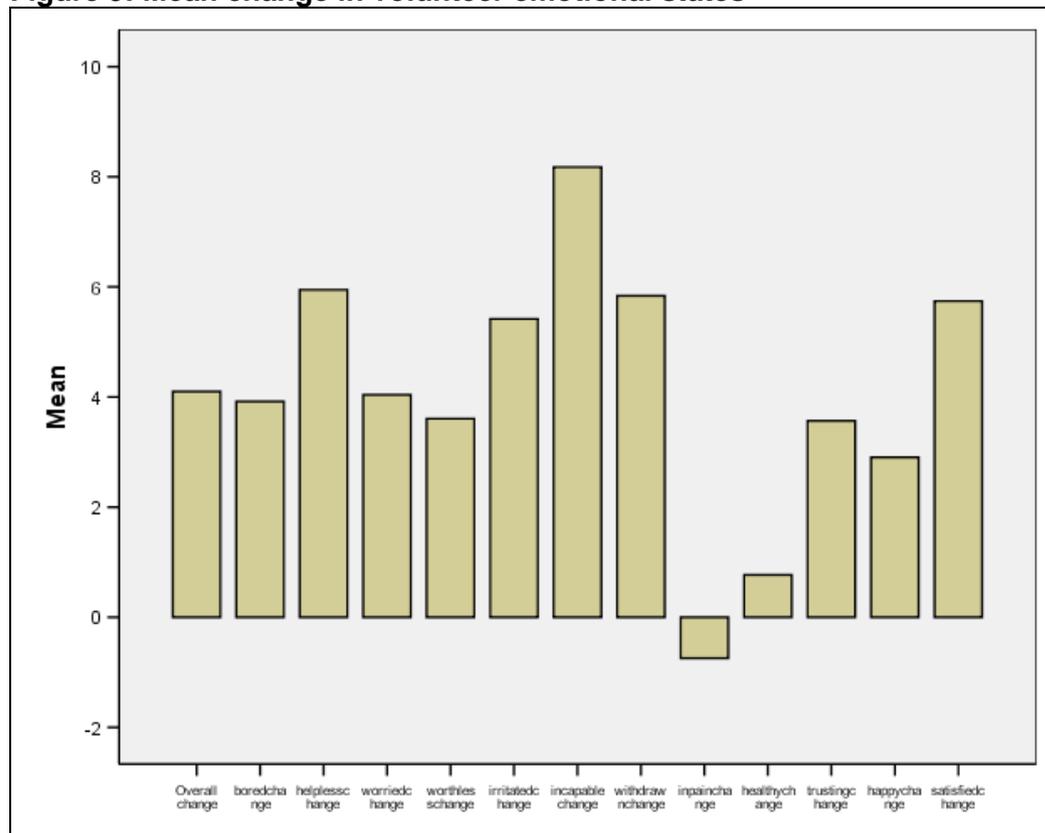
emotionally more positive after engaging in the activity. All values are measured in millimetres (mm).

When averaging the volunteers' emotional responses for each parameter, volunteers appear to record feeling more positive across all parameters except one (In pain-Pain-free). Several parameters were statistically significant for positive change from before the commencement of the environmental volunteering to after with volunteers, on average, feeling more interested, in control, calm, skilful, talkative and satisfied. Although the volunteers appear to report experiencing more pain by the completion of the environmental activity, this value is small and not statistically significant.

**Mean volunteer change in emotional state**

Figure 9 shows the mean change in volunteers' responses for each parameter of the ESS. A positive value indicates that, on average, volunteers recorded a positive change for that parameter. A negative value indicates that, on average, volunteers recorded a negative change for that parameter. According to this figure, respondents generally appear to have experienced positive change in each of the parameters except for pain. Most notably, volunteers appear to feel more capable following the environmental volunteering activity.

**Figure 9: Mean change in volunteer emotional states**

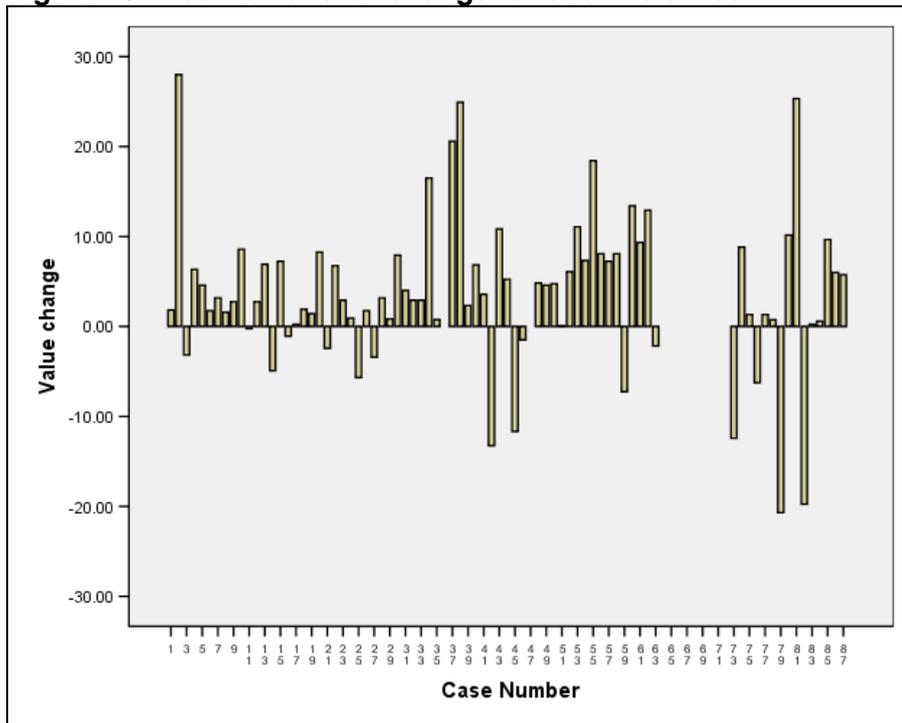


**Mean emotional parameter change for each volunteer**

When the parameter changes are averaged for each volunteer, 61 volunteers (79%) experienced a positive change in general emotional state while 16 volunteers (21%) experienced a negative change in general emotional state, as Figure 10 demonstrates<sup>12</sup>.

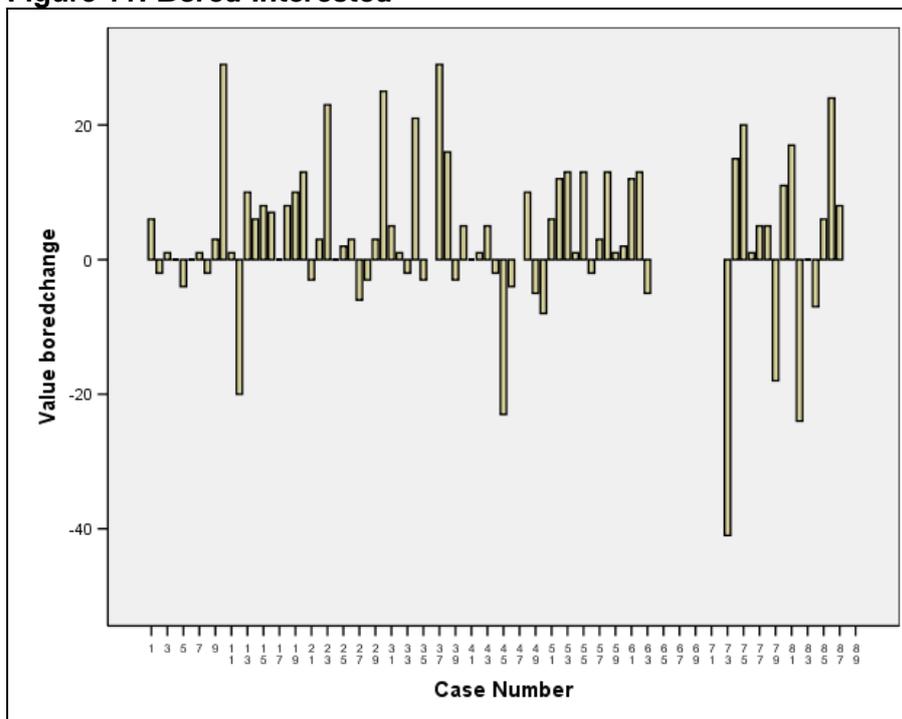
<sup>12</sup> The gap in figures 10 to 22 denotes either missing data or volunteers did not complete all of their forms.

**Figure 10: Mean emotional change for each volunteer**

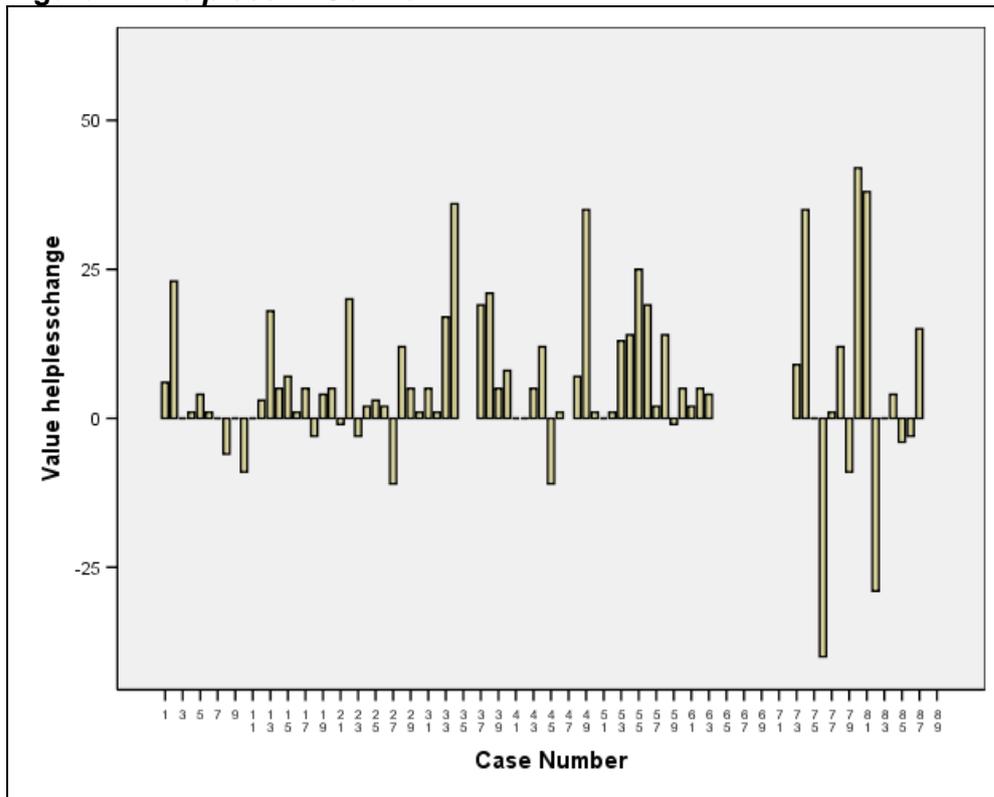


The following Figures graphically demonstrate the individual responses for each parameter. Volunteers who scored above zero reported a positive change in emotional response for the given parameter. Volunteers who scored below zero reported a negative change in emotional response for the given parameter. Visually, the graphs show that most responses were positive for emotional change across all parameters.

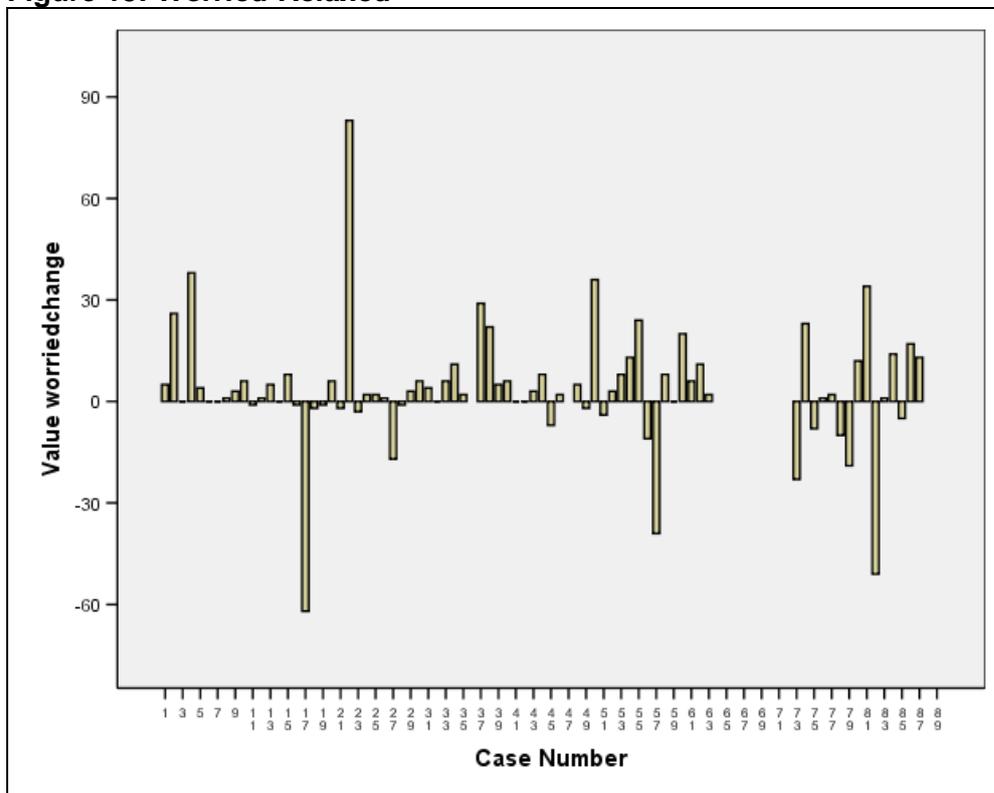
**Figure 11: Bored-Interested**



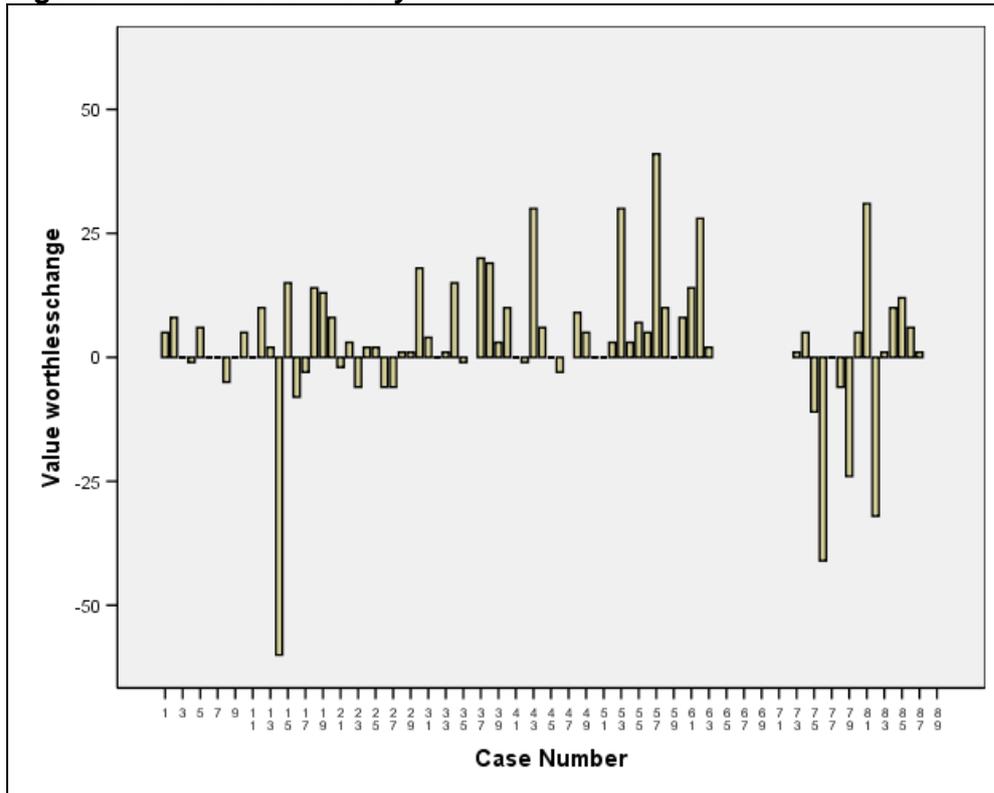
**Figure 12: *Helpless-In Control***



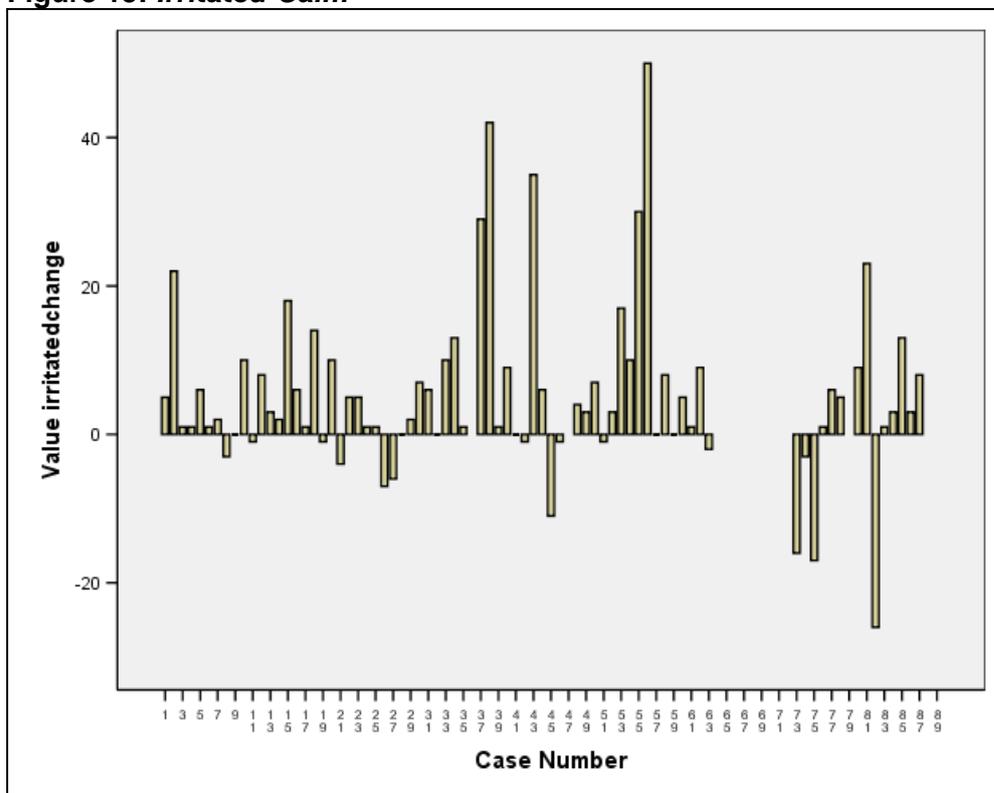
**Figure 13: *Worried-Relaxed***



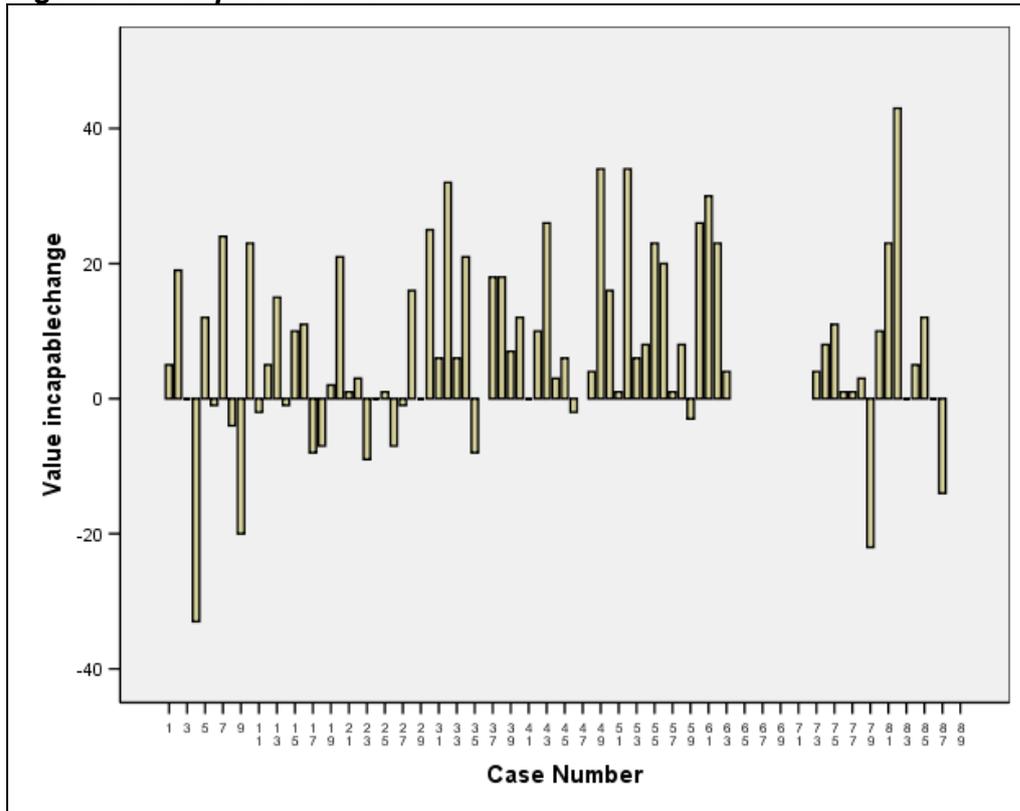
**Figure 14: Worthless-Worthy**



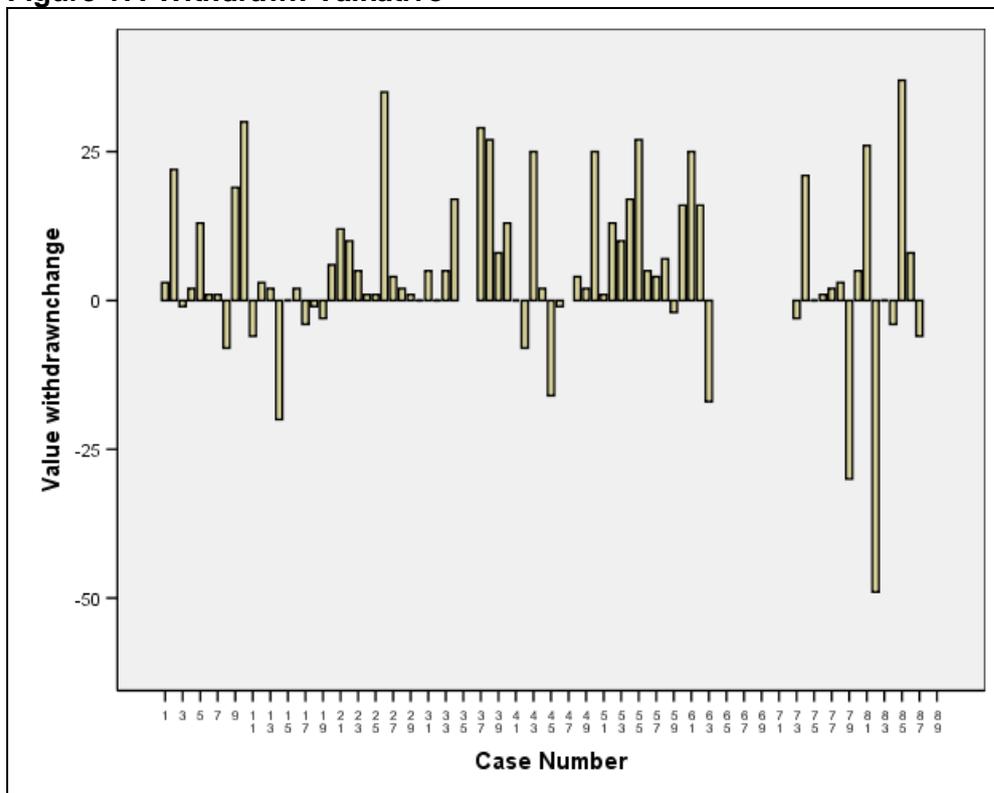
**Figure 15: Irritated-Calm**



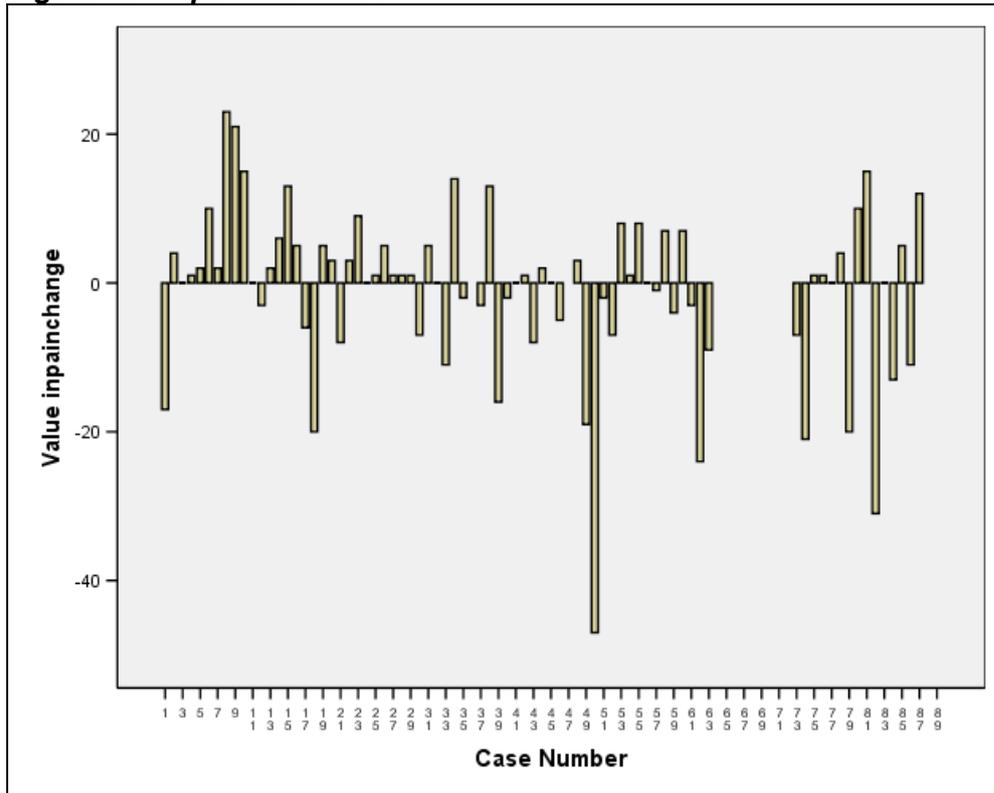
**Figure 16: Incapable-Skilful**



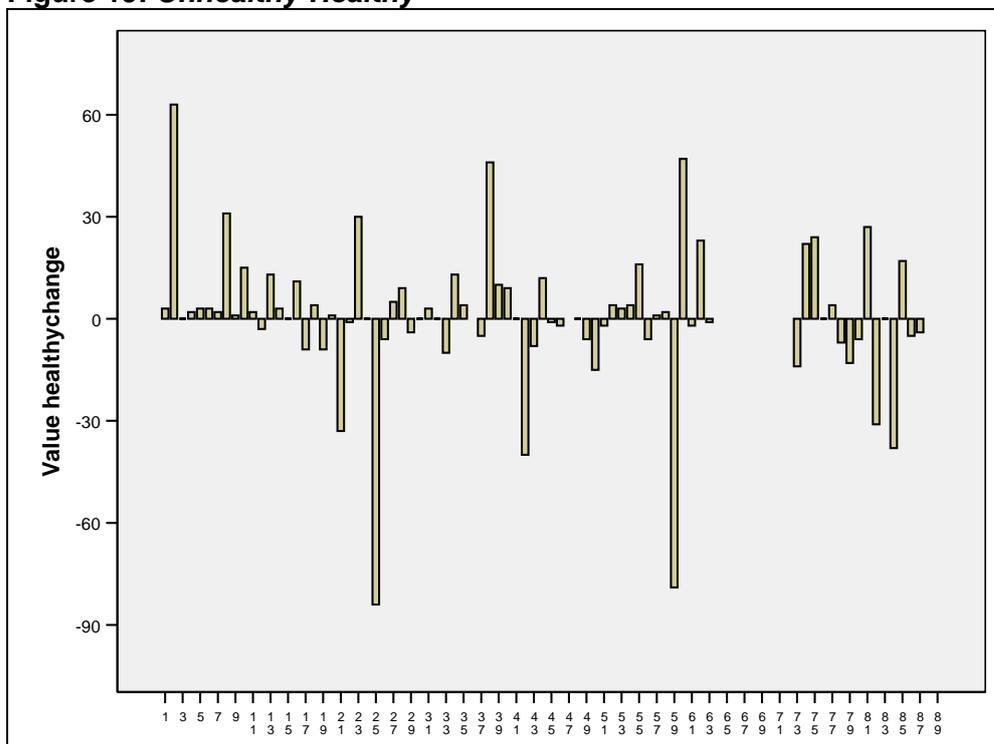
**Figure 17: Withdrawn-Talkative**



**Figure 18: *In pain-Pain-free***

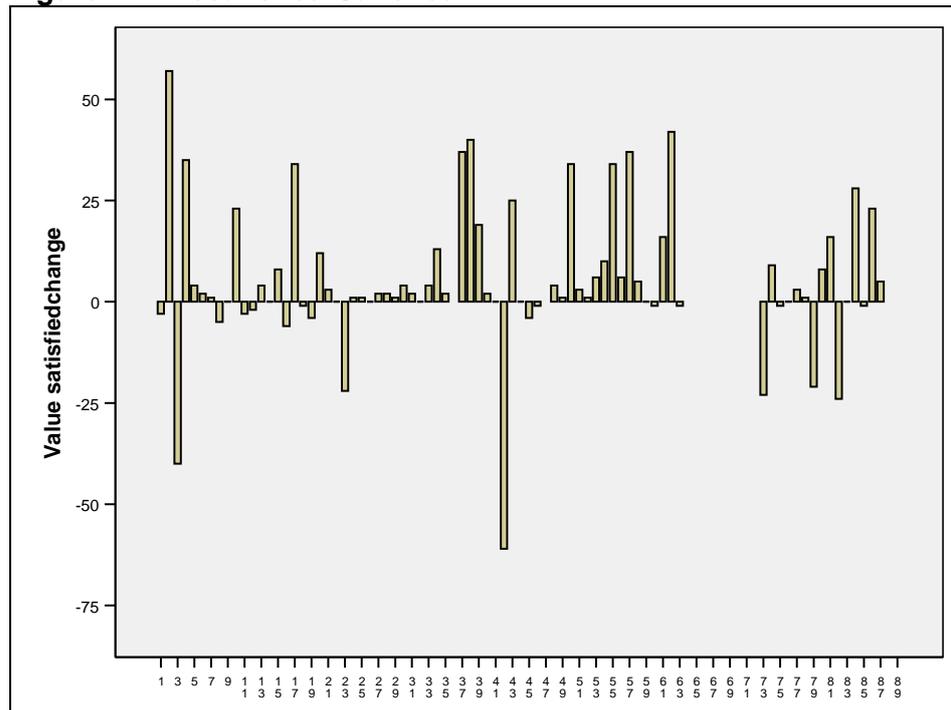


**Figure 19: *Unhealthy-Healthy***





**Figure 22: Dissatisfied-Satisfied**



### 6.3 Correlations between variables

A number of correlations were found between demographics, quality of life and Emotional State Scale variables.

#### ***Standard of living and mean change in emotional state***

The more satisfied volunteers were with their standard of living, the greater their positive change in emotional state.

#### ***Personal relationships and mean change in emotional state***

The more satisfied volunteers were with their personal relationships, the greater their positive change in emotional state.

#### ***Gender and emotional state***

The difference in the mean change between men and women is statistically significant ( $p = 0.036$ ) with females (7.03, SE 1.18) reporting a greater change in emotional state than males (2.47, SE 1.18). Capability was the only emotional parameter to show a gender difference ( $p=0.018$ ).

In summary the quantitative data mainly reinforces the qualitative data gained through interviews on site with volunteers (see following chapters). The results from the quantitative data highlight the importance of getting behind some of the measures of emotional state and personal well-being to explore people's experiences in context. The negative results for pain illustrate this, through the interviews with volunteers it became clear that pain such as muscle ache and twinges were not always viewed negatively as it indicated people had carried out physical work and this gave them a sense of satisfaction. In the ESS this is classed as a negative and without the qualitative detailed work it would not be clear that there could be a positive aspect to the pain people experienced.

## **7. RESULTS: ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES – NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL**

### **7.1 Where does environmental volunteering take place?**

For some organisations voluntary activities primarily take place on the land that they own or manage. For example:

- RSPB on its nature reserves.
- NT and NTS at their built properties and the grounds of properties, as well as other land owned by the Trusts.
- NE and SNH at their national nature reserves, and through the grants they provide to organisations that involve volunteers.
- BFT on the land it is responsible for managing
- FCE and FCS on the public forest estate, and through grants to woodland owners some of which may involve volunteers.
- TWT on its nature reserves.

While the above organisations often work on the land they are responsible for, they may also work in partnership with other organisations to facilitate volunteering opportunities in other areas.

BTCV does not own any land and its volunteer work takes place on land owned and managed by others. Work for most of these organisations takes place across the urban-rural continuum and across a broad range of habitats from woodlands to parks, nature reserves, country parks, nature gardens and heathlands.

### **7.2 The changing focus of environmental volunteering**

From the interviews with national organisational representatives there appeared to be a view from all the interviewees that the organisations they worked for were moving away from what might be classed as traditional or conventional environmental volunteering, that involves those who are interested in, and have knowledge about, the environment; and which is focused on what people can do for the environment in the way of conservation or restoration. In place of this traditional approach, organisations were said to be moving towards being more inclusive and trying to reach non-traditional audiences, through outreach work or targeting community groups at a local level; and are focused more on what the environment can do for people in terms of their well-being and community development. This new focus has been outlined in the projects undertaken by BTCV and TWT that specifically targeted under-representation. One respondent described it as '*moving away from preaching to the converted*' and trying to reach people who do not know about the environment. However, there is a realisation that organisations may not have staff with the right skills to reach new audiences and that capacity building and training is needed. There has also been a move by organisations away from a predominant focus on rural and good quality habitats with rare species to inclusion of urban areas and greenspaces that are not necessarily in particularly good condition. This appears to highlight issues of environmental justice in which there is a view that poorer communities live in areas with poorer quality environments with fewer green spaces. The quote below highlights this changing view.

*We know, and research has shown that the poorest communities experience the worst quality environment and we also know that the environment sector as a whole including BTCV historically, has not been good at reaching out to people who experience very poor quality local environments. And we also are aware that the whole biodiversity conservation process tends, if you read your local*

*biodiversity action plans and all that sort of thing, they tend to focus on the rare and declining species and let's save these things that are really precious and let's develop these really high quality protected sites, the SSSIs and the national and local nature reserves and all the rest of it. And what all that stuff forgets, or simply doesn't even seem to think about in the first place, is the fact that the areas with the least biological diversity tend to be your poor inner urban areas, your poor peripheral housing estates, where if you've got any green space at all, it's just drab, barren green desert, lowest possible management costs and simplest possible management regimes and that's rubbish. If there is a goal about looking after biodiversity in this country, then surely one of the prime goals should be to increase biological diversity and the variety of life in some of these areas where there's almost nothing there. (BTCV, NR<sup>13</sup>)*

A number of organisations are involving communities, where possible, in directly finding out what they actually want and how they think they can change their local spaces. This is done before any activities are undertaken and is a fundamentally different approach compared to recruiting people to an existing project or activity. For those organisations that own land this approach is more difficult as the focus on their activities is primarily on the land they are trying to manage; so they have existing management needs that have to be met, but there can be flexibility within this to involve people in decision-making and deciding what could or can be done and what is of interest to volunteers.

#### **Information on volunteers**

Some organisations had more systematic methods than others of recording data on their volunteers, depending to a certain extent on how many volunteers they have, and how important volunteering is perceived to be for that organisation. There was a realisation from most of the organisations that good systematic data collection was needed; this would be through databases that provided information on the sort of people volunteering. It was also felt that research was important to find out in more detail what volunteers thought about volunteering and getting a better understanding of their experiences. A number of the websites of these organisations provide data on the numbers of volunteers and members (NT, NTS, RSPB, TWT) they have, while others provide quotes and testimonies of volunteers' experiences (FCE, RSPB) (Table 4).

**Table 4: A range of information collected on volunteers**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Information and data</b>
RSPB	Central volunteer management system – that includes who volunteers are, what they do, what references or screening have been completed on the volunteers, what volunteer opportunities are available. Induction pack given to every volunteer. Undertake a survey of all volunteers every 3-4 years of how volunteers feel about their experience.
NT	Mapping exercise undertaken in 2004 – largest proportion of volunteers are stewards in historic buildings. Do not have central database of volunteers – this is undertaken locally. Have a central database of all Working Holiday volunteers. Undertake an annual survey of volunteers – to enable the volunteer voice to be heard and focus priorities.
FCS	Have carried out a survey to establish how many people are

<sup>13</sup> The organisation that the representative is part of is given at the end of each quote e.g. BTCV is British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. NR means National representative and LR means local representative of an organisation.

	volunteering in the forestry sector in Scotland.
FCE	Carried out a review about four years ago but do not have a formal central system of data collection. There is some local information.
BTCV	Online database system enabling real-time recording of who volunteers are, what they are doing and where they are. Keep information on volunteer officers and how many go into full time employment.
SNH	Carried out survey of volunteers a couple of years ago. Commissioned audit and review of environmental volunteering in Scotland which was completed by Volunteer Development Scotland. Have central database of volunteers and volunteer opportunities
TWT	Carried out research on satisfaction levels of volunteers a few years ago.
NE	No systematic evaluation.
NTS	Have database of conservation volunteers. Have a combined database of properties and conservation in the pipeline.

### **Staff views and staff support**

There was recognition by the national organisational representatives that staff within their organisations needed support in managing and training volunteers. They highlighted that some staff did have concerns about the time it can take to manage volunteers, the reliability of volunteers, what tasks they could do, and how to manage difficult volunteers. SNH highlighted that there are few dedicated volunteer managers in the environment sector. For a couple of organisations the view was that some of the organisations' staff did not really understand the benefits of having volunteers. Occasionally there were worries voiced about staff being replaced by volunteers. SNH suggested having a corporate training programme, to broaden understanding of the role of volunteering, and working with human resources within the organisation to ensure volunteers are managed more corporately.

However, it was thought that many staff did see the benefits of volunteers, and it was recognised that some had been volunteers themselves. This was not really a big issue for BTCV as it's whole focus was on volunteering, however the BTCV respondent did still talk about increasing staff skills and capacity. This respondent also raised the issue of staff skills in relation to reaching new audiences and questioned whether staff needed youth skills, for example. He suggested that what was needed was for staff to work in partnership with organisations that might have these skills.

A recent appointment has been made to BTCV in Scotland of a volunteer management development officer (VMDO); this post is funded by the Scottish Government through FEVA. This post was developed by FEVA and is seen as an opportunity to *'develop the support and learning opportunities for environmental volunteer managers across Scotland'*. There was concern that volunteer managers needed more support and were often unsure of where they fitted into the overall picture of their organisation. The person in post wants to ensure that volunteer managers feel supported, get appropriate training, network and work in partnership to learn from others. This new post provides an important opportunity to disseminate best practice and the officer spoke about the opportunities within the environment sector for people to work together. Volunteer Development Scotland is running an Investors in Volunteers (IiV) scheme specifically for environmental volunteer organisations. The Community Local Action Network (CLAN) run by BTCV in Scotland provides a programme of training to volunteers and volunteer managers. A gathering is held once a year to bring people together to share information. It was

thought that these types of processes can aid, and be, beneficial to volunteers and volunteer managers.

### ***Recruiting volunteers***

There was a wide range of ways in which organisations went about recruiting volunteers to work for, and with, them. The most widespread approach was through the internet. Some organisations, such as the RSPB, list the opportunities that people can apply for. The RSPB's focus is on recruiting people for specific tasks; they provide a lot of details for the potential volunteer of what is required, and where the activities will be. Volunteers may be interviewed either formally or informally, and this is a way of ensuring that the organisation and volunteers know what is expected. TWTs are also likely to identify tasks that need to be done and recruit on that basis. TWT outlined its approach to recruitment:

*So if we were looking for volunteers perhaps to join a team to work with young people then we would go into places where there were already families and people who had an interest in that area, and we would make sure the messages were both- we're looking for enthusiastic people who like young people and we will help train you. (TWT, NR)*

It also stated that some of the individual Wildlife Trusts had a single point of contact within that Trust and all volunteers would be asked to contact this person in the first instance to discuss possibilities and potential opportunities for volunteering.

The majority of organisations viewed word of mouth as a key way in which volunteers were, and could be, recruited. The organisations realised that their existing volunteers spread the word to friends and family. This is backed up by a survey in Scotland (VDS, 2007) which found that when asked how they had become involved in volunteering 65% said that someone had asked them. Recruiting new audiences was also seen as providing new opportunities to tell a wider range of people of the benefits of volunteering and the importance of the environment. Most of the respondents, including TWT, spoke about different approaches taken at a local level; depending on the networks and relationships established by local staff.

Leaflets, posters and promotional materials are provided by most of the organisations. Local media such as interviews and press releases are sometimes used to raise awareness. Organisations with members can email or write to the members to recruit people to volunteer for the organisation. NT has a central phone line for volunteer enquiries, and it is interested in how to turn enquiries into live volunteers. The RSPB attend career fairs and mail every University or College that runs environmental or conservation courses. It also advertises opportunities in local volunteer centres by mailing them; as does the NTS. The RSPB has a system that records information about volunteers and outlines volunteer opportunities; however this does not necessarily match the database that is used by local volunteer centres and therefore exporting the information directly into the database does not take place at present. Mailing is still the approach mainly taken by the RSPB of passing information on to the centres. The research by Volunteer Development Scotland (2007a and b) found that of the 9090 volunteering organisations registered with the Volunteer Scotland database only 7% were registered in the environment category and 0.5% in the gardening/conservation category. Therefore the number of environmental organisations registered with Volunteer Centres is low and they could potentially miss opportunities to diversify their volunteer base. However there may be reluctance to recruit in this way for organisations that feel that they do not have the capacity to manage more volunteers.

The NTS has a corporate challenge programme that it offers to organisations. Recruitment can also take place through partnerships between organisations, where one organisation who may not have the capacity to take on more volunteers can point the potential volunteer towards opportunities in other organisations. Working through community groups and 'Friends of' groups was also another way in which recruitment could be targeted.

However most of the organisations interviewed were not necessarily focused on increasing the number of volunteers they get *per se*; rather the focus was on diversifying the volunteer base (the idea of reaching new audiences). For some organisations such as NE it has more volunteers than it can deal with, other organisations find that some activities are particularly popular and are therefore oversubscribed (such as residential volunteering for the RSPB, 'The Two Trees Conservation Team' activities in the New Forest organised by FCE) while other activities are undersubscribed. The NT suggested that there was a need for consistent messages to be provided to volunteers even if, and when, different methods of recruitment were undertaken. TWT raised the issue of the government's drive for more volunteers and the difficulties for organisations to manage this within their existing resources.

### ***Targeting recruitment***

Specific targeting of groups was not necessarily explicit, rather national organisational representatives stated that working with communities took place at a local level and work depended on the staff members at this level and their contacts and networks, as well as the particular region in which activities took place. BTCV talked about the 'Environments for All' programme in which it had worked with BME and disadvantaged groups. The organisation also talked about trying to gain new funding and how funding often has specific objectives attached about groups that should be included. TWT talked about its 'Unlocking the potential' project; and also spoke about two youth volunteering projects that have been set up with the funding that became available out of the recommendations of the Russell Commission. One youth project will offer taster sessions, as well as short and long term volunteering. The other project focuses on mentoring so that youth groups can get help to plan environmental projects. However, trying to engage with hard to reach groups is difficult and although potential numbers of volunteers maybe increased these could be quite small. There are also management issues of concern as the environment organisations realise they do not necessarily have staff that are expert in dealing with youth offenders, or people with mental health problems. Those who raised this issue talked about the need to work in partnership with organisations that did have this expertise. For organisations that owned land, then issues such as how close the land was to communities was seen as important. If the organisation provides grants then this was also seen as an opportunity to use grant funding to potentially reach new audiences.

All of the organisations saw potential to attract more diverse groups and to reach out to people the organisations had not conventionally engaged with in the past; as they realised that social and environmental justice and community development were becoming more important to them. NTS suggested that environmental volunteering could attract a wider range of people than other types of volunteering, as they were many different ways of getting involved and a range of opportunities in environmental volunteering.

### **Why do people volunteer?**

The organisation representatives thought (from their experience, which was similar to the reasons volunteers themselves gave) that the key reasons people volunteered were:

- Career development/change – a young person might want to develop a career in the environment sector, another might be re-evaluating their life and want a career change, people might want to learn more about conservation and the environment, they may have a skill or skills they want to use and share, or they may want to learn new skills and get promoted through their corporate volunteer activities.
- Social interaction – volunteers want to become part of a team, want to meet new people, and enjoy company.
- Health and well-being – some people may have stopped work due to ill health and want to do something before returning to work, or instead of paid work; want to be active. People may have health problems in which physical activity is beneficial, or mental health problems in which activity and nature are beneficial.
- Meaning – people may want to make a difference to society or the environment; want to be involved in development and decision-making about local environments; may love a particular site and want to conserve it; may want to work locally while thinking about global environmental issues.

A couple of representatives also talked about environmental volunteering providing opportunities for life changing experiences, for SNH the chance to experience wild nature that people may not ordinarily have contact with was viewed as a great opportunity and an inspiration for people.

### **7.3 Local representatives**

The representatives managing volunteers' practical activities had a range of different job titles from community wildlife officer to community and information warden. This illustrates the different foci within organisations, concentrating on either people or the environment, or both. A number of the representatives spoke about volunteering themselves in the past. This highlights how many people in the environment sector see volunteering as a potential route into employment; into work that interests them. Representatives spoke about the task of trying to include everyone and find something for all abilities. They sometimes worked with people with a range of abilities and this led them to think they were sometimes more like community or social workers than wildlife officers, as one of the Greenlink (female) representatives describes:

*...sometimes you feel that you could be a bit of a social worker as well... as working in conservation. Because you do lend an ear and you can get, not too involved, but you do find that you get told a lot of problems and issues and things that people are dealing with, but that's all part of the job. (RSPB activity, LR)*

### **Purpose of activities**

The researchers tried to gain an understanding of the objectives for organisations of having volunteers if it was not necessarily the key focus for the organisation (as it was for BTCV): was it to get environmental work done that the organisation would not be able to do without volunteer help or was the key objective to encourage people out of doors and connect them with the environment? All of the organisation representatives stated that it was a combination of the two and that reconnecting people with the environment was particularly important.

By connecting people with nature a key idea is that people will become more interested in the environment and this might lead to potentially pro-environmental behaviour and a greater desire to get involved in further conservation work (BTCV, 2008b). Reconnecting people with the environment was also an issue about place and encouraging people to get to know their local spaces and to visit and enjoy them; not only when they were doing volunteer work, but also at other times. For the majority of local representatives getting people out and having a good time was often seen as the most important issue; potentially instilling an appreciation of nature and landscape.

*But the predominant thing is to reconnect people with the landscape again and our members and other organisations. Because, you know, we're a landscape charity and we want people to appreciate and value and love the landscape. (FoLD, LR)*

When a group of volunteers with a very work focused ethos such as the HWT group were able to organise tools, drive the HWT work cars and complete tasks that were needed using power tools if necessary; and could be left to get on with tasks, this was viewed as very useful. However the representative leading the HWT group was also aware of some of the other weekend groups just wanting to get out and these volunteers might not necessarily be doing a lot of activity; however this was viewed as equally important for people. This will also potentially have an impact on the amount of work that is completed, with some volunteers being focused and others having difficulties that may limit what they can do.

*...at times it's getting things done and obviously with a team like this which are skilled regular volunteers who if necessary you can say this is the task guys and they can head off and do it. Some of our other groups it's more about getting people out to experience the countryside. They get a bit of work done and occasionally they decide not to do anything at all and that's fine. (HWT, LR)*

## **7.4 Managing volunteers**

### ***Tasks and activities***

The local representatives were carrying out a range of tasks and activities on the day that the researchers joined them. Organising the activities and ensuring that there was enough equipment and work for people to do could be difficult for those who were leading the session. Local representatives often did not know how many people would turn up to the session. The BTCV representative stated that the volunteers were supposed to register if they were attending a volunteer day; however he said they often forgot. Representatives also found it difficult knowing what could be achieved by the volunteers:

*You can never guarantee you're going to get anything done. (RSPB, LR)*

Having specific targets was not always the main focus for the organisations, as outlined by the FCS representative who was managing a small number of older men who came out on a regular basis. The representative also talked about trying to find a variety of things for the volunteers to do and sometimes rewarding them by taking them for a walk or to see something specific, or previous work they had completed.

*They'll do anything. What we do some days is we'll just say alright that will do us and we'll head down to the deer park and we'll go to the goat park and take loads of bread and feed the goats, just to give them a wee difference. (FCS, LR)*

The representatives (particularly those who took volunteers out every week) acknowledged that sometimes the volunteers were very eager and quickly completed tasks and other weeks they were less keen and then a more relaxed approach was taken. This was viewed as a normal pattern of volunteering; something that could be accommodated by the organisations.

*Some days they are so driven and you won't be able to stop them and other days no one's feeling that great so we'll sit about and have a chat. And that's okay because you know the week after they're going to be there. It's tricky to manage it and because it's just me I've got no one to bail me out so if I need to finish something off I'd have to do it and I'm stretched pretty thin. (RSPB, LR)*

One representative talked about litter picking as '*morale destroying*' and tried to ensure the volunteers he managed did not get involved in that activity; other volunteer groups did do some litter picking. However while a lot of the volunteers stated that they enjoyed doing a variety of activities, this was generally not one of them. Representatives tried to ensure they only asked volunteers to do this within reason.

A couple of representatives spoke about the need to have a plan B in case the initial task for the day needs to be changed or an issue arises. For example at the RSPB volunteer day one of the tools for knocking in fence posts broke, and the volunteers had to be organised to do other activities for the morning.

Health and safety was an important issue and the FCS representatives spoke about supervising the young men working in Galloway Forest to ensure that all the work was carried out safely and that they were using tools correctly. Sometimes the representatives would become slightly frustrated with health and safety issues, thinking that concerns about health and safety had gone too far and were limiting their ability to undertake certain tasks.

### ***Range of abilities and skills***

The sheer diversity of volunteers (in terms of ability outlined previously) that the local representatives worked with could potentially raise issues of how to manage people with very different skills and reasons for volunteering. Getting to know your volunteers and gaining an understanding of their skills was seen as very important. One respondent talked about thinking ahead and having a range of work that volunteers could do: '*so that's tricky, sometimes you might not have the ideal job, because you just haven't, so have to improvise sometimes*' (NT). For the groups with BTCV and FCS it was mainly young people who wanted to gain training in order to increase their chances of employment. Other groups like GBMC, CWW, HWT, NT, NTS and DBC had a mix of retired people and employed people. There were also a range of volunteers in this study who suffered from disabilities/conditions such as mental health issues, emotional and behavioural problems, or with learning difficulties. If they had severe problems then they would be accompanied by a carer or support person. There appeared to be a significant amount of flexibility to accommodate this, as the following quote suggests:

*we've got eco health Dumfries and eco health Galloway and some of these are as I say schizophrenic, so there's challenges there... some people can only come out for an hour, and they have to have a carer with them, and so we have to sort of balance it, we come in and just say, come and do and if you're fed up sit down. (NTS, LR)*

The respondents talked about some of the challenges they faced (see quote below), however they were practical people with a wide range of experience and appeared to cope with the range of volunteers that came out.

*And working with those kids can be quite challenging, it's very draining, I think quite exhausting. And 'L' could be working with an ex addict who doesn't speak all day, just doesn't say anything, and it's kind of, it's - it is just a challenge. (BFT, NR)*

The following representative also talked about how this range and diversity of people could be an asset, allowing people to get to know others they may otherwise never meet through their everyday activities.

*I wouldn't say challenges, sometimes if you've got different ages. I think once you're in a group you get everybody involved together. It was challenging sometimes with big Stewart because he had learning difficulties. But you had to adapt and if he was happy to do something you left him to that. Stewart came out and there was a young boy George and they would never (normally) have interacted, never. They would have laughed at him in the street the way he was, and it ended up he was very defensive of him (Stewart). He ended up getting on great with Stewart. That's a good thing. (FCS, LR)*

However there is potential for those within organisations from a traditional conservation background to worry about becoming or being thought to be required to become community/social workers rather than conservationists. The size of the volunteer group could also be important in this respect. If there are people with specific problems then smaller groups were often said to be easier to deal and cope with. Health and safety issues could also present problems if volunteers did not follow the procedures they were taught. One representative spoke of volunteers' amazement at not being able to use brush cutters unless they undertook training for a day, even though the volunteers might use this type of equipment at home.

The FCS representatives talked about helping the young men to develop social skills; therefore talking to them and engaging with them to help develop them in this area. For the young men who were responsible they were sometimes given the job of mentoring other boys and helping them out. Some of the young men had challenging behaviour, however they would often calm down if they were given help and support. Team working was viewed as a key element of helping the young men socialise and develop employable skills. Having people skills was the key requirement identified by the line manager of the three FCS employees:

*It's really important to me that it's people skills. It has to be, and there's got to be a bit of empathy, because the boys they get, some of them do come from really crappy backgrounds, and you feel sorry for them and you have to take that into consideration when you're watching their behaviour... (FCS, LR)*

One of the young men at FCS was behaving badly and the other young men decided to deal with this themselves after asking permission from FCS staff. They spoke to the young man and told him how his behaviour was affecting them; they also gave him positive encouragement rather than focusing on too many negative aspects of his behaviour, and according to the staff member the young man improved. There were also rewards for example of seeing the young men move on, one of whom got a 'volunteer of the year award' and went to America to work on the Nevada Wilderness Programme.

For the GMBC representative the key issue was gaining an understanding of what people could do, whatever their abilities:

*you've got to be a bit of a psychologist obviously, because you've got to get into their minds and you've got to remember these volunteers are all levels of, what should we say, intelligence and abilities. So you've got to learn to speak to their levels...you've got to recognise that it doesn't matter where they're at and what their level of ability is, that you have got to try and find something to channel them into that they can do.*

### **Motivating volunteers**

Respondents talked about the need to set the volunteers work in context, so at the start of the day the local organisation representative or lead volunteer would talk about the tasks that needed to be done that day; as part of this would be a brief explanation of why the work was needed and/or important and any health and safety issues outlined. A number of respondents all stated that sometimes as part of a day's volunteering they might walk around a particular site and talk about wildlife and what work had been done. Taking volunteers back to see work they had completed in the past was also something the leaders sometimes did; this was done to highlight to people the difference they had made. Thanking volunteers at the end of each session was also something that all the respondents did; they thought it was very important. The RSPB representative spoke about showing volunteers photographs of how the site they were working on had changed. Because the work they were doing in clearing a site to create a nursery was taking a long time he felt that the volunteers often forgot how much progress had been made.

*Yes, I keep everybody motivated. It's hard enough sometimes when the weather's grim. It's very difficult. Particularly on work like this tree nursery where the objectives are not necessarily clear. People think a tree nursery that's for planting trees to make money but it's not that at all. So we have to explain it to people and make it very clear: what the contribution is they're making and the bigger picture. It's a good way to talk about conservation issues as a whole. It's good to keep people aware. (RSPB, LR)*

For those on the Thistle Camp holiday with NTS the volunteers were able to see the progress of their work over the week and the representative stated that people had taken many, before and after, photographs to remind them of what they had done. The NT representative spoke about putting the work in some context but not necessarily going into all the complicated detail of the historic garden they worked on (on the Wallington Estate near Morpeth) and the objectives and management for that. The representatives talked about providing information that seems appropriate to the interests of the volunteers.

*'I like to give people credit and the people do come along with mental health difficulties or things like that, don't get a lot of praise, ever. So you say thanks for your time and effort; people really like that'. (RSPB, LR)*

A FCS representative spoke about engendering a family atmosphere into the Project Scotland young men, as all of the work that they do is team based. Providing this type of atmosphere was seen as a way of helping the young men to work together, relax and take some responsibility. Another of the FCS representatives talked about leading by example: show them how to do a job, explain why it is important and then if that is done well reward the young men with a visit to see something such as nesting grouse or play a game of football after they have completed their tasks. One representative described how the young men became more responsible over the

months and how they started to 'prepare for work in the morning, so that they are thinking for themselves' and wanting to oil and clean tools, clean the minibus. He described this as evidence that they were starting to feel ownership of the project and how they were sad at the end of the year when they left.

Local representatives liked to stress that the voluntary activities should be enjoyable and fun if possible.

*It's difficult because you see the different abilities. It's difficult to say this is really good for you, it's a tricky area. I think everyone feels good about it so it's the feeling good I like to dwell on rather than the physical. The feeling good comes from being outside. It's not a matter of exercise, losing weight, there's a stigma about people smoking - you just don't want to go there. It's tricky talking to people like this; you don't want to be too preachy. You want to get them out, have a good time, have a blether and a cup of tea. (RSPB, LR)*

### **Corporate volunteering**

This is a newer focus and was of interest to most of the organisations; however local representatives thought that sometimes they were contacted to find tasks to do for largish numbers of employees in a relatively short timescale, and they found this difficult to deal with. One of the groups in this research, the FoLD, had ten corporate volunteers on the day the researchers joined the group. These corporate volunteers were from the Environment Agency. The staff were allowed two days per year by the Environment Agency to undertake voluntary activity. This was seen as a way of staff getting out and getting to know each other outside the office environment and doing something practical for the environment. The staff members worked together for the agency so the volunteer activity was seen as a different opportunity for team building.

### **Resources and capacity**

One of the representatives talked about a lack of awareness and support from higher management. This representative spoke about wanting more resources, particularly in terms of practical issues such as transport. The representative stated that if they were able to get a new minibus they could recruit more volunteers. With only one minibus they were limited in the number of people they could transport to different sites. GMBC had recently employed a volunteer development co-ordinator and this was viewed as a positive move by the three local representatives of the organisation in developing a new volunteer leaflet and website for volunteers, as well as potentially recruiting more volunteers. Having resources to maintain tools was also an issue that was considered important: blunt tools annoyed the volunteers and frustrated their progress. One of the GMBC representatives spoke about wanting to provide volunteers with their own room (at one of the sites that had a visitor centre) where they could make tea and coffee and keep a journal or log of things of interest they had seen.

### **Training**

Training was an important issue for a lot of the organisations and was a particular focus for those who had younger volunteers such as the BTCV Glasgow group and FCS. The young people at FCS had opportunities to undertake training in the use of chainsaws, strimmers, brush cutters as well as first aid, basic training for tools both use and maintenance, and manual handling so that they lift and carry things sensibly so as not to injure their backs. The representatives spoke about assessing training needs of different volunteers and judging whether they were ready and responsible enough to undertake the training. If the young people had a positive attitude and had a good attendance record then they were more likely to be considered for training.

For the FCS young men there is an opportunity to put a bid into the Personal Development Fund (which is part of the Project Scotland programme) which can provide up to £1,500 to a young person in Project Scotland to buy tools, help pay to get a driving licence. They can bid for this funding up to a year after they have finished with PS. The young people with BTCV in Glasgow, if they had decided to become volunteer officers, gained more training and responsibility to take on a leadership role with the other volunteers.

The retired men at HWT had undertaken training in brush cutting and chainsaw use and were quite happy to work with tools. For other groups specific formal training was less of a focus, however learning through others and through carrying out activities was often an important benefit that volunteers appreciated.

### ***The work that volunteers do***

The activities undertaken by the volunteers was wide ranging covering tree thinning, getting rid of invasive species, creating a footpath, litter picking, re-creating a woodland and a range of other practical work. The work was different in different seasons and the representatives tried to provide volunteers with some variety and potentially some choice of what they could do. The majority of the local representatives spoke about how this type of work would not be done if it was not carried out by volunteers. Not only are there potential benefits in terms of biodiversity, there can also be improvements to recreational infrastructure and important maintenance of sites so that local communities can benefit, as the following quote suggests:

*So a lot of the ... work that volunteers have done on this site particularly, it's brought about real positive changes, whether it be biodiversity, improving the site as far as biodiversity goes. The grasslands [are] now botanically much more interesting than they were previously. The amphibian interest and the invertebrate interest is much improved and a lot of that, again, is to do with the management work that the volunteers carry out. Access is infinitely better now, and not just physical access; the volunteers have done lots of physical access work, improving footpaths, step work, boardwalks, bridges, this kind of thing. So they've improved the physical access but not only the physical access, just the people's first impression of the site now is so much better because we used to have real problems. This is an urban fringe site and it has all the... problems of any urban fringe site: litter, vandalism, misuses, motorbikes, other such things. But because the site now, at a glance, it's so much ..., well it looks ... managed. There isn't a problem, there isn't the..., there aren't the issues now with litter and the like. So ... that's helped improve accessibility. (GMBC, LR)*

The site where the researchers interviewed the GMBC volunteers and representatives had formally been a clay extraction site that was later landfilled with rubbish; and this was converted into a large green space with a small lake for fishing. According to one of the representatives:

*It was more than an eyesore, it was horrific, smell and everything; it was completely filled with rubbish. (GMBC, LR)*

However, through the work of the countryside section of the council and with the aid of volunteers the site, enjoyed by walkers today, was created. The representative also suggested that from his experience vandalism at the site had reduced over the years as the volunteers maintained and looked after the green space. This maintenance is a key part of showing that there is social care of a site and enables users to feel more comfortable and safer when using the area.

## 7.5 Volunteering aiding integration with others and society

It was clear from the volunteers themselves and the representatives interviewed as part of this research that there was a range of people from different backgrounds, with different abilities and with sometimes specific mental health, learning or emotional and behavioural problems. Environmental volunteering, it can be seen from this report, provides a range of opportunities for different people. One of the GMBC representatives spoke about some young offenders who carried out voluntary activities and how this benefited them:

*...but some of the young children from the secure training unit, you see them really blossom; they've been locked up for a couple of years. The expression on their faces when you walk them over the hill and they see all this greenery, it's just amazing. Some of them do love it and others don't. (GMBC, LR).*

The local BTCV representative talked about taking the young people to outdoors areas they probably have not experienced before and how enjoyable they found it:

*BTCV are involved a lot in the idea of social inclusion and giving people who otherwise wouldn't have the chance to get out and gain new skills and experience outdoors and give them the opportunity to do it ... And a prime example of that is a few months back I decided to give the guys a break from doing work and I thought I'd take them for a nice healthy walk. And it was only 50 minutes outside Glasgow, up just past Loch Lomond to the Cobbler. I took them up there and the majority of guys that I took up came from Glasgow and they had never been there before. Most of them had never been there before. Yet, a lot of them were a bit apprehensive about actually going and walking up the hill. And again they whinged and moaned about it when they were doing it but when they got back to the van at the end of the day they, they'd all thoroughly enjoyed it. (BTCV, LR)*

For the older men volunteering for FCS there was a range of benefits. One man had a carer, however he was able to do his volunteering work without the carer and the FCS representative had got to know him well and looked out for him. In the second quote below the HWT representative talked about working with BTCV and reaching wider diverse groups of people through this partnership:

*The other thing I like about the volunteers is they're not here to bust a gut. They're here to do a wee bit and then will stop and have a wee talk about anything. There are nay quantities here. I've got no targets to reach. But some days I can nay stop them. And some days they just stop and yapper. (FCS, LR)*

*We've got a group of adults at the moment with learning disabilities from a residential place. This winter we're looking to have a group of disadvantaged. It's a young carer's project. That's a project that's been co-ordinated by BTCV. We can offer a range of activities. The learning and disabilities group often go for a walk before working. The young carers are going to do practised tasks and we may lay on activities. We offer activities through the education centre (Brashford lakes). That's one reason why we might get a wider range of people volunteering than most sites would. The education centre has been there for 11 years. It's known far more by people as an education site than an access reserve (which has only been on line for about a year). Gives opportunity for people to do a task and something else. (HWT, LR)*

The FCS representative spoke about helping to improve the social skills of the young people they worked with:

*They gain, first of all they get, and they're interacting with, a team of people from different walks of life, team of people with different ages and different backgrounds. Hopefully it can instil some better social skills into them, so again it's people skills: getting them to work better with people; trying to teach them how to relate to people and to simply talk to someone in a basic, everyday conversation. (FCS, LR)*

The representative stated that they had had an autistic young man and someone with Aspergers Syndrome. He spoke about the need for patience and how these young men could still work as part of a team with the other participants. Including a wide range of people of different ages and abilities in voluntary work allowed others to meet and interact with people they may not normally interact with as part of their everyday life.

## **7.6 Partnerships**

Partnerships between environmental sector organisations were seen as increasingly important. The RSPB worked in the same office as Greenlink representatives<sup>14</sup> and Greenlink volunteers carry out work on the RSPB reserve. The FoLD representative spoke about having good relationships with BTCV and borrowing tools from them when needed. BTCV in Glasgow had good links with local colleges and Project Scotland and got a lot of their volunteers through these opportunities. The HWT representative spoke about working with BTCV and sometimes exchanging or passing on volunteers to the RSPB. In this way the organisations can pass on volunteers if they have too many and do not have the capacity to find something for them all to do. Partnership working at a national level was also considered important by all the national representatives, and greater partnership working will almost certainly be an important aspect of future environmental volunteering.

## **7.7 Recognition within organisations**

A couple of the local representatives talked about the need for those nearer the top of their organisations to recognise the important work that volunteers did:

*...hopefully it's filtered down to the director and that, that volunteering is important. (GMBC, LR)*

One respondent stated that volunteers were absolutely vital to managing the sites and that he hoped the Chief Executive of the organisation he worked for appreciated and valued volunteers. He saw this research as a potential way of highlighting the role that volunteers can play. The representatives talked about recognition of the work that the volunteers undertake; they did not explicitly mention the recognition of their role in leading and managing volunteer activity. However, the national representatives did raise issues about the need to support staff on the ground who were managing volunteers.

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<sup>10</sup> The Greenlink Project personnel carry out community engagement work in the South Calder corridor encouraging environmental awareness, social inclusion and improvements in health and well-being. The project is funded by Central Scotland Forest Trust, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire Council and the Big Lottery Fund.

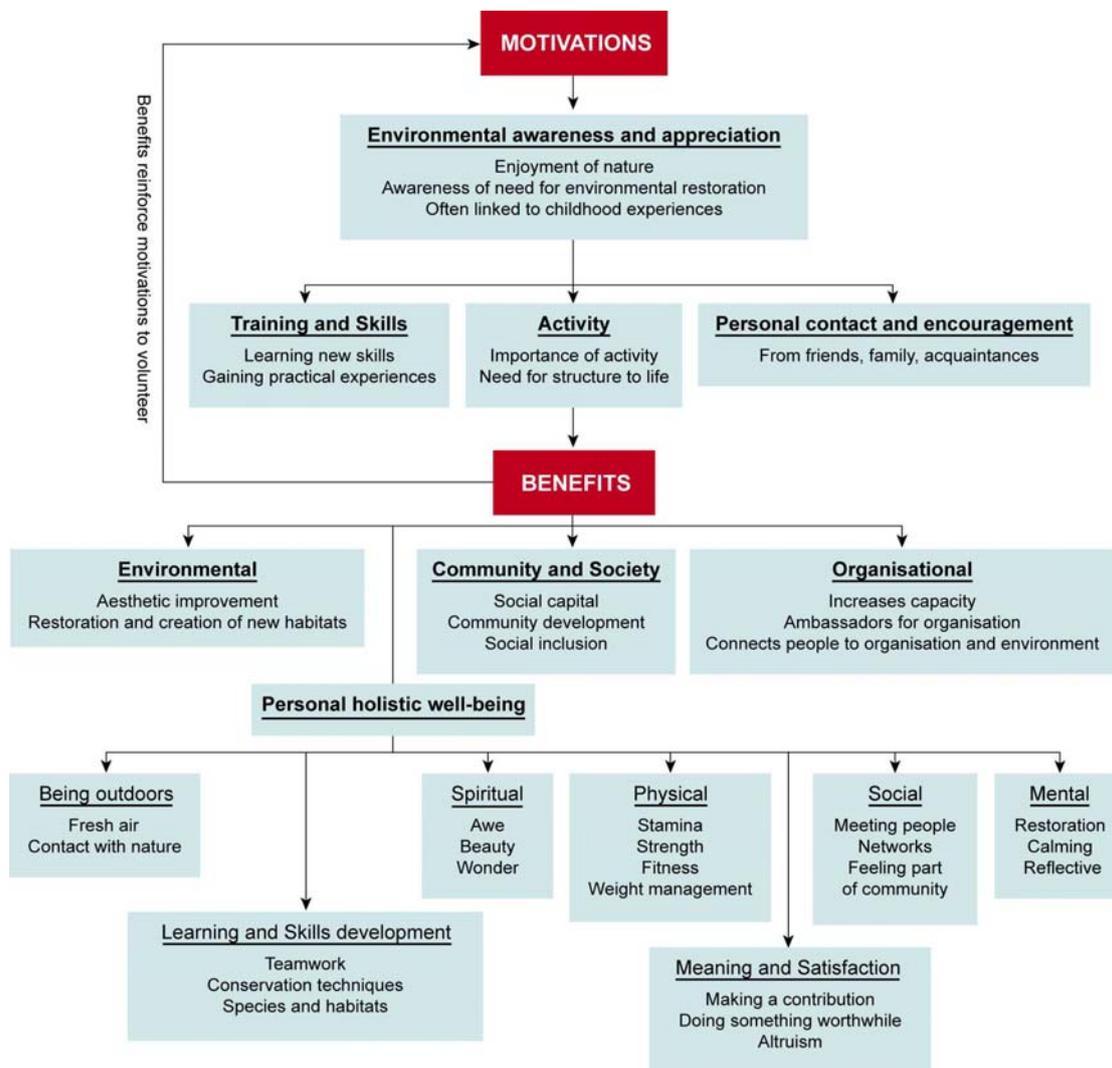
## 8. RESULTS: MOTIVATIONS FOR GETTING INVOLVED IN ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING

There were a number of motivations for getting involved in environmental volunteering and a wider range of benefits gained from that involvement.

### 8.1 Interest generated through an appreciation of being outdoors and environmental awareness

For the volunteers themselves a common (but not universal) over-arching factor in the motivations for becoming engaged in environmental volunteering was an enjoyment of nature and the outdoors, and an awareness of the need for environmental restoration (Figure 23). For some volunteers, this was aesthetically based; for others it was related to philosophical approaches to life. This has clear links to the ways in which people value nature and the environment.

**Figure 23: Conceptual framework of individual motivations for environmental volunteering and benefits to the individual, wider society, environment and organisations of volunteering**



The value of nature and the environment was articulated very clearly by a member of Durham Bird Club, who said:

*When something's priceless, it's magic; you've got no price on it; it's wonderful, it's free and it has that magic about it and you say it's priceless. But once you start with the money and you put a price on it, it's got a value; it becomes cheap, it becomes tacky, you've destroyed the beauty of what ever it was, the magic is gone, because you fixed a price on it, so if you've got sufficient money you can have that. Pricelessness is something where you can never put a price on it, it's there, it's a feeling you have, it's moments in your life that you can look back on and say 'ahh that was priceless' and it gives you that kick and that buzz you know. As soon as money comes in, values go out the window.*

Often this enjoyment of the environment stemmed from childhood experiences.

*I'd been with the scouts when I was very young, I mean this was in the 1950's and it was camping in tents and sleeping bags weren't so good, but I enjoyed it. (Male, NTS)*

The same man went on to say:

*Once you're into it, there's so many other groups ... And they're all little bits, it's a little piece in the jigsaw and you hope you're doing your bit. I mean all this modern talk about carbon footprints and you think, well I'm putting a bit back.*

A volunteer with NT, when asked about his motivation for becoming involved, said:

*Well, I suppose it's two things. One is I like the outdoors, ... and I like what National Trust do and I wanted to do something where I could contribute my own time to whatever, to a useful charity and this seemed to fit the bill.*

Similarly, one of the young men involved with BTCV commented:

*Well I'm from the western islands of Scotland, so I've been brought up in it [the natural environment] and I'm used to sort of working outdoors and I enjoy being outside. ... you feel like you're sort of doing something for the environment and whilst you're not just getting the skills you're also giving something back while you're learning.*

This appreciation could come later in life if people had not had a lot of access to the countryside before as outlined by a man from the GMBC group:

*...when I lived in North Shields there was only one country park close by and that was about 6 or 7 miles away, and of course I didn't have my own transport, public transport was difficult to get there so I didn't really sort of get to go along as much and didn't really appreciate what was happening, its only since moving over here and being with my partner who actually comes from the countryside that its opened my eyes a bit more and I've been able to sort of look at it in a different way.*

For 'D'<sup>15</sup> with NTS the environment was very important:

*I'm quite passionate about it, I mean there's so much more should be done and could be done...I do BTCV, NT because I believe they are doing a worthwhile job, I can feel a little part of it.*

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<sup>15</sup> This is the first initial of the volunteers name – full names are not given to preserve anonymity.

For another of the volunteers involved with NT, an appreciation of the natural environment (being in creation) and the physical nature of the work motivated him to be involved.

*Oh I love it, this is a beautiful site. Just aesthetically, it's a stunning place and it's just so enjoyable to be in a beautiful place for a whole day, and the landscape becomes absorbed into you and it helps you cope with the next week ahead. Alas, we work indoors, I work indoors for too much of the week and this certainly helps offset that balance, it's how I relax. Physical work is not stressful at all, it has the opposite effect. I'll return today with a nice warm glow, I'll be tired but I'll feel content. And I think it's that element, just being in Creation [nature] and seeing the lovely trees and the beautiful views, and I think it's that, just being in the landscape for a whole seven hours, in the winter months especially, you can see the weather come across, you can see the clouds come across. The weather changes from all sorts of types of weather and you can see the, even to the point where you see the sunset. Because you're out in it all day, you see more of it.*

One group – the members of staff of the Environment Agency – were involved in the FoLD activities on one of their two annual environment voluntary days (which they are offered as part of their conditions of employment). It was suggested by several of the EA volunteers that a pro-environmental orientation was likely to be associated with working in such an organisation but that actual hands-on environmental engagement was likely to strengthen this. One said:

*Most people that work at the Environment Agency are there because they want to protect the environment and this is a great opportunity to get out here and do something.*

Another commented:

*I mean obviously the mindset of working at The Environment Agency, you take green issues very seriously, but actually getting out and seeing the practicalities of what you can do does make a difference, it does make a difference.*

But the same person also recognised the importance of her childhood experiences in her attitudes towards the environment:

*I've always, I think... it's something that has probably been part of my family upbringing I think. My mum used to go out and do fell walking; even though she was from Liverpool, she used to come up here at the weekends.*

## **8.2 Training and skills**

Two of the groups, primarily, involved young people and therefore training and learning new skills, and gaining practical experience were seen as very important. These two groups were:

FCS Project Scotland (PS) – PS classes itself as a new type of volunteering. Full time placements (30 hours a week minimum) are available lasting from three months to a year. A range of opportunities are available and FCS is working with PS<sup>16</sup> to provide opportunities to volunteer in Galloway Forest. Most of the young people are local to Ayr, where there are limited employment opportunities available beyond

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<sup>16</sup> Young people can choose to volunteer to work for a range of organisations if the organisations are linked with the Project Scotland programme (Project Scotland, 2008).

working in the service industry. An allowance of £55 per week is made to the 16-25 year olds that get involved. As part of the PS approach the 'Voscars' is a celebration ceremony held on an annual basis to make awards to the Volunteers of the Year.

The young men in PS were mainly in their late teens. They were attracted to FCS because they wanted to work outdoors and wanted to undertake the training offered. One young man stated '*you'll get a good reference out of it as well and that will look good*'.

A couple of young men talked about gaining skills to become self employed. They also talked about what they would be doing if not involved with FCS:

*Probably sitting on the couch, playing on my computer all day... getting into trouble. So this is really good for getting out of trouble.*

It has been announced that the Scottish Government is to stop funding Project Scotland from April 2008 and other funding sources will need to be found to carry on the work. A recent announcement on the PS website stated that those currently involved in the scheme should not worry; they can continue to volunteer and receive their allowance.

The second group was BTCV Glasgow – the majority of the volunteers in this group are affiliated to a local college and are undertaking an environmental course. As part of the course three days a week are spent doing practical conservation work with BTCV. Similar to the young men with FCS the BTCV volunteers wanted to gain skills and practical experience. One female respondent summed this up:

*The fact that I want to work outdoors, and I knew I would need to get practical experience so I'm just combining this with college as well. And I love the outdoors so I thought it's be good to see what it's actually like to work outdoors. And I'm enjoying it so far and it's given me a lot of skills as well, like they put you on leadership courses and first aid course. So that is really useful as well for working outdoors as a ranger or something. (Female, BTCV)*



**Clearing Japanese Knotweed with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Glasgow**

However, although the other projects included in this study were not specifically or predominantly for young people, there were still examples of training and skill development, including for young people. One of the volunteers at the RSPB reserve in Motherwell, Glasgow was a young man still at school (not a mainstream school but one for difficult pupils). He was not interviewed as part of this research because he was only fourteen years of age and parental permission would have been needed. However the teacher who accompanied him every week on the voluntary activities outlined how volunteering was a way to give the young man something he could do and how it had a calming effect on him. The school had previously sent another young man volunteering to the same reserve and he had since left school and was working in a garden centre. Another of the young people volunteering at the RSPB reserve in Motherwell was a young woman who had been diagnosed as suffering from a low work ethic and a short attention span. She had been referred to the project by a social worker, with a view to addressing these issues. In the interview with her, she expressed the view that she had already developed new skills and was very committed to coming out each week and actively participating in the activities.

The activities undertaken under the leadership of the FoLD also offered training and skill development opportunities. There were representatives of four distinct groups involved in the activities on the day on which the research was undertaken: FoLD; Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA); EA; and West House (WH). West House is a trust providing community support for people with learning disabilities.

For 'G' volunteering for the LDNPA there are opportunities for walk leaders to go on wildlife courses and learn about flora and fauna so that they can impart this knowledge to those who participate in the walks. 'T' felt that learning new skills helped him to feel that he was putting something back:

*It's the sense of achievement in terms of, certainly the walling [dry stone walling] picking up new skills and actually doing something to really help restore the*

*landscape. Having walked round it for years and eroded a fair few footpaths over time, it's very nice to be able to put something back and help restore it. So it's a sense of achievement and particularly the skill of walling. (Male, FoLD)*

One of the care workers from WH speaking about the WH residents commented:

*Well, some of the guys that have been involved, they're just growing in confidence. It's just amazing the things they can do .... Some of them have never like walked on uneven surfaces before because they've been mollycoddled at home. So the fact that they're not only coming out and experiencing this, but they're getting a different culture because it's not just about the shops and what can they buy and what they can get and what other people can do for them. They're realising in their own right that they can actually do just what everyone else is doing.*

For those with HWT there were learning opportunities, 'J' stated:

*I have, because I lived in Northwest London for most of my life and worked in industry; I've always been interested but never really got involved. It's all new to me and I've learnt a hell of a lot. (Male, HWT)*

'T' also described learning new skills:

*I grew up in the country but I'd never built fences or stiles, never used a chainsaw in my life before I started this lot. (Male, HWT)*

The men volunteering for HWT were proud of their skills and the fact that they could use the power tools such as chainsaws and brush cutters. They also had keys to the store cupboard and drove one of the HWT's cars to and from the sites, where they undertook their activities. This gave them a fair degree of independence which they enjoyed. These men had a very strong work ethic; they wanted to get on with the work and were impatient if there were any delays due to equipment not being available or for other reasons. They described how one of the HWT staff members sometimes pointed particular things out to them or took them on a tour of the site they were working on to discuss wildlife, and this was something they enjoyed.

### **8.3 Need for activity (including after retirement or when unable to work)**

A number of the volunteers were retired, or had stopped work due to health problems and they were looking for something to provide structure to their lives. This was the case for three of the men in the HWT group, for four of the men in CWW, and for one of the men in the RSPB group.

*this gives me a break every day, I love the green office. (Male, HWT)*

'J' was an older volunteer with FCS at Galloway carrying out volunteering one day a week. He had a carer but was able to carry out his voluntary work without his carer. He talked about the need for activity:

*It changed my life quite a way because I'm bored where I'm staying. I've just got nothing to do.*

For 'M' in the DBC he had finished work due to ill health, he had been interested in birds as a boy and realised this was something he could take up again now he was not working. 'J' joined HWT when someone knocked on his door recruiting for TWTs.

*I had a year off after working nearly 40 years with rarely a break. And then I thought I need some structure and someone happened to knock at the door recruiting for TWT. (Male, HWT)*

'A' was retired and looking for something different to do, which is why she got involved volunteering for GMBC. Similarly, 'D' commented:

*Well, British industry retired me because of my age, they don't want to know once you've turned 50. Doesn't matter what your experience is, so at about 57/58 I found myself unemployed but with a company pension so was not rich but I could get by and you want to fill your time. (Male, NTS)*

However, opportunity for regular and meaningful activity was also a motivating force for volunteers who may not have recently left the paid work force. One of the volunteers in the GMBC group, who worked part-time, became involved because he "wanted to do something different".

The need for some external motivation to become active was also a motivating factor in joining a volunteer group. One of the NT volunteers (a woman, who was not retired) said:

*I'm inherently incredibly lazy and if I don't have to get up and go out the house to do something before I know it, it'll be two in the afternoon and I'll still be in my dressing gown. And then I'll resent wasting a day, so I do a lot of voluntary work outside my day job.*

For some volunteers, the physical nature of the activity was also an important factor in motivating them to become involved. The female NT volunteer quoted immediately above went on to say:

*The gym is really boring and if I want to eat a lot of cake, frankly I've got to do something to burn it off, so it's, this is as good as any, better than most because you can work at your own pace. I think it's good being outside, it's healthy. My job is based with human beings and frankly in my spare time I want not to have to deal with human beings, and doing something out here which is physical, wears my body out instead of wearing out my brain, is infinitely preferable.*

In keeping with the notion of 'joiners' and 'non-joiners', thirty four [out of eighty eight] of the volunteers interviewed were involved in more than one volunteering activity, including both environmentally-based activities and other activities not associated with the natural environment. One volunteer, who was a participant in the NTS Thistle camp (and had been on two previous Thistle camps during 2007), was also involved in environmental volunteering in her local community and in several volunteering activities not associated with the environment. She commented: *'I'm a volunteer junkie, I think'*.

#### **8.4 Personal contact and encouragement**

The importance of word of mouth as a means of engaging people in environmental volunteering was evident through many of the interviews. A number of people had been persuaded or encouraged by others to get involved. For example one man at the DBC had met the chairman while out birding one day. 'B', volunteering for GMBC, had got involved because her son had taken up conservation volunteering and suggested she get involved. One of the men volunteering for Lake District National Park Authority had a friend who was a voluntary warden who described what he did and this inspired the man to get involved, as he thought it sounded interesting. One

of the CWW volunteers had academic links with another of the volunteers and got involved in the project because he thought it was inspirational.

'A's husband had died, she was retired and thought '*I no longer have an invalid to look after; I need to do something*'. She heard about the Gateshead Countryside Team from a friend and wanted to do something she had never done before. Word of mouth can be an important way of engaging with people who would not think about, or were not aware, of environmental volunteering.

*I didn't know it existed, you hear of other voluntary work, working in hospices or shops. Working in charity shops didn't appeal to me. I didn't know this existed.*  
(Female, GMBC)

One volunteer with NT, who was there for the first time, acknowledged that the impetus had come from a friend who was involved. He said:

*M. suggested it and I found it quite interesting and the fact that I enjoy getting out, I do a lot of walking and stuff like that and I like the amount of work ... in the city all day and stuff, so it's quite nice to get out and do stuff and it's a good way of [meeting] people.*

Another volunteer – a woman who volunteers regularly with the LDNP – said:

*I'll blame it on 'J'. my next door neighbour wherever he is, he's here somewhere. He was telling me about how he was involved and I thought, oh I'd be quite interested in that, so I went along and got hooked.*

A small number of the volunteers had been referred by their social workers, this was the case for one young man at FCS and a young women at the RSPB. For 'S' at FCS a career advisor had suggested it and the young man stated '*it's one of the best decisions of my life so far*'.

## 8.5 Organisations motivating and rewarding volunteers

For organisational representatives there was a strong recognition of the need to motivate, enthuse and reward volunteers, as well as provide them with training and support. The main ways of rewarding and motivating volunteers are outlined in Table 5<sup>17</sup>.

**Table 5: Ways of motivating and rewarding volunteers**

Theme	Detail
Thanking volunteers	Ensuring that local staff who lead volunteers say thank you to them on the day (All organisations) Newsletter or volunteer magazine (NTS, NT, TWT) Award scheme for volunteer of the year (NT, Project Scotland) Barbecues, meals, Christmas lunches (RSPB, FCS, NE, NTS, BFT)
Incentives	Long service badges (RSPB, NT) Volunteer cards e.g. if a volunteer does more than 50 hours of volunteering they get a card that gives them a discount in shops, cafes run by the organisation or access to built properties (RSPB, NT)

<sup>17</sup> These were the main rewards mentioned by each organisation, it does not necessarily include everything the organisation does but is what was raised by the interviewees. This provides a flavour of recognition and reward processes of the different organisations.

	Limited edition print for volunteers when they retire from organisation (RSPB) Internal working group to support volunteers (NE) Chance to work with passionate people and experts (NTS) Annual ceilidh (NTS)
Training and learning new skills	Providing a structured volunteer plan for those who are volunteering to try and gain employment in the environment sector (BTCV) Training, skills and support (RSPB, BTCV, NE, TWT)
Involvement in decision-making	Regional conferences – thanking volunteers and hearing their views or concerns (RSPB, TWT) Involving volunteers in decision-making (FCE, NE)

The NT talked about wanting to move the, reward and recognition, scheme it has away from a focus on long service which is about quantity and the number of hours of volunteering, and to think about quality and the impact the volunteer makes. This organisation is reviewing its reward scheme, in recognition that patterns of volunteers are changing and there may be more short term and less long term volunteering in the future. For BTCV there were concerns for full time volunteers who maybe unemployed and on benefits. A requirement for gaining benefits is that the person is available for work and there can be a view from Job Centres that if a person is volunteering full time, they are not available for work. BTCV, with a couple of other volunteering charities, made representation to the Department of Work and Pensions about this issue. It was suggested that better information and training for Job Centre staff was needed as the treatment of volunteers was not always the same and that contradictory information was sometimes provided to volunteers. BTCV have a number of volunteer officers and as outlined in Table 5 above they have a structured plan for these volunteers that enables them to get the training and experience they need to seek employment in the environment sector.

An example of long term training is through the New Forest Volunteer Ranger Service (VRS) run by FCE. This scheme was set up in 1999 (Garner, 2002) to assist the rangers in the New Forest. In 2002 sixty people applied for the ten places available and twenty were interviewed. Others in the New Forest area can volunteer for Forestry Commission England (FCE) through the Two Trees Conservation Team (TTCT); and most of the activity takes place in winter. For the VRS the volunteers spend a year training to learn the social, environmental, economic, historical and legal framework of the New Forest. After their training they can wear FCE clothing, can drive FCE official vehicles and they commit to a certain level of volunteering (usually 2 days per month). The VRS provides quite a different approach to volunteering; more formalised with a specific commitment. These types of schemes are important as they provide a different opportunity for volunteers who may want to make a more formal commitment.

The volunteers were motivated to volunteer generally for specific reasons as outlined in this section. However, there were a wide range of benefits that people gained from their voluntary activities. The volunteers described benefits to themselves individually; they also outlined benefits for wildlife and the environment, and also wider benefits to local communities who could enjoy and use the sites they worked on.

## 9. RESULTS: ORGANISATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS AND COSTS OF VOLUNTEERING

### 9.1 Benefits and costs of volunteering

Organisations mentioned a range of benefits of having volunteers (Table 6). Many of the charitable organisations emphasised that they were set up by volunteers in the first place and that their Trustees are all volunteers; such as RSPB, NT, BFT, BTCV, DBC. Fundamentally this places the importance of volunteering for these organisations into context; at the core of what they do.

However, BTCV stated that it did not consider this question in the same way as other organisations as its sole purpose was to involve volunteers; it suggested that turning the question around was more relevant to the organisation and asking '*what can we offer volunteers?*'

There were four main themes relating to the benefits to organisations of having volunteers, including 1) extending the organisation's work; 2) promoting pro-environmental thinking and potential behaviour change, by getting people to think and care about the environment or create a new woodland culture as suggested by the BFT representative; 3) the beneficial impact on the individual and potentially their community or wider communities; and 4) encouraging identification with the organisation and its objectives. Organisations saw very clearly that the benefits went beyond allowing the organisation to do more work, at little extra cost, to a much broader view of potentially improving people's well-being, creating more cohesive communities and potentially instilling people with an environmental ethic. There was also an acknowledgment of the diverse experiences and richness of people's backgrounds that volunteers brought to the organisations they were volunteering for.

One respondent (BTCV, LR) described the benefits as '*absolutely huge... the value is not really about the work on the ground...it's about all the other benefits to do with PR and education and raising awareness and getting to the kids*'.

The following quote highlights some of the personal stories that respondents had from their own experience, emphasising the impact that individuals can make if they are enthusiastic and committed. It encapsulates many of the benefits of volunteering in terms of activity, mental well-being and making a meaningful contribution to society.

*And he said my main reason for coming out is because I'm a retired person, if I didn't do something like this I would sit at home. I would get depressed, I would never see anybody, I'd get unfit and things and actually what coming out and doing practical work enables me to do is to get fit, get healthy, stay active, meet people. And at the same time go home with a good feeling that I've made the place a bit better. And from that he became quite messianic, people would come up and say, oh you're wasting your time doing that, it'll get trashed by the local vandals. And he's, and he would turn round to people and he'd say, and so what are you doing about it, why aren't you out here doing something and he would convert people (FCE, NR).*

**Table 6: The benefits of having volunteers**

Benefits
Allows the organisation to do work it could not do with its staff alone
A way of interesting people in the organisation and its objectives and values – they become ambassadors for organisation

Enables the organisation to achieve its objectives whether that is environmental, social or economic
Opportunity of passing on information and the values of the organisation to others such as friends, family or relatives
Volunteers will have a stake in and think about the environment (potentially changing attitudes and behaviour to pro-environmental behaviour)
Allows the organisation to extend its resources and capacity
Volunteers can deliver a range of social and environmental outcomes potentially increasing community and individual well-being

A few representatives spoke about the uniqueness of environmental volunteering in terms of how it could inspire people and benefit people in a range of ways not available through other types of voluntary activity.

*Yes I think that environmental volunteering has some unique qualities to it that maybe allow it or enable environmental volunteering to reach additional benefits or achieve additional benefits or reach particular audiences that maybe other types of volunteering wouldn't reach. And while in very general terms the management of volunteers, whether they're environmental volunteers or any other type of volunteers there are certain things that are, would cut across them all. The only things around volunteers management that is different is maybe some of the health and safety stuff because you're outdoors, because you're maybe working with tools or the nature of the work you're doing. There is an additional stuff there but in general best practise in volunteer management would cut across all sectors. But what, where I think environmental volunteering may be different from other types of volunteering is that the work that's done by volunteers. Especially if it's volunteering at a local level in terms of improving the environment and green spaces and places where in and around where people live is that it has very wide benefits in terms of who then accesses those sites. And benefits from the improvements that volunteers have made. So if it's volunteers going out and improving public spaces then potential benefits are for anyone who can access that site (SNH, NR).*

While highlighting the many benefits of having volunteers, the costs of this were also mentioned. However, none of the organisation respondents thought that the costs of recruiting and managing volunteers outweighed the benefits. Volunteers were not viewed as cheap labour as the organisation representatives all realised that volunteers needed to be properly resourced and managed. Quantitative data (on what organisations spent on volunteers) was not collected for this project; rather the main areas of costs were explored qualitatively. The costs fell into three main categories (Box 2).

### **Box 2: Costs of having volunteers**

1. Direct spending - some of these costs were related to spending on equipment and materials that were needed, transport costs if the organisation offered transport for volunteers e.g. minibus, reimbursing travel costs, and paying for social activities as a thank you to the volunteers.
2. Training - was also an issue; not only the cost of training volunteers but also the cost and time needed to train staff to develop and managed volunteers.
3. Health and safety requirements were also seen as a cost and time issue by the majority of organisations. There were concerns that health and safety was hindering some of the work, as requirements to meet standards became more stringent.

## 9.2 Benefits to volunteers

The organisational representatives thought that there were a range of benefits to the volunteers of volunteering. In some ways these were similar to the motivations outlined above; the benefits could be for the individual or wider community. Improving community cohesion and empowerment were mentioned along with well-being benefits, learning and understanding about environmental issues, having the opportunity to visit great places and improving quality of life were also mentioned. This is outlined to a certain extent in the quote below:

*I'm really keen that we find ways to ensure that nature, wildlife, natural environment, is relevant to people's daily lives, it's not just something they watch on television or they occasionally experience if they're on holiday, but actually it's part of a meaningful way of life for them and it's essential to their health and well being. (NE, NR)*

The conceptual framework outlined in Figure 23 highlights the range of benefits gained by the individual, the environment, wider community and organisations. These benefits were raised by both the individual volunteers and the representatives of the organisations. The benefits described were not necessarily hierarchical i.e. the benefits people talked about were related to the context in which they volunteered and to their own previous experiences. Therefore the importance of individual benefits might change over the period of time that people volunteered, for example a person might join a volunteer group if they had just moved to an area in order to get to know people. Once they developed a social network, the learning benefits of their conservation work might become more important. The volunteers generally talked about the benefits they gained in a holistic way rather than stating that one benefit was more important than another.

### ***Being outdoors***

The majority of the volunteers talked about being outside; some of the volunteers were volunteering in very scenic countryside, while others were clearing up spaces in urban areas. Some of the volunteers stated that they had not been aware of the sites before they started their voluntary activities. Some groups primarily worked on one site such as the CWW/BFT group and FCS group; however many of the others went to a number of places depending on the requirements of the organisations managing the volunteers. Both options could provide benefits. For example, those who worked on one site could become very familiar with it and observe quite small changes that took place, while others who went to different sites could appreciate the different qualities of these sites. For those participating in the conservation holidays it could be a chance to visit a part of the country they had not seen before. A number of the young men with FCS had not visited Galloway Forest before becoming involved in the project even though they lived in nearby Ayr. This seems to suggest that there are a range of reasons, possibly barriers, that can prevent people accessing woodlands or green spaces. Research (O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005; Weldon et al, 2007) in this area suggests that not knowing where to go or where you are allowed to go, or a lack of information of opportunities for accessing sites, can be an issue for some people. Watching changes over the seasons was also something that provided enjoyment. For a number of the volunteers walking in the countryside and green spaces was something that they did in their spare time and this was part of their enjoyment of being outdoors, and volunteering was a natural extension of that, as 'J' outlines:

*Oh, well I'm a keen hill walker anyway, which is why this rugged valley appeals to me greatly. Because I think this is the most stunning scenery in southern Scotland right in front of us. (Male, CWW/BFT)*

Being outdoors involved visual amenity, e.g. being in a green space, but also a chance to experience the elements wind, rain, snow and sun. The volunteers primarily said that they had been out in most weathers. They seemed to say this almost with a hint of pride; that they could cope with the elements and still get on with their activity. Seeing changes in the environment around them through the seasons was also described, not only changes related to the work they were doing but wider changes.

For quite a few of the volunteers, their enjoyment of being outdoors had been long-standing. One, a member of Durham Bird Club, said:

*Well, I like being outside, I'm a gardener by trade so I'm outside most of the time. I'm not one for the concrete jungle, you know what I mean, and I mean, I've lived in the country and I've lived in the towns. I lived in London for a while, I existed in London for about 4 years, you know what I mean, but I mean, the thing is I'm, like, in tune with the earth and the seasons and I always have been since I was a child.*

For others, it provided a contrast to their day-to-day life:

*Being outside and being in the fresh air, especially if you work in an office all week, which I do, it's nice to be outside in the fresh air, it's exercise.*

*It stimulates you in every way, your health, you're busy, the physical side, you're using different muscles and you're breathing the air, which is a lot fresher... We just live about fifty yards from the M6 [motorway] so the air is like toxic. (Male, NTS)*



**Carrifran Valley near Moffat which is being re-wooded by the Carrifran Wildwood group and the Borders Forest Trust**

### **General well-being or holistic well-being?**

'B' the teacher of the young man who volunteered for RSPB described how the young man looked forward to his volunteering work and how he had changed over time. The school was a special one for disruptive and disturbed children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, who would not be accommodated in a main stream school. Many of the children in the school were in care homes. The RSPB group leader was something of a role model for the young man who followed him round and they seemed to get on very well. The teacher described how the young man looked forward to his voluntary activities.

*Oh yes he's certainly changed from when he first came into the school. He was a very uncoordinated type of boy. When he was eating, food went all over the place. I think this activity helps him. He looks forward to it every Tuesday, there was one Tuesday we couldn't come and it was a nightmare for him. He couldn't accept it at all. (B, Teacher of T, both male, RSPB)*

For 'J' who led the DBC volunteers he found volunteering relaxing, he worked for Natural England and organised volunteer days as part of his employment, as well as doing it in his own leisure time. For 'K' with FoLD he found his volunteer work interesting as he cleaned cars full time and found that a '*bit mind destroying*'.

'A' talked about a feeling of general well-being that included socialising, getting outdoors and learning:

*You can speak to different people. If you stay in the house nobody cares do they? You have to find them. You do learn a little bit as you go along, you can spread the word to other people. It really has a lot to offer. ... it's all positives, no negatives about this work at all (Female, GMBC).*

One woman (a volunteer with RSPB) commented:

*Health wise I haven't been really good and he [her husband] was really depressed because he's always worked, and worked really hard, so having nothing to do was really getting him down. And there is not a lot of things he can do with his condition, so this is great ... it's really made him feel better, and me as well.*

A number of the FCS young men described how their activities took them to places they had not been before. The comments by one NT volunteer (male) are suggestive of what might be termed 'holistic well-being' rather than 'general well-being'. In his comments he alluded to benefits in terms of physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being, as the following quotes indicate:

*Physical fitness... I thoroughly enjoy cycling and I enjoy conservation work and so, therefore it's not a demanding exercise. I couldn't imagine what it must be like to go into a gym and work out on a machine, or sit on a bicycle without any wheels for an hour, how insane is that? Physically there is that plus for me to get fit.*

*We've talked about the way that it removes stress, that's very important to me. But also spiritually, I can't do anything without thinking about the way that it affects me spiritually. I find that being in Creation [i.e. in nature] allows me to just be aware of ... listen, there's a beautiful bird now just singing ... be aware of all of these delights that are here. I'm a committed Christian and I find that being in Creation satisfies my spiritual need. I attend church, I was there this morning*

*but I think because my spiritual life is so integral to me, that there is an element of worship almost in being out in the countryside, same as when I'm on my bike. I'm surrounded by these beautiful things. I'm a Creationist, I think these things were created for me to enjoy and there is absolutely a contentedness that comes from feeding the spiritual side of my life.*

*And I love the teasing that we get; I have so many friends in this group and we tease each other and there's happy banter there and it's just another way of creating comradeship - out of adversity comes comradeship. And I know this isn't true adversity, but there is a challenge there, there's a task to be done, we want to do it well and we support each other in that, and that's delightful, isn't it?*

Likewise, a NTS volunteer highlighted multiple dimensions of well-being which he saw as being improved as a result of his volunteering:

*First of all there's fresh air and physical fitness. And also I'm a great one for, like I did the other day - I can sit in the hillside for ten minutes and it can be as effective as a Prozac. I sit there, I look and I've got a mind that's always working and thinking and doing things, and I can sit there and I just get a high, I suppose, from looking at the beauty.*

A DBC member highlighted his experience of feeling a high level of well-being associated with his volunteering:

*I mean, we come out bird watching, it doesn't cost us a penny, but at the end of the day, I'll go home after I've had a good day out somewhere, hit the pillow on the night and there's no rubbish in your head, you hit the pillow and your gone, you wake up the next day and your refreshed and you feel better within yourself and you feel like you've achieved something and you just feel that you're a better human being and you haven't got any time for the dross that's going on around you, you know what I mean.*

*I think I can say that its part of my life now, it's an enjoyable thing, you can do as much or as little as you want on the task you know, if you're a bit tired you can just sort of sit back and have a chat, or just do something light, there's no pressures on how much you do or how little you do. I think it's a good thing to be involved in, I love it (Male, GMBC)*

The overlap between 'health' and 'well-being' was evident in the following comments by a NT volunteer (female):

*I think if you're looking at purely health, I think it's better than going to the gym actually. And you hear about green gyms. So, kind of mentally, you feel really relaxed and focused, time just goes really quickly in the garden, you don't even realise. And you can focus on a task quite intensely. So relaxation, great, yeah, because my job day to day, I drive, it's busy, I work with people day in, day out but it's nice to do something different.*

### **Meaning and satisfaction**

Volunteers talked about putting something back, and gaining satisfaction and a sense of achievement from getting involved. This category seemed to be more specifically about what might be termed the more altruistic side of volunteering and the need to make a contribution.

A DBC member commented:

*You feel you're doing something positive, you're giving something back to the environment, you're actually doing something physically yourself where you feel you're achieving something. I guess there are too many people in the world talking about doing things and not actually doing it, and putting legislation into place and whatever, but at the end of the day, a lot of the time it doesn't actually work, whereas if you take control yourself, you feel like you've achieved something, you know what I mean? Or you're making your mark, you're not relying on someone else to do it, you're doing it yourself.*

'R' found that volunteering allowed for time spent at a slower pace in which more notice could be taken of immediate surroundings:

*Apart from fresh air and you get to see places you've not done before. Actually get time to look around. Most people are too busy running about doing another busy job so, this way you can, it slows down and you can just take a look at everything. (Young Male, BTCV)*

Volunteers also noted that putting something back made them feel good in themselves and this can potentially be particularly important in building people's confidence, especially those with low self esteem. Not only the self-esteem of the volunteers, but the respect paid to them by others, was also important. One young FCS volunteer commented:

*My mum and dad were concerned that I wasn't going to be doing anything with my life, you know. After a lot of time came some things and they just can have pride in me now you know, I can see that. And I get on a lot better with my dad.*

Seeing the changes that they had made to the environment was also important to the volunteers. Some of the volunteer leaders would take the volunteers back to sites they had worked on to show them some of the changes that had taken place over time. This was considered important and set the work the volunteers did in its environmental context. 'J' described going back to a wetland site DBC had done some work on:

*Oh, the satisfaction part is just superb. When you see it's raining, when it's wet it's a different environment altogether. Lots of different species coming in. You can understand what the work's benefiting. (Male, DBC)*

For 'T', who valeted cars for a living and found this a rather tedious activity, dry stone walling was one of his favourite volunteer activities:

*Oh, yeah, it's a real sense of achievement, yeah. I mean, it isn't a mindless sort of job. It's trying to get the right stone in the right place and there's all sorts of considerations about the slope of the wall and the shape of the stones and how it's supported down below and whether you can put the next layer on top of it and, so you can't switch the brain off with it. (Male, FoLD)*

For the CWW/BFT volunteers, because they were working on one site, there was a clear feeling of satisfaction and achievement. This is a more unusual volunteer group; a number of friends developed the idea of restoring the Carrifran Valley to its original wild and wooded state. The initiators of the scheme helped to found BFT and raised considerable funds from a number of sources. In 2000 BFT purchased the valley, which is near Moffat in southern Scotland, and work began on planting thousands of trees. A detailed study of Carrifran was undertaken to explore the pollen record and identify the types of trees that would have been part of the site

6,000 years ago. The volunteers are very much behind the vision for the CWW and they spoke about leaving a legacy and how the valley would change over the years.

*Oh yes this is particularly what I was born for. (Male, CWW/BFT)*

*The only tragedy is I'll not live long enough to see it mature. (Male, CWW/BFT)*

'D' who was a volunteer leader/driver for NTS, had completed about thirty working holidays, he said that this meant he met about fifty to sixty new people a year. He spoke about how he got a lot of satisfaction out of a successful holiday. He also enjoyed the control he had as a leader to make decisions and pass on skills, and he also got the holidays for free.

### **Physical well-being**

Most of the volunteers talked about the physical benefits of their activities; and this applied across all the age groups, from the young men at FCS who talked about getting a better nights sleep and not having to go to the gym as frequently, to those who were retired and talked about feeling stiff the next day; however this was seen positively. Being out in the fresh air was often talked about in the same breath as physical activity benefits and the majority of respondents enjoyed getting outside. Whether the volunteers were undertaking their voluntary activity in beautiful surroundings such as Carrifran or the Lake District; or in more urban areas, they all enjoyed being outside and exploring their surroundings.

*Meeting new people, being out in the fresh air and I've always been quite an active person, following outdoor pursuits. It's a way of keeping fit. (Female, GMBC)*

*When I was doing it once a week and I got home, whether I was putting in more effort than not by the time I got home I was totally wiped out and the next day I'd be stiff. But I don't seem to have that problem now. So whether it's because I'm getting fitter or whether I'm not putting that much into it I don't know. (Female, GMBC)*

For the HWT men the key benefit was being able to be physically active and work up a sweat.

*This is a superb way to keep relatively fit. The physical is important, it's the buzz, tree felling it's a bit of a man's thing. Generally we want to get on and we are out there for the physical. It's good for muscle tone and keeping the beer off the belly. (Male, HWT)*

*When you're retired it also keep you fit, keeps you active. Some of its quite hard physical stuff and you go home shattered. But it's what I call healthy tired. It's a good feeling. If I don't come out for any reason I miss it. (Male, HWT)*

One of the volunteers at Gateshead commented:

*It keeps you healthy and keeps you fit and alert by getting out in the fresh air for one thing, in the lovely fresh air like this today and you're using muscles which you never... which when you're retired you tend to forget using, stop using them.*

'M' was told that he needed to get some exercise:

*I'm paid off [from work] through ill health. And I had to find something to do. I was advised to get exercise, so here I am. (Male, DBC)*

One of the young men at FCS wanted to lose weight saying 'I'm desperate to do that, so this will help', he had been off sick for a long time and wanted to become active again.

The CWW/BFT volunteers needed to be reasonably fit to start with as they are planting trees up to 450 metres up a hillside. Some, also volunteered as boundary walkers and walk the fence that bounds the site and keeps sheep out of the valley. The fence is above 500 metres and involves a twelve kilometre walk. One of the volunteers stated that it took him five hours to complete the walk, with a stop for lunch.

*It also gets me out every Tuesday, every week; out in the hills, in the wilderness, which is where I like to be. Its just good exercise, good crack. (Male, CWW/BFT)*

### **Social well-being**

This was a key benefit outlined by the majority of volunteers. 'A' described himself as a loner; he had joined the DBC after meeting the chairman of the club. He had done a lot of hill walking over the years, often in Scotland, which he described as 'God's own country; and was a fit person.

*It's okay I enjoy it. I think I spent too much time on me own and me mind started going to mush because I didn't particularly engage in conservation very much. So that's good I may have extended myself in that way. (Male, DBC)*

Once people have retired or are not working then a major source of socialising, through work, is no longer available to them and they need to find activities and occupations that allows them to meet others.

*I enjoy it. You have a good crack with the lads you know, it's good fun. (Male, DBC)*

*The social side is good and we meet socially down the pub. Three quarters of the people I'm socially involved with are conservation volunteers including the Sunday group. It has a huge impact on your social life which is great. I ran a company and rather than socialise with work colleagues I looked to that outside work. (Male, HWT)*

Many of the volunteers described some of the social activities that took place out of hours. These social events or activities were organised by the organisations or committees that ran the groups often as a thank you to the volunteers for getting involved. For example FCS volunteers had been on barbecues and mountain bikes rides. On the whole volunteers also seemed to think that volunteering was inclusive as outlined in the quote below. 'A' also suggested that the DBC was not elite and was not about one-upmanship in which people tried to suggest that they knew more than others.

*We all get on very well it's quite a close band of people. There's no hidden agenda; you don't need to know who the people are or what they do. You just come [and] enjoy the day that's the beauty of it. (Female, GMBC)*



**Volunteers from the Durham Bird Club breaking for lunch**

Those who were regular volunteers enjoyed the relationships they built up with others over a period of time. It allowed them to get to know others. This comment by a female NT volunteer illustrates this common theme:

*There's the social contact. Over the years I've got to know members of the group really well, they're some of my best friends in the area. It was a good way of getting to meet people when I first moved up to the North East, and obviously friendships take a long time to build up and over the years you see people twice a month, once a month, you start to actually get to know each other.*

For the HWT group even if the weather was too bad for working the group would meet up anyway to discuss what needed to be done next. Volunteers talked about the 'crack' and camaraderie, and making friends that occurred through their activities. For those who participated in conservation holidays this was a good way of getting to know people.

For the young men at FCS there was an opportunity to make new friends and similarly for the young people with BTCV. Most of the young people also talked about the team work element of volunteering. This was seen as important for both socialising and in terms of developing skills.

*Aye brilliant. I met hundreds of new people. It boosted my confidence well high, so it did. (Male, FCS)*

*Yeah, it's mostly teamwork. Well, sometimes we can work alone and sometimes work in teams so it's, but you've got to remember, BTCV, basically we're a big team anyway so, we're all looking after each other and looking after what we're doing. (Male, BTCV)*

The range of backgrounds of the volunteers was considerable in both age and socio-economics terms. A number of the volunteers also had health problems; physical and mental or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some of the groups were very mixed and volunteers were likely to meet a range of different people and this was something that was appreciated. As one female NT volunteer said:

*I like being with young and old people at the same time.*

### **Mental well-being**

The volunteers used a range of expressions and told of their experiences that led to an impact on mental well-being. One volunteer with DBC talked about the relaxed nature of the activity, one man with the FoLD described how he found it therapeutic. For some of the young people it was a chance to 'chill out', take stock and look around them. While one of the CWW/BFT volunteers described mental stimulation, this was primarily due to the opportunities to converse and learn from the others in the group and because the long term vision of the project to re-wood a valley was something that the group readily found stimulating.

*Just even, like peace of mind as well. There's something about being outdoors that I think just gives you a calmness.* (Female, BTCV)

Others also found stress reduction important:

*I can sit on the hillside for ten minutes and it can be as effective as prozac.* (Male, NTS)

*I think for me it's a real de-stress thing. I'm wound up like a spring at work through our busy period. And you kind of come away and just feel it's a long way away and you can forget all about it.* (Female, NTS)

### **Spiritual well-being**

Although not a dominant theme, spiritual well-being was one of the benefits noted by a few volunteers. As noted above under 'General well-being or holistic well-being', a volunteer from NT made several references to what might be termed 'spiritual well-being'.

Similarly, one of the CWW/BFT volunteers, in response to the question 'what do you think you get out of being involved?' commented:

*It's a part of your soul I suppose. It's one of those things, you know, as you're getting older you're looking for reasons, you know, 'why are we here'? And you know it is that magic 40 years, once you get over the 40 year part, your whole life's changing, you know you start to have different values in life and ... basically that means ... laying down something here for future generations. I've been able to work in some of the large estates in Scotland where all the people have planted these trees and planned the gardens and stuff like that. They were never going to see the results, they had vision, and we've ... I've got vision as well and I can also just about picture here, all the trees in 200 years time.*

### **Learning**

Many of the volunteers felt that they were learning a range of things from their voluntary activity, however this was not through any formalised training, as mentioned under the training and skills (motivation) section. The informal learning people identified came about primarily through the person leading the activity or from other volunteers who had particular knowledge. For those in the DBC, as part of

being a member there were opportunities to attend lectures or borrow tapes of bird song to help improve identification. The bird watchers also learnt from each other and were happy to share knowledge. 'M' stated that the volunteer co-ordinator knew a lot.

*I'm not very knowledgeable on the subject like, but guys like 'J' they know their business. You stick with fellas like that, you know they keep you right. And you learn a lot from them. (Male, DBC)*

'A' who volunteered for GMBC stated that you 'learn a little as you go along' (Female, GMBC). Another volunteer (female, RSPB) commented:

*Usually they say you can't teach an old dog new tricks but that's wrong because you can because H [her husband] has learnt a lot of things, and me as well. I mean, I know a lot of different flowers and wild flowers and that. My grandson or grand daughter will ask me something and I know the answer.*

The men in the CWW/BFT project spoke about learning from each other, one was knowledgeable about invertebrates, another was an ornithologist and was a biological recorder for the group. He talked about recording species distribution in the Carrifran valley and in the adjacent valley, there is a boundary fence that keeps the sheep out of Carrifran. If monitoring is carried out every year then the differences between the two valleys can be monitored and the intervention of planting trees and keeping out sheep in Carrifran can be explored. Two of the men in the group had been academics one a zoologist and the other a biologist; another was an ex forester.

For 'L' with RSPB in Motherwell learning was important and allowed her to overcome her fear of insects.

*Well I've learnt new skills. If somebody had said to me can you build a fence I would have said och I don't think I can help, but now I can help easy. I used to be really scared of bugs and today like I had these gloves on touching the earth and stuff and I was doing alright. So it's nice to know I've overcome that fear as well. (Female, RSPB)*



**Hampshire Wildlife Trust volunteer using a power tool**

### **Environmental benefits**

'J' an ornithologist and one of the CWW/BFT volunteers described potential changes in bird species due to the creation of the wood.

*not knowing what it's going to be like in ten years time or twenty years time, I think that's hugely exciting. And indeed, not knowing what effect we're going to have on an influx of bird species. So, for example, this year we had grasshopper warblers coming in. And the Borders RSPB regional officer, Pete Gordon, who's moved up to Inverness recently, he wrote an article, back in about 1998 I think, making certain predictions as to what the sort of changes that he would expect to take place in the bird species distribution in this valley as a consequence of woodland establishment. And it's interesting that quite a lot of his predictions are now becoming evident. (Male, CWW/BFT)*

'J' who was leading the DBC activity outlined how he would write a short article on what the volunteers had done and the benefits to bird populations for the club members. This he hoped would encourage others who were members of the bird club, but did not volunteer, to get involved. He also talked more broadly about intensive farming:

*Yeah, because we're, because we're directly managing, you know, volunteering and doing the work for birds, it does bring other themes into it, which is what 'A' was talking about, with different organisations and how he feels and thinks about the, the global aspect of things. Because obviously agriculture's changed within this project we're doing here. When you look at the agricultural system broadly, it's all so intensive, and you start thinking about it as well. I mean, I do think about it a lot. 'A's' just starting to think about it because of his voluntary work with us. You realise it's not just a local scheme, it's regional. ... so he's probably moving on from voluntary work to ... environment. (Male, DBC)*

For 'M' protecting the birds that gave him so much enjoyment was a key reason to get involved.

*Yeah, I like to get involved. Because the birds give me a lot of pleasure and if they didn't have their habitat they wouldn't be here. And now so, I like to do me little bit for them, pay them back for the pleasure that they give me (Male, DBC).*

The young men with FCS reeled off a list of wildlife they had seen such as deer, badgers, foxes, adders, and birds of prey:

*Forestry has made me see what wildlife there is out there and to take care of it. (Male, FCS)*

A NTS female volunteer appreciated that her work was contributing to environmental improvements, but acknowledged that this was aided by the fact that she was working under the guidance of 'experts'. She said:

*Well I'm helping to improve biodiversity, controlling invasive species and that sort of thing but I'm doing it under the guidance of people who know what they are doing and they are working to a specific programme.*



**Pelaw Quarry Bank, Gateshead – a created green space**

## 10. RESULTS: BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING

### 10.1 Barriers and challenges for organisations that manage volunteers

A key challenge seen by all of the organisations was that of developing and managing volunteers. Getting the right people with the necessary skills was considered important by the RSPB and it did this by focusing on the skills and tasks that needed to be done and matching people to those. Other organisations might have volunteer opportunities on particular days of the week and anyone can get involved, the focus here is on the process of involving people and carrying out fairly simple activities. There was also recognition that volunteers may not always follow the correct procedures of an organisation or may perform poorly, or potentially be critical of an organisation if they feel passionately about a particular issue, or the quality of the work they do may not be good. All of these issues need to be sensitively handled in the way that an organisation may have to deal with similar situations with its paid employees. Having the resources and staff time to do this was seen as important by all of the organisations. TWT suggested that its guidance that came out of its 'Unlocking the potential' project is a step in the right direction. Some of the employed staff may not be particularly keen to work with or manage volunteers and feel that they have little control over them. Therefore the three key barriers and challenges are outlined in Box 3.

#### Box 3: Barriers and challenges for organisations that manage volunteers

- Resources – having staff time to develop and manage volunteers, funding issues, having too many volunteers.
- The volunteers – not getting their needs met, difficult to manage if they are not regular volunteers, what to do if there is poor performance, what to do if the volunteers have been there for years and like to do something in a particular way that does not fit in with newer staff members.
- Health and safety – this was something organisations felt was becoming overly onerous and restricting what could be achieved.

### 10.2 Barriers to volunteering: becoming involved and staying involved

Although the research only involved those who were volunteers already, the questions asked of volunteers include one on the barriers to volunteering. Some of the volunteers had not thought about this and could not think of any barriers, however the majority of people did suggest that there could be barriers. Some of these had been experienced by the volunteers themselves and others were issues that they thought might prevent other people becoming involved. The barriers are divided into those to do with getting involved in environmental volunteering in the first place and also barriers that might occur once someone was involved in volunteering.

#### Barriers to becoming involved

There were a range of key barriers to getting involved in environmental volunteering. Some of the barriers the volunteers had experienced themselves, while for others who had not experienced any barriers they considered what might prevent others from getting involved. These barriers included:

##### *Finding out about opportunities*

Lack of information was an important issue, some of the volunteers were not sure where to get information from. Others were not aware that particular organisations such as FC or local councils have environmental volunteers, and that there were opportunities to join in.

*Knowing about it I suppose, knowing about all the different opportunities, lots of people don't know. I mean I had to do a bit of hunting to find out about opportunities. (Female, NTS)*

One respondent highlighted an even more basic knowledge/information issue – awareness or connection with the environment. As was noted above in terms of motivations to volunteer, environmental volunteers in this study appeared to have an over-arching concern for or attachment to the natural environment. The lack of exposure to, or understanding of, the environment is therefore likely to be a barrier to participation.

*It's information, that's the thing. You've got to make people aware; if you can make them aware then..... It's hard today because the way people are today they've caught in to this modern way of living; people are glued to the television or onto the internet. Where you've got to start is with the primary school children; if you sow the seeds, out of all those children that's the next generation coming along, and if you keep doing it every generation, then you've got a bit of hope. But it's like talking to somebody about classical works of art - they've never ever seen them, they've never ever seen any pictures of them, but if you actually take them and say, look that's a Da Vinci, that's a Van Gogh, that's this that's that, some will say well I don't like that and some will say woah! Do you know what I mean? You've got to expose it to them and then it triggers it off within the person, and that's where you've got to go I think. (Male, DBC)*

A small number of the volunteers were not aware that practical conservation volunteering took place until they got invited to join in or found out about it from someone they knew; this is where word of mouth is particularly important.

*One of my friends, my best mate I play in a band with, he started and he says well why don't you come and I wasn't doing nothing at the time, just arsing about and he seemed to be going really well at it. (Male, FCS)*

### **Costs**

The volunteers did mention that they thought that having their travel expenses paid was very useful.

*That's right, yeah, other wise it would be too expensive, I couldn't afford to come here if it wasn't for them paying my expenses, but I keep them down because I'm a pensioner, most of mine a free anyway, it's only before a certain time that I have to pay the full fare. (Male, GMBC)*

This will be an increasingly important issue if low income groups are to be more widely engaged in environmental volunteering.

### **Groups are at capacity**

Some groups are popular and can fill up quickly. This can be the case particularly if a group only undertakes activity in a particular season or if it only meets occasionally. One NTS volunteer highlighted the popularity of volunteering opportunities as a barrier, commenting:

*I only recently found out about the volunteer holidays. I read in the National Trust England one actually, magazine, so that encouraged me to find out about those. But virtually all of those, and all of the ones in Scotland book up miles in advance, and this was the only one that had, happened to have someone drop out, so I could get a place. (Female, NTS)*

Another volunteer alluded to the concept of 'capacity', when he said:

*The opportunity is there for everybody to become involved. But at the same time you wouldn't want hundreds of people becoming involved, I mean you wouldn't.*  
(Male, GMBC)

Similarly, a volunteer at Carrifran Wildwood commented:

*I suppose there could be a case when they end up getting too many volunteers and there won't be enough actual sort of people to organise.*

### **Transport issues**

Not having a car and lack of public transport to sites could be an issue. Some of the organisations provide transport, these are primarily minibuses that are used to pick people up from a central meeting point. This happened for the FCS, GMBC and BTCV groups. Most of the people interviewed, who were volunteering, for these organisations got public transport to the meeting points. For 'C' at BTCV this meant getting two buses. For 'M' in the DBC when interviewed for that volunteer day he had travelled by train and two buses before walking three miles to get to the site to clear saplings from a farmers field. He said that the three mile walk was a chance for him to bird watch and was an enjoyable experience. For those who drove to the sites, the distances they travelled varied. The CWW/BFT volunteers might make a thirty to forty mile round trip but did not find this awkward as they talked about the beauty of the scenery they passed on the way and they had their own transport. One of the group made a sixty miles round trip from Dumfries. The HWT volunteers stated that they could not travel by public transport to the depot where the tools were kept. The furthest travelled was by some of the FoLD and Environment Agency corporate volunteers who travelled from Kendal to Eskdale in Cumbria which was approximately sixty miles for the round trip. However, this was not undertaken on a regular basis.

Another volunteer commented:

*I don't drive so I'm completely reliant upon other people in the group to be able, kind enough to give me lifts to places because most of these sites are either a long way from where I live or not on a direct bus route, there's only a couple of sites I can get to by bus.* (Male, NT)

### **Confidence**

There was an issue about confidence, whether people had the confidence to follow up on information or to be proactive and get involved. This also might include having the confidence to meet new people and interact with them.

*I don't know if it's difficult - I mean it isn't difficult, it's there for people to join. It's just some people seem reluctant to get involved or find it difficult to get involved with groups, you know, especially if they're single or living on their own and find it difficult working with other people, but I mean the opportunity is there for everybody to become involved.* (Male, GMBC)

*It can be quite scary going to a place where there are people you have never met and you don't know what it will be like.* (Female, NTS)

### **Not sure how to go about it or what is involved or what to expect**

Some of the national representatives thought that there was too little information about how volunteers benefit from their activities or what training they can get

involved in. Personal stories of how volunteers had benefited were considered important and a number of organisation websites now have case studies from volunteers themselves talking about why they enjoy their volunteer work.

## **Barriers once involved in volunteering**

### ***Not having the right equipment for the job***

This could be a problem if enough tools were not available, or if the existing tools were not in a reasonably good condition. This could frustrate the volunteers and was something that volunteer leaders needed to organise and keep on top of.

### ***Not able to voice concerns or frustrations***

One group insisted that they wanted to be able to contact someone within the organisation if they had any issues they wanted to raise or concerns they had. For example the HWT volunteers were concerned with the length of time some of the training could take such as first aid training which they said was a three day course.

### ***Lack of organisation of activities or planning before hand***

This was perceived as potentially being a barrier, however it was only raised by one group who had carried out a clearance task of some alder one year which should have then been treated to stop it growing back, however the treatment had not taken place. This led the volunteers to feel frustrated that their efforts had been wasted as the alder was now growing and would have to be cut back again.

Acknowledging lack of organisation as a potential barrier to participation, one volunteer commented:

*Well, certainly relevant to this particular environmental project, working at heights and stuff like that can put people off, but Hugh's quite well organised in that fact, that if he knows that one of the Sundays we're getting a group down from Glasgow who are predominantly teenagers, so he's got it well planned out that obviously he's not going to drag them up here for the high level stuff, there's low level stuff that they can do, short attention span stuff as well for some of the other kids and it was interesting that the teenagers were very well motivated really, they spent, I would say, at least two thirds of the day up helping us.  
(Male, BFT/CWW)*

### ***Group dynamics: some groups may be exclusive***

Generally speaking, the volunteers did not raise group dynamics as a barrier to participation, although in the FCS group the one participant who was at the older end of the allowed age range (26) observed that '*a lot of the others are 16 to 18 so there is a bit of an age gap between us*' and went on to say '*I do feel a little left out sometimes because they all talk in their little groups about all their young things and I've no interest in them*'.

Another example of group dynamics affecting satisfaction with volunteering was highlighted by a female volunteer at Gateshead, for whom the involvement of a person with psychological problems caused some concern. So, while one of the Council employees highlighted the involvement of that individual as evidence of social inclusion and noted the benefits that individual received from his involvement, there appeared to be scope for improved management of the group dynamics.

A NTS Thistle Camp volunteer also made a comment related to group dynamics, but in this case saw it as his problem, rather than a problem of any other particular person. He said:

*I'm not a people person so it's a challenge in some ways to work with other people for a week. And I find that's sometimes difficult. So in a sense it's not just coming for the fresh air. It's changing the routine. It's a wee bit coming out of my comfort zone because I'm dealing with people whom normally to be honest I wouldn't socially mix with if I had the choice.*

### **Mundane tasks**

Litter picking was a task that was not considered with enthusiasm. Some organisations try to make sure its volunteers did not do this while others saw the necessity but try to limit the time spent on it. As one female from GMBC argued:

*When I first started we didn't do any litter picking and now it seems everywhere you come out you're litter picking. So whether it's a case of more getting around or well the volunteers are here we'll make use of them I don't know. It's one of my least happy jobs. Because I think we've got more potential than just picking up the people's rubbish.*

### **Not getting feedback**

If participants did not get feedback on what they were doing, why it was important or how it fitted in to the wider picture of the organisation and environment then this could be a potential barrier. This was not the case for the volunteers in this study most of whom stated that the leaders talked about why the work they were doing was important. A female volunteer from Gateshead expressed the her view, saying:

*'P' will often take us round and we'll talk about the plants and flowers that are there which you would hope to encourage to grow and those you didn't want. Sometimes we go in a field and pull the ragwort out because we know we're doing it for the horses. So, yes, we do have an understanding of what we're doing; we're not just out there blindly cutting things down. We do understand why it's happening.*

### **Being expected to do more than you want to**

Volunteers generally did not perceive that there were excessive demands on them, and some noted the lack of any particular expectations as a benefit of being a volunteer rather than an employee.

*I don't really see that there's anything that would stop people from doing it though, you work at your own rate. It's not like you're under a lot of pressure or anything. Even if you weren't physically fit you could work at your own pace so there's nothing really that's stopping you apart from the fact that I'm going to be completely skint for the next 6 months. (Male, BTCV)*

Another volunteer commented:

*You can do all kinds of things. You don't have to be skilful in any one of them. Just join in when you feel you can and when you've had enough then you stop. (Female, GMBC)*

### **Physical limitations**

Many of the volunteers alluded to the fact that they have physical limitations, which impact on their capacity to undertake volunteering activities. However, they generally

did not perceive them as barriers to participation in the long term (though acknowledged that from time to time their involvement may be inhibited by physical issues).

One RSPB volunteer who experiences serious health problems drew attention to the fact that she can be involved and benefit from the experience despite her ill health:

*A lot of times it's hard to get out and about, I can't walk very well sometimes, but I do come out and when I get back I feel better. See even if I don't do a lot, I just come out and make the tea, I'm doing something, I feel as if I've done something for that group, you know for somebody else and not just been selfish.*

Another volunteer, when asked if there were barriers to people volunteering, said:

*Only of their own making or perhaps physical disabilities, but there's so many things which can be done in volunteering I would have thought that cleverer people than me were bound to accommodate almost anybody to volunteering work. (Male, FoLD)*

Other physical limitations noted were associated with personal strength or with the physical conditions in which the working holiday volunteers are accommodated.

*It's just I suppose the physical limitations and you have to make sure that you can actually do [the task], you know, that would be my only concern coming here, that it would be big trees, how I would handle a big saw. Not very good on that, a big huge tree trunk crashing down and I would be under it; and you know, carrying the dry stone wall, carrying big heavy rocks and things, but I think that's the only thing that limits you. You have to have the information beforehand, on what you're actually doing and what your limitations are. (Female, EA/FoLD)*

A related issue was the perception of risk involved with volunteer activities. One volunteer commented:

*Well I suppose there is always a risk of health and safety isn't there? It's a very tiring day, so it's possible you could pull a muscle or put your back up, something like that, so you've just got to be mindful of health and safety all the time and make sure that you take rests and you don't actually work too hard. (Female, FoLD)*

Several volunteers on the NTS's 'Thistle camp' compared their current (satisfactory) accommodation with other accommodation they had previously experienced on working holidays. One said:

*This sounds dreadful, but when I choose the camps I go to, there's only two or three I would come to because I'm at an age now that I don't want to slum it and lie in sleeping bags and halls, so part of my selection is that you've got a house to stay in and hot and cold running water. So that's important for me. (Male, NTS)*

Another said:

*I know from experience my wife and her sister did do a camp and while they enjoyed the work and the social aspect, but they didn't enjoy the accommodation and they wouldn't do another one. And I would say to the National Trust if the*

*accommodation's good, people will come, and will come back and it's the one thing that will put people off. (Male, NTS)*

### **Time**

The perennial problem of competing demands for time was one of the key barriers to volunteering highlighted by current volunteers. Given that over 40% of the volunteers interviewed were in either full-time or part-time employment, it is not surprising that not all agreed that it was a valid reason for not being involved. At one end of the attitudes range was that expressed below by one long-standing volunteer, who considered time constraints to be a poor excuse for not volunteering:

*Everybody's caught up in the rat race 'I haven't got time, I haven't got time' but we've got more time today than we have [had] in the history of mankind you know what I mean? When you think about what people did 50, 60 years ago, men round here who lived in the pits and the foundries and the ship yards, grafting all the day and when they came home they still had time for their hobbies and their interests. They still found that time, and their families, but they were more, I believe they were more satisfied, they were probably more tired, but they were more satisfied as people than we are today. Everybody's chasing the new car and the holiday and the new computer and the bigger house and all the materialistic things of society, and they're just totally blinkered to the natural world that's around them and if they were to get back the connection with the natural world they'd feel better for it. There'd be not the stress and.... I mean the doctors wouldn't have to issue half as many drugs. (Male, DBC)*

By contrast, a volunteer undertaking a one-off day of volunteering activities as part of his employer's 'environmental leave' provisions, said:

*I'd say probably time, people's time, it's crucial. If we all had the time we'd do it, probably the weather as well. We've been very fortunate today with some nice weather. I'd say mostly time, time because it's work and family and all other aspects of just general life, really. (Male, EA/FoLD)*

Other volunteers clearly recognised time constraints as a problem, but the fact that they were regular volunteers suggests lack of time is a problem which can, at least to some degree, be overcome. For example, one regular volunteer said:

*I've got these footpaths to finish and I'm just struggling for time to get them finished, so if I wasn't working I could certainly be out a lot more. (Female, LDNPA)*

### **Insularity**

The insularity or lack of sociability of people, typically related to people being 'hooked' on TV and the Internet, was highlighted as a barrier to either beginning or continuing in volunteer activities.

*I think it's sociability; I think people are becoming insular. I think there is too much going on in people's lives today, people are living so fast, they're caught up in the rat race, and in the nightmare of technology, and they're not aware that you've got to have human contact. And also a lot of people are private, a lot of people are frightened now, because of the way society is. They don't want to be involved 'leave me alone' they don't want to be involved 'I don't want to know, I don't want to know', 'I'm happy with my little slot over here' you know what I mean? (Male DBC)*

### **10.3 What improvements are needed?**

The key areas national organisational respondents outlined for improvements were in the recognition of volunteers and the work that they do; it was felt that this could be enhanced. Managing volunteers more effectively was also raised as an issue and providing volunteers with a better quality of experience. Investing more in volunteers and providing resources for training was another issue seen as important by NE. SNH suggested bringing practice up to a minimum standard and having mechanisms in place to support this. There was also some questioning about whether current volunteering opportunities met the needs of volunteers and how organisations could meet volunteer expectations. With a realisation of changing patterns of volunteering, being more flexible was seen as particularly important as it was thought that people may volunteer for less time; but as they were living and working longer their volunteer activities could come at different life stages. Stable funding and resources were raised as an issue as well as the short term nature of some funding and the impacts this could have on communities, particularly those in more deprived areas. The quote below highlights this issue:

*if we're going into some quite disadvantaged communities where the level of capacity and self confidence and all the rest of it is very low, it's really quite damaging if you go in and raise peoples' hopes and start making improvements that they can see and get involved in and then you say, sorry folks, the funding has run out, we're going to walk away and leave you to it on your own again. It's a really, really bad thing to do and we try our hardest not to do it but it's, but again there's no, it seems to be very hard to find funders who understand the need. I've literally just at the end of last week was just proof reading a little booklet we're bringing out called Change Places, Change Lives, and what it is, it's a case study of some of the projects we've been running with small local community groups, some quite disadvantaged and one of the lessons that emerges from it again, because we've demonstrated this before, but we're trying to make the point again, is that it doesn't require large amounts of money. In some cases, really quite small amounts of money can really make a difference but what it does require is stability of the funding. (BTCV, NR)*

### **10.4 Engaging with communities**

This was seen as crucial by all the organisational representatives, for the public bodies such as NE and FCE there was talk of public benefit and having a licence to operate. BTCV felt that it had an advantage, because as it did not own land the organisation was much more able to focus on the interests of the community whether that was in a local park, wildlife area, wood, nature reserve etc. It also stated that it was working in poorer quality environments and trying to improve those. FCS talked about the importance of getting people from all walks of life working together on a shared goal and how this could take place through volunteering. FCE suggested that volunteering was a subset of community engagement and that a key issue was to work with communities. Therefore rather than suggesting a specific project, working with a community to try and understand what people feel about their local environment and how it fits into their everyday lives. FCE suggested that the way in which volunteers are engaged and the style of that engagement has changed a lot in the past fifteen years. Increasingly the environment was seen as a way of bringing different groups of people together. Involving people in decision-making was an important issue for many of the organisations.

*And also to see what role, the trees and woodlands can play in supporting stronger communities. So how can trees and woodlands help bring people together, make connections, give communities the sense of identity, pride of*

*place, sense of belonging and a sense of empowerment about controlling their own place. (FCE, NR)*

*Yeah, so I suppose where we're going with environmental volunteering is in a direction that says, actually if you, if you're imaginative enough and open minded enough and if you think about it from local peoples' perspective and make the effort to hear what their concerns are, then what you find is that lots and lots and lots of people are interested and concerned about their local environment to the extent that they will be prepared to do something about it if they're helped to know what to do and how to do it. (BTCV, NR)*

## 11. DISCUSSION

This research clarifies the difficulties of drawing a clear boundary between what motivates people to get involved in environmental volunteering and the benefits that they receive. There were a relatively small number of key drivers that motivated people initially to get involved. These motivations are similar to those found by Clary et al (1998) (section 4.3). However, the benefits they received were wide ranging and they appeared to be what motivated people to continue with their activities. This is an important issue, as the retention of a core of volunteers was viewed as important in providing continuity and sustainability. This research highlights that the term environmental volunteering or volunteering in nature or the outdoors, and what is included in these definitions is fluid and dynamic. There appears to be a continuum from what could be termed the more altruistic aspects of volunteering through to volunteering and volunteers that are very focused on gaining new skills and abilities that will lead to future employment (often in the environment sector). This broad spectrum of volunteering can be viewed as both a potential strength and weakness. Its strength lies in the wide range of opportunities that are on offer to people with a range of abilities who want to have an input in the short term or commit to long term activity; however a weakness is that this variety is potentially difficult to manage and can be confusing to those who have not volunteered before. It also makes it harder to publicise and promote a coherent picture of what environmental volunteering is, so that the traditional view of environmental volunteering as only about physical muddy activity outdoors is changed.

Concerns were occasionally raised about whether volunteering could be replacing some employment or that volunteering could be viewed as cheap labour by organisations that did not have the funds to employ people to undertake small scale tasks, or by government as it tried to reduce public spending. This was very much a minority issue raised in this research. Three or four representatives of organisations did raise some of these issues, however they often then went on to suggest that this type of view was decreasing and that volunteering was valued as a key means of connecting people to the environment and helping communities to develop. Therefore, it is highlight from this research that volunteering needs to be assessed in terms of the multiple social, economic, and psychological benefits to volunteers and to wider society rather than as a substitute to paid employment. This position is reinforced by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008 a and b) in which it advocates volunteering becoming part of the DNA of society, integral to the way people think and lead their lives.

The volunteers in this research had many positive issues to express about why they volunteered and how they benefited. This research suggests that environmental volunteering may have key potential benefits in relation to other types of volunteering. Contact with nature and the restorative benefits of the environment have been shown through a range of research to be particularly beneficial. The environment can also be calming providing those with attentional or emotional difficulties the space and opportunity to work alone or with others.

While there were many positive aspects to volunteering in the environment, those involved in this research did raise potential barriers that either they had experience of, knowledge of, or that they thought could deter involvement by other people. Organisational representatives at both the national and local level also raised many issues that from an organisational perspective need to be addressed covering recruitment, increasing the diversity of volunteers, the management and development of volunteers and the staff who manage them as well as partnership working and

providing a coherent image as a sector. Although much funding has been targeted at volunteering over the past few years by government, the environment sector has not always benefited. The sector needs to consider where it wants to position itself for the future. Potential ways of overcoming some of these issues and barriers are outlined in the next section on the implications of the research.

There were some broader themes that have emerged from the research and these are outlined below.

### **11.1 Volunteering as a means of integration/re-integration into society**

While the ethnicity of the volunteers in this study was not diverse, the range of abilities, socio-economic backgrounds and ages was. The results have shown that environmental volunteering seems to be able to accommodate those with learning difficulties, developmental delays<sup>18</sup>, emotional and behavioural problems and those with mental health problems. The work that these volunteers do alongside others of all ages potentially helps to reintegrate them into wider society. The carers at West House in the Lake District stated the importance of the people they are looking after being able to see that they can do what others do and work alongside them. The young man at the RSPB site in Motherwell from a special school was able to find something that he enjoyed and that he could do, while working alongside a range of people of different ages. A young man at FCS spoke about developing a better relationship with his parents through his voluntary activities. The fact that local representatives can allow for days when people want to work hard and for days when they want to relax, chat and go at a slower pace is important in enabling people with a range of difficulties to continue participating.

### **11.2 Volunteering: values, identity and meaning**

#### ***Social capital***

Social capital has been defined by Putnam (1995) as the norms, networks and social relations that facilitate collective action and reciprocity. High levels of social capital have been associated with education (Teachman, et al. 1996), health and satisfaction with government and public engagement (Putnam, 1995; Cuthill, 2003). There are concerns that levels of social capital are declining due to a range of issues such as reduced memberships of community groups, reduced numbers of community groups, and the individualistic nature of a contemporary society focused on consumption and increasingly private pursuits focusing on television and the internet (Putnam, 1995). The social networks and connections that people established through their environmental volunteering activities were viewed as extremely important and this is similar to previous work on volunteering (see section 4.4). Volunteers repeatedly talked about the importance of social contact both during their voluntary work but also through the barbecues, days out, ceilidhs (folk dances) that organisations organised as a thank you for their participation. The following quote illustrates how woods/the environment can be seen as a way of bringing people together:

*We actually, we can use trees and woodlands to bring people together, to help them develop confidence, to help them understand how other sections of the community operate, to think and work and live and these things. So in a sense if trees and woodlands themselves can contribute to a more inclusive society in which everybody shares the benefits, everybody develops a common sense of place, common sense of ownership, sense of sharing, shared identity and things like shared activities in shared places are central to that. So there's a push on*

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<sup>18</sup> Those who are not developing at the same rate as other people of their own age.

*us all the time things and increasingly there's a more formal push on us in where public bodies are being expected to actually demonstrate explicitly, what are you doing about increasing the diversity and inclusivity of your work. (FCE, NR).*

### **Community development**

The concept of community development in the context of the environment has significantly changed over the past few decades from a focus on financial income and employment provision to a wider focus on community well-being conceived as including among other issues education, health and recreation. Community development includes community capacity and resiliency. According to Donoghue and Sturtevant (2007) there are two key types of assets for communities these include foundational assets such as physical infrastructure, natural resources and economic capital that are present within a community; and mobilising assets which are the civic and organisational infrastructure mainly known as social, human and political capital – the assets that make up collective action. These mobilise the foundational assets within a community and can help to meet the needs of communities, and create opportunities. The work that the volunteers undertake can benefit local communities and aid in community development. The volunteers in Motherwell were closely involved in their local community and improving local greenspaces. The volunteers in Gateshead were improving a community resource and reducing vandalism at the site. The following quote illustrates the view of many of the national and local representatives:

*It is and actually in a sense I think it's bigger than that, because I think the societal benefits from people volunteering, from people feeling that they're contributing, spills over into other aspects of their lives and their communities as well. So I think often environmental volunteering starts off as one thing but ends up as something else, because it brings people together in a very neutral way. And that's something I would stress about environmental volunteering is that I think, it's often a leveller in a sense for people and communities, and that you don't necessarily have to be particularly skilled or knowledgeable to do it, but the fact that you're doing it with others is really important (NE).*

The government has a Public Service Agreement target (PSA21) of building more cohesive, empowered and active communities (HM Treasury, 2007). The indicators in the PSA target include seeing improvements in the percentage of people who have meaningful interactions with people from different backgrounds and the percentage of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their locality.

Involving communities in decision-making about their local environment is also a way of helping communities to develop. For some organisations this was an easier process than for others. Those who managed specific pieces of land were less able to take a completely bottom up approach; however they could approach communities to discuss what could be done together in a particular green space.

*That actually we really needed to understand not just what did people feel about their environment, we need to understand where does the environment sit in all the other things which people have got their minds on, is it important or not? And the, while it was a much more, it was a much longer term, it's much more difficult side effects, much more resource intensive to actually start from scratch. But the whole thing about going on to their territory and in a way having them shape the questions. And then being able to say, well we can, we can help answer some of those and we can't help answer others. You, all sorts of stuff comes out of the woodwork when you do that about divisions in the community and strife with the council and the fact that the lorries going through the village*

*and all the rest of it. So it's still important in that process to have an agenda and to have a clear, a clear plan where we said, look we can do certain things and we can't do other things. But within that agenda I think you get a stronger structure and relationship in the longer term if you start off on their ground' (FCE, NR).*

### **Values**

Value theory concerns the ways in which people value or consider the worth of, for example, a habitat such as woodland. Values may be considered in terms of utility or economic value, however they may also involve moral, aesthetic, social or cultural value. From a sociological view value theory explores the types of personal values that are commonly held by a community. As highlighted in this research volunteers often had underlying values for nature/the environment, these were often developed through childhood experiences e.g. people had been taken out by their parents or had explored nature with friends. This made them familiar with nature and brought them closer to it. This has implications for those who may not have contact with nature when young, how will they value green spaces? The biophilia hypothesis developed by Wilson (1984) argues that we have an innate need for contact with nature based on our evolutionary history. Economists try to create monetary values for intangible benefits through people's willingness to pay for seeing wildlife or beautiful scenery. However there is significant debate within the social sciences about how this type of approach does not capture people's motivations or ethical issues about management and conservation of the natural environment. This research highlights some of the ways in which people discuss the importance and worth (value) of the environment and their voluntary experiences. This qualitative data provides rich details about how the environment and volunteering sits within the context of their everyday lives.

### **Place**

The volunteers developed attachments to the places where they were volunteering and this was the case for those in both the more rural scenic areas like Carrifran near Moffat and the urban areas in Clydebank, Motherwell and Gateshead. According to Davenport and Anderson (2005: 627) *'people assign meanings to places and derive meaning in their lives from places'*. Places encompass the physical setting as well as the activities that take place there and people's meanings and interpretations of these. An interesting finding from this research is that the practical activities that people undertook, changing and conserving the environment connect them to places and reinforced the values that they held for nature. Volunteers also found the opportunity through their activities of getting to know places that they would not otherwise have visited or known about.

In summary there are potentially a range of benefits of volunteering to society, local communities, organisations and individuals as well as to the environment (Box 4). The Commission on the Future of Volunteering stated the importance of volunteering as a building block for communities and civic society, suggesting that the ethos of volunteering is a fundamental part of what could be termed a good society. There are links connecting the impacts and benefits of environmental volunteering to wider policy agendas such as health, inclusion, education and biodiversity.

#### **Box 4: Benefits of Environmental volunteering**

##### **Benefits to society**

Social capital, community development  
Social Inclusion  
Environmental and biodiverse management and improvements  
Pro-environmental behaviour  
Pro-social behaviour

##### **Benefits to organisations**

Completing work the organisation could not otherwise do  
Increases capacity  
Volunteers become ambassadors for the organisation  
Connects people to the environment

##### **Benefits to individual**

Skills and learning  
Well-being – physical, mental and social  
Reintegration into society  
Social connectedness  
Rootedness to specific places

##### **Benefits to communities**

Pride in local community and green space  
Community cohesion  
Usable and enjoyable green spaces

##### **Benefits to the environment**

Creation of new green spaces  
Management to maintain and increase biodiversity  
Clearance of rubbish and litter

## 12. IMPLICATIONS AND POTENTIAL WAYS FORWARD

This section provides some ideas for potential ways forward in environmental volunteering, in terms of practice, policy and research. Many of these were suggested by the organisation representatives or volunteers involved in this study, with some additions from the researchers who were able to explore the findings of the work in relation to results from other research.

### 12.1 Practice

- Taster sessions are an opportunity to provide those who are not familiar with volunteering a chance to see whether environmental volunteering interests them and what it involves. This is potentially particularly important in reaching a more diverse range of volunteers who may not be aware that there are opportunities to volunteer in the environment.
- Work with volunteer centres so that the opportunities for environmental volunteering become more widely known. This is an opportunity for those organisations who want to increase the numbers of volunteers they get. However if an organisation gains more volunteers through this route they will need the capacity to manage them and have activities for them to do.
- Many of the organisations in this research produced some form of leaflet or literature about volunteering opportunities. These could be targeted in places such as doctor's surgeries, local schools, and universities – depending on the groups organisations want to reach. A wider range of volunteers may be reached as a result.
- Organisations should have a register of volunteers and volunteer skills, this data could be collected in a simple format when a new volunteer starts, however it would require updating to cover those who leave and go on to other activities.
- Ensure accommodation for the volunteer holidays is reasonably adequate and there are facilities for volunteers to get dry and cleaned up.
- Involving volunteers in decision-making could improve or strengthen motivation. Involvement in decision-making could also empower volunteers and draw on their skills and ideas.
- Effective planning and having potential back up plans to enable a diverse range of people to get involved is an important aspect of managing volunteers. The difficulties of not knowing how many people may turn up on the day makes this issue an important one. Good organisation highlights respect for volunteers and the time and effort they put in.
- Recognise when longer term volunteers might be ready to help manage other volunteers therefore cascading management of volunteers to others and increasing capacity. This takes places through structured programmes like the volunteer officer approach of BTCV. It may be useful for other organisations to consider training volunteers to manage and lead others.
- With different patterns to volunteering revealed through this work (and other research) such as placements, short term volunteering, corporate volunteering then new ways of engaging and managing volunteers is required e.g. one off and short term opportunities, concise tasks, opportunities to dip in and out of volunteering and opportunities for employees to get involved. Flexibility is an increasingly important issue.
- Undertake a series of events/talks in schools to engage with children and interest them in the environment and volunteering. Tree planting events can be an effective way of engaging with young people.
- Managing volunteers is a specialist skill and needs training and recognition for staff who manage volunteers of the importance of their role within an organisation.

## 12.2 Policy

- Engage with Local Authorities (LA) as LA's have a national indicator to meet concerning participation in regular volunteering. This indicator reflects national government priorities and performance against each indicator will be reported.
- Link in with specific organisations e.g. there maybe local community groups or mental health groups that would welcome the chance for their group to participate in a day's volunteering activity. By targeting groups in this way environmental organisations could increase the diversity of their volunteers and people who many not normally have the confidence to volunteer as an individual may get involved because their whole group is participating.
- It seems that universities and employers increasingly use extra curricular interests to differentiate between young applicants. This may explain why young people were found to be attracted to volunteering by opportunities for training and skills accreditation. Many organisations would like to involve more young people in environmental volunteering and they should consider what training opportunities they can provide. Publicising volunteering opportunities on websites such as 'YouTube' and 'Facebook' could reach a younger audience. Linking in with 'V' the youth volunteer charity is a potentially way of exploring opportunities to engage with younger people and publicise environmental volunteering opportunities.
- Development of strategic partnerships is already taking place, fora such as FEVA in Scotland and the Environmental Volunteer Partnership<sup>19</sup> in England as well as the new North East Environmental Volunteering Initiative (CRN, 2008) highlight the way forward as one in which partnerships are formed to share best practice, volunteers and expertise. Partnership agreements could be created to outline in more detail what is expected of each party. Partners can then also signpost each others organisations; if they have more volunteers than they have the capacity to deal with they can point the volunteer in the direction of one of their partner organisations.
- Environment sector organisations should consider allowing their own staff to volunteer one day a year as part of their employment contract. This would send a clear message about the importance of volunteering and can be linked to corporate social responsibility.
- Promote the multiple benefits that can be gained from volunteering to the volunteers, to communities, society and organisations so that people gain a better understanding of volunteering and its importance, and how it can be an important way of people/communities taking local action to improve their green spaces.
- Engage with the media to provide messages about the benefits of environmental volunteering. Social marketing<sup>20</sup> approaches could be used to highlight the role of environmental volunteering. There is already a range of good practice and innovation to draw on. Use new images that cover the diversity of environmental volunteering opportunities, at present many of the organisations websites use pictures of the practical conservation activities rather than any of the other activities that people can do as a volunteer.
- All organisations with volunteers need to produce a volunteer policy that outlines why the organisation has volunteers and how they will be treated. The policy can provide the focus for the organisation and the rationale for having volunteers and whether volunteering should be targeted at particular groups of people or remain flexible, or whether increased numbers of volunteers is a priority.

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<sup>19</sup> This includes a range of organisations such as Woodland Trust, National Trust, RSPB, The Wildlife Trust, Sustrans and others.

<sup>20</sup> Social marketing is the application of marketing techniques and concepts to achieve behavioural changes for public good.

- Emphasise the changes people can make to their environment and link this to tackling climate change issues and sustainability. This can enable people to link how they can act locally with key global issues.
- Policies should highlight the need to support and acknowledge practitioners and the work they are doing at the ground level.
- Ensure that volunteering is valued within the organisation. The volunteers should be valued as well as the people who manage and develop them.
- Ensure an effective system of recognition and reward is in place. A number of the interviewees mentioned the need for incentives to encourage and/or acknowledge volunteer input.
- Recognition that projects to develop volunteers or reach out to new groups are often funded for only 2-3 years. The sustainability of this approach is questionable particularly when trying to reach more diverse populations. Harder to reach groups are by their very nature hard to reach and therefore time and effort is needed to put into building links and developing trust. A lot of good work could be reduced if the support is then taken away without a sustainable legacy in place.

### **12.3 Research**

- Monitoring and evaluation should be undertaken to provide clear information about the numbers of volunteers and how they benefit and how different organisations benefit from volunteer activity and input.
- A better understanding is needed of how people's motivations for volunteering changes over time. This could enable organisations to help develop volunteers or provide different or varying activities or challenges to keep people interested.
- Examine whether involving volunteers in decision-making and planning concerning volunteering activities, the creation of new spaces and/or management of existing spaces, leads to longer term commitment.
- Explore whether environmental volunteering of different types changes people's attitudes towards the environment and whether it leads to pro-environmental or pro-social behaviour.
- Research the impact on the environment of volunteer activities in terms of biodiversity changes/increases, and restoration and creation of habitats.
- Identify the impacts on communities of improvements made by volunteers on sites, in fostering pride in neighbourhoods and use of sites for community and social activities.
- Examine the changes the environmental sector is going through to adapt to a more innovative way of engaging and managing volunteers. Case studies of innovation and best practice could be identified.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Questions for representatives of National organisations**

- How important are volunteers to the organisation? Primary way of organisation meetings its objectives, peripheral to organisation, what info does the org collect on volunteers – age, number, gender, ethnicity?
- How do organisations recruit volunteers and how effective is this? Advertising, training, support given, reimbursement of cost of volunteering, type of support given, diversity of volunteers, what do they see as best practice?
- What is the impact of volunteering on the organisation? Positive – get work done, bring in new skills. Negative – time and effort needed to work with volunteers.
- What is the impact of volunteering on paid staff of the organisation? Helps them to do their work, takes up too much of their time, makes them nervous that they will be replaced by volunteers?

### **Questions for representatives of organisations at a local level**

- How long have you been involved with volunteers here?
- Regarding the activities volunteers carry out, what are the well-being benefits for the environment?
- What do volunteers say that they enjoy or do not enjoy about the activities they do?
- Do volunteers prefer particular places/habitats or activities?
- What feedback do volunteers get on how well they work or how their work fits into the objectives of the organisation?
- Why do volunteers get involved in your organisation? And in your opinion what benefits do they gain?
- What are the benefits and difficulties of managing volunteers?
- What areas of volunteering could be improved in your organisation?

### **Questions for volunteers**

- What roles, responsibilities and tasks are you involved with?
- Why do you volunteer here?
- What benefits do you gain from being involved?
- In what ways does your voluntary work here influence the environment?
- In what ways does your voluntary work here influence your/or this community?
- Through your voluntary work here, to what extent do you feel connected to your/or this community?
- Has your involvement in this voluntary work led you to make any changes in your life?
- Through your voluntary work here, to what extent do you feel connected to nature and the environment?
- In your opinion is there a difference between carrying out your activities in different habitats/environments?
- What enables you to be involved with activities here?
- Are there any negative aspects or anything that limits you from engaging in the voluntary work here?
- Have you encouraged friends/family to get involved with the voluntary work here?
- What could be done to encourage others to be involved as volunteers here?

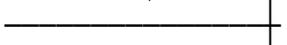
## APPENDIX B

### Environmental volunteering: Understanding motivations and benefits *Emotional State Scale* **BEFORE**

Name:	Date:
Organisation:	Code:

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Mark on the line the position that best represents how you are currently feeling.

EXAMPLE:    good        bad    (feeling very good)  
                  good        bad    (feeling a little bad)  
                  good        bad    (feeling very bad)

Bored	_____	Interested
Happy	_____	Unhappy
Helpless	_____	In control
Worried	_____	Relaxed
Satisfied	_____	Dissatisfied
Worthless	_____	Worthy
Irritated	_____	Calm
Incapable	_____	Skilful
Withdrawn	_____	Talkative
In pain	_____	Pain-free
Healthy	_____	Unhealthy
Trusting	_____	Cautious

**Environmental volunteering:  
Understanding motivations and benefits**

*Emotional State Scale*      **AFTER**

Name:	Date:
Organisation:	Code:

**INSTRUCTIONS:**  
Mark on the line the position that best represents how you are currently feeling.

**EXAMPLE:**

good	_____	bad	(feeling very good)
good	_____	bad	(feeling a little bad)
good	_____	bad	(feeling very bad)

Bored	_____	Interested
Happy	_____	Unhappy
Helpless	_____	In control
Worried	_____	Relaxed
Satisfied	_____	Dissatisfied
Worthless	_____	Worthy
Irritated	_____	Calm
Incapable	_____	Skilful
Withdrawn	_____	Talkative
In pain	_____	Pain-free
Healthy	_____	Unhealthy
Trusting	_____	Cautious

## APPENDIX C

### Environmental volunteering: Understanding motivations and benefits

#### Volunteer Self Report Questions

Participant code:	<i>Internal Use Only</i>
Date of interview:	Time of interview:
Organisation:	
Habitat type:	Activity:

1. Gender (please tick):

Female	Male

2. Postcode and locality of residence:

Postcode	Locality

3. Age:

In years

4. Ethnic background:  
(please tick)

White	Chinese	Mixed race	Asian/Asian British	Black/Black British	Other (specify)

5. Length of time volunteering at this organisation:

Years	Months

6. Hours per month volunteering for this organisation:

Hours per month

7. Voluntary involvement in other organisations/activities:

Name of organisation/activity	Hours per month

8. Employment status:

Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Retired	Parent/ carer	Studying full-time	Un- employed	Not working due to	Self- employed	Other (specify)
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**Environmental volunteering:  
Understanding motivations and benefits**

						illness/ disability		

9. Occupation of the principle income earner in your household:

10. How many days a week on average do you take part in 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical exercise? (this includes all types of physical activity that makes your breathing and heartbeat faster such as sport, recreation, domestic activities like housework or gardening. Exercise can be built up of 10 minute bursts and does not have to be done all at once)

0 Days	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 or more days

11. "Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you **with your life as a whole?**"

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral						Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. "How satisfied are you **with your standard of living ?**"

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral						Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. "How satisfied are you **with your health ?**"

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral						Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. "How satisfied are you **with what you are achieving in life?**"

Completely Dissatisfied					Neutral						Completely Satisfied
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. "How satisfied are you **with your personal relationships?**"



## APPENDIX D

# Environmental Volunteering: Understanding Motivations and Benefits

## *Plain Language Statement*

The purpose of this Plain Language Statement is to explain to you what this research project is about and how the information will be collected and used. If you agree to participate in the research you will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form. You may choose not to participate in this research, to withdraw at any time, or choose not to answer a particular question without consequence.

### **What is this research project about?**

Dr Liz O'Brien, Forest Research in Britain, together with Associate Professor Mardie Townsend and Mr Matthew Ebdon, both from Deakin University, Australia, are studying the benefits, motivations and needs associated with environmental volunteering. This study includes various organisations involved in environmental volunteering across Britain.

This research will involve talking to volunteers about their experiences with environmental volunteering and also representatives from organisations to find out about the nature of environmental volunteer programs.



### **How will the information collected be treated?**

Volunteers: Researchers will take notes on what the volunteers say about their experiences in environmental volunteering. Volunteers will also be asked to complete some short questionnaires. Researchers may also take audio recordings that will be transcribed in writing to accurately capture what volunteers have said and may take photographs of volunteers participating in environmental activities. The information provided by volunteers will be de-identified. That is, names and other identifying information will be removed from any written text to ensure anonymity and privacy of the volunteers. No names will be associated with photographs. At any time volunteers may request that information or photographs be discarded. All information will be stored securely at Forest Research and no one other than the research team (named above) will have access to individual information.

Representatives from organisations: Researchers will take notes on what the representatives say and audio record discussions that will later be transcribed in writing to accurately capture what representatives have said. The information provided by representatives will be associated with their name and organisation unless the representative indicates otherwise. At any time representatives may request that information be discarded. All information will be stored securely at Forest Research and no one other than the research team (named above) will have access to individual information.

### **How will the information collected be used?**

## **Environmental volunteering: Understanding motivations and benefits**

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The information will be analysed to identify themes, trends, comparisons, suggestions and recommendations regarding environmental volunteering. This information along with photographs will appear in reports, publications, conferences and academic journals to inform:

- Communities about possible benefits of environmental volunteering to encourage greater involvement; and
- Environmental volunteer organisations about the possible needs of volunteers to improve conditions for volunteers and encourage greater involvement.

Please let us know if you would like a copy of our final report.

Should you have any questions or want more information on the project, please contact Liz O'Brien:

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Thank you for your interest,

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