# Active England
## The Woodland Projects

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# 1. Introduction

This report provides an overview and analysis of research on five woodland projects that took place as part of the Active England programme. The Active England programme was established in 2003 with Big Lottery and Sport England funding of £94.8 million (Sport England, 2009).  The overall aim of the programme was to increase community participation in sport and physical activity in England and 241 projects were funded in total. Five, three year, projects in woodlands were developed at the sites listed below, starting in 2005/6. Three projects were based at single sites (site based projects) and two were based within Community Forests where events and activities were organised at a number of sites:

- Bedgebury Forest in Kent                                Site based project
- Haldon Forest Park in Devon                          Site based project
- Rosliston in the National Forest Derbyshire       Site based project
- Great Western Community Forest in Wiltshire      Community Forest project
- Greenwood Community Forest in Nottinghamshire.    Community Forest project

The Active England Programme focused on key 'target groups' that have been identified as under-represented in sport. These included women and girls, the disabled, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, those under 16 years of age, those aged over 45, and people on low income. Forest Research was asked by the Forestry Commission to monitor and evaluate the five woodland based projects that were funded through this programme. A particular emphasis was placed on each project's performance in relation to these target groups.

This report is the final output from a 3 year programme of research carried out between 2005 and 2008. After the presentation of the key findings from the overall evaluation in Section 1, the report goes on, in Section 2, to outline the health policy and service delivery context within which the Active England Programme was established and to provide background information about the design and implementation for each of the five projects. Section 3 then describes the research methodology and methods used to monitor and evaluate each of the projects. Over two thousand eight hundred on site questionnaires were completed to construct and compare against baseline 'visitor' and 'visit' profiles for each site. The spatial profiling of each site's catchment area (Section 5) allowed comparisons to be made between visitors and surrounding populations as a basis for identifying (under-)representation of each target group. Subsequently, one hundred and fourteen people participated in targeted qualitative research through organised activities and discussion groups.

The report then provides the key findings from the research, particularly highlighting differences between the site based projects and Community Forest projects. Section 4 presents an analysis of data from each project that was gathered through a two year

programme of on site surveying. Section 5 presents an analysis of the socio-demographic make-up of each project's catchment population, conducted through a programme of spatial 'profiling'. Section 6 presents an analysis of qualitative research undertaken with 'users' of the projects and 'non-users' who had been identified by comparing each site's visitor and catchment profile. The inclusion of non-users in the overall evaluation constitutes an important innovation of this research project.

The final section of the report identifies lessons learnt from the research in terms of the design, implementation and delivery of the projects, and discusses some critical reflections on the research methods used.

Individual reports have also been produced for each of the 5 woodland projects, providing more detailed accounts of research results from each site. These, together with an overall summary report can be accessed at the following website: http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/activeengland

# 1.1 Key findings

## Impacts on target groups: on site survey and project monitoring

- There was a significant increase in the proportion of people from the 16-44 age category visiting the site based projects (Bedgebury, Haldon and Rosliston), from 39.7% to 59.4% of all visitors. This demonstrates an increase in family use (p<0.001) which, in turn, suggests a significant rise in the number of under 16s using these three sites. At these three sites, this meant that visitors from the 45+ years age group fell as a proportion of all visitors.
- All the sites showed some increase in visits by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, with a significant increase (p<0.001) for the site based projects. Increases, however, were often not sufficient to be able to say that BME groups are well represented at these sites.
- There was no significant change in the percentage of registered disabled or blue badge holders[1] for the Community Forest or site based groupings.
- A significantly greater number of Community Forest visitors than visitors to the site-based projects stated they had long-term health problems (p<0.05), whilst for the site based grouping an increase in the number of younger visitors may explain the decrease in the number of visitors with a long-term illness (p<0.001).
- There was higher representation of people from low income households amongst visitors to the Community Forest grouping than was the case for the site based grouping, reflecting the more urban context of the Community Forest sites.

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[1] This is a scheme which provides a range of parking benefits for disabled people with severe walking difficulties who travel as either drivers or as passengers.

- There were significant increases in engagement in activities such as cycling, use of play areas and mountain biking at the site based projects, largely attributable to the investments made in infrastructure and equipment. These activities are more likely to attract people from the target groups than more traditional sports.
- The overall proportion of female visitors increased in Greenwood CF from 44% to 57%. However, proportions of males and females remained similar for the site based projects. There were extremely high numbers of females visiting Rosliston, a ratio of 3:1 compared to males, possibly due to the child friendly activities and facilities provided at the site.
- There were significant increases in total visitor numbers reported by the monitoring activities of project staff at Bedgebury (from approximately 182,000 in 2006/7 to 273,000 in 2007/8), Haldon (from approximately 80,000 in 2006/7 to 224,000 in 2007/8) and Rosliston (from approximately 129,340 in 2005/6 to 189,905 in 2007/8). The other projects did not collect data on overall visitor numbers.

## Catchment profiling

- The spatial profiling of the catchments surrounding sites within a 20 miles radius and the use of Census and Index of Multiple Deprivation data allowed conclusions to be drawn about the level of representation of specific target groups at each site compared with concentrations of those groups within each catchment.
- The profiling enabled the identification of target groups that were not involved in the projects and to bring them to the site to explore barriers to access.

## Qualitative research with target group project users and non-users

- The research identified two primary motivations for project users to get involved: 1) socialising and meeting new people; and 2) the chance to become more active to improve health.
- Users identified the following key benefits of getting involved in regular, organised and led activities:
  - Socialising
  - Contact with nature
  - Mental and physical health improvements
  - A sense of achievement and self-improvement
  - Enjoyment
  - Positive influence on other areas of life.
- Evidence from users suggests that involvement in the project activities often led to more active lifestyles.

- Only two of the fifty nine project users[2] did not fit one of the target groups. Often users fell into more than one target group, by being female and over 45 years of age, for example.
- Volunteers made crucial contributions to the delivery of the projects providing, in many cases, a vital human resource to lead activities such as health walks. The volunteers themselves also benefited through their involvement by developing their own abilities and improving self-esteem.
- Those who used woodlands and green spaces more frequently expressed stronger views and derived a wider range of benefits from the sites than non-users.
- Users particularly valued the projects because they took place in woodlands and green spaces, providing them with a rich aesthetic, sensory and restorative experience of the natural environment.
- Engaging people in physical activity through the Active England projects has had an impact on people physiologically. For example, many project users described improvements in fitness, mobility and weight loss. There was also evidence of positive psychological impacts, with some testifying to increased levels of confidence, improvements in general well-being and the joy and sense of belonging that comes from meeting new people and becoming part of an organised group.
- The research reveals that involvement in physical activity in woodlands can act as a gateway to a range of personal and social benefits.
- The focused outreach was able to reach people and groups who had not visited the sites before as well as those who had not previously participated in the types of activities provided.
- Barriers for non-users included:
  - Physical and structural barriers: lack of transport was a key issue for low income groups.
  - Psychological and perceptual barriers: safety concerns for women visiting sites alone or only with their children were a key issue. For BME groups significant barriers were a lack of confidence and an absence of the cultural norms of visiting and accessing green spaces.

## Qualitative research with project staff

- Project staff found it difficult to find time to undertake extensive outreach work as they were so busy delivering and running the projects on site/s.
- Project staff stressed the importance and value of outreach work which was seen as critical to accessing the Active England target groups. It was also important in providing a communication link with potential users, enabling the tailoring of services to meet the specific needs of some groups.

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[2] A total of sixty four project users participated in the qualitative action research; however only fifty nine completed demographic information which outlined which target group they belonged to.

- Staff identified the need for internal support to advise not only on how to develop projects and gain funding, but also how to ensure any positive impacts are sustained in the long term.
- There were some concerns that focusing on specific target groups might not easily map onto the expectations and needs of the wider forest user base.
- For Bedgebury and Haldon, coping with the large increase in visitor numbers presented challenges for both project staff and existing site staff, often leading to less time being available for outreach work.

## Lessons learnt and recommendations

- Led activities and facilitated[3] access are critical to reaching under-represented groups and encouraging physical activity and the use of green space. Staffing and financial support for these activities should be prioritised in project design, funding and delivery.
- Targeted outreach work needs to be supported, adequately funded and staff given time to bring in new users.
- Project staff need support in long term strategic and business planning.
- Monitoring and evaluation needs to be built in at the beginning and should be relevant to project/site staff as well as to funders.
- Volunteers, who can help to ensure the sustained impact of projects, need to be adequately valued and supported.
- Project design should recognise the high social value of regular, scheduled group activities identified by project users. The importance of the group, which often constitutes a primary motivation for continued involvement in the activity, should also be recognised.
- Led activities run on a regular basis are more likely to bring about sustained changes in behaviour than one-off events that attract large audiences.
- Projects that focus on specific target groups can generate unintended consequences. For example, the increase in the 16-44 age category at the site based projects coincided with a proportional decrease in the 45+ age category. The site based projects became more attractive to families (including children under 16) and potentially less attractive to older groups, thereby increasing the representation of one target group at the expense of another. The site based projects need to consider whether this balance should be redressed.
- It is not easy to categorise people into the target groups identified by Sport England, as the target groupings were not mutually exclusive. For example a project user could be a woman, over 45 years of age, and from a BME group thus

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[3] We define facilitated access as project workers going into specific hard to reach communities and identifying suitable groups that are then brought to a site (by coach or mini bus) and guided around the site via an activity such as a walk. This differs from led activities in which participants have to find their own way to a site in order to join an activity such as a health walk.

fitting three of the target groups identified. This raised questions for project reporting and research into the (under-)representation of target groups.

## Methodological reflection: learning from the methods used

- Including non-users in the research provides valuable insights into some of the potential barriers of accessing woodlands.
- The three stage methodology developed for the monitoring and evaluation was more appropriate to the site based projects where activities and infrastructure improvements were located in one place, rather than activities that were dispersed across a number of sites, as was the case with the Community Forests.
- On site surveys of general users are not the best approach to take in identifying small changes in use by target groups. For example, the surveys did not detect any significant change in the percentage of registered disabled visitors at any of the sites. However, disabled groups were targeted specifically and successfully through some of the outreach work.  Therefore, the site survey results need to be read in conjunction with the data produced by project staff and the qualitative research to provide a more holistic picture of the impacts of the projects.
- It can be problematic to separate out the impact of each Active England project from the impacts of other initiatives taking place at each site. For example, both Bedgebury and Haldon installed 'Go Ape'[4] facilities on site. While these were not part of the Active England projects, they have almost certainly attracted new visitors to the sites.
- Longitudinal research is important to assess the medium and long term impacts of projects, both for users and for the sites themselves.

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[4] 'Go Ape' is a high wire forest adventure course.

# 2. Health and physical activity

A report by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in 2002 highlighted growing concerns about obesity and the health risks associated with increasingly sedentary lifestyles (Department of Health, 2002). In 2004, the Department of Health produced the 'Choosing health' white paper and a report entitled 'At least five a week'. These documents brought together evidence of the links between physical activity and health. The 'Five a week' report recommends that people undertake 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise on at least five days of the week to improve their health. The recommendation is higher for children, at 60 minutes of moderate intensity exercise every day (Department of Health 2004a and b).

Physical activity is seen as a key factor in improving and maintaining health. 'Choosing activity: a physical activity action plan' (Department of Health, 2005 p6) outlines that increasing activity will contribute to *the prevention and management of over 20 conditions and diseases, including coronary heart disease, diabetes and cancer, positive mental health and weight management. Increasing activity levels also has beneficial effects on musculoskeletal health, reducing the risk of osteoporosis, back pain and osteoarthritis'*. The 'action plan' also highlights the importance of tackling health inequalities, demonstrating that, for example, men in managerial and professional positions report higher levels of participation in sport, walking, and gardening than those in other professional categories.  The 'action plan' also outlines that, for both men and women of all ages, low educational attainment is associated with higher levels of physical inactivity. The 'action plan' states that only 37% of men and 24% of women meet the CMO recommendations for physical activity (Department of Health, 2005). The 2005 'Health survey for England' shows that 43% of men and 33% of women were overweight (National Centre for Social Research, 2006). 'The Health profile for England 2008' (Department of Health, 2008) shows that 23.6% of adults in England are obese. The 'Foresight report on obesity' (2007) predicts that based on current trends, 50% of women, 60% of men and 25% of children would be obese by 2050. The costs of some of these health problems have been identified in various reports and are brought together in a recent report on health by the Sustainable Development Commission (2008) (Table 1).

**Table 1: Costs of health problems in England** (taken from 'Health, place and nature' by the Sustainable Development Commission, 2008).

| Health problem | Health and social care | Wider Economy | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mental ill health | 12 billion per annum | 64 billion per annum | 76 billion |
| Obesity | 1 billion per annum | 2.3 billion per annum | 3.7 billion |
| Diabetes | 1.3 billion per annum | Unknown | 1.3 billion |

'Game plan: a strategy for delivering government's sport and physical activity objectives' was published in 2002 by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Strategy Unit (DCMS/SU, 2002). The 'Game plan' (DCMS/SU, 2002) set out the objective of increasing levels of sport and physical activity and set a target of getting 70% of the population active (e.g. participating in 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week) by 2020. Sport England is a non-departmental public body and National Lottery fund distributor and, in response to the 'Game plan', produced 'The framework for sport in England' in 2004 (Sport England, 2004). The framework set out a vision for increasing and widening the base of participation in sport. Sport England has adopted the Council of Europe Sports Charter's definition of sport, which is:

*'all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels'.*

The 'Game Plan' target outlined above was reduced in the 'Framework for Sport in England' (Sport England, 2004) which set out the need to get 50% of the population active by 2020; this equates to a 1% year on year annual increase rather than the 2% increase implicit in the 70% 'Game plan' target.

The Active England programme was developed against this background of increasing concerns about the health of the population, and the targets set in the various government strategies.

Recently Sport England has developed a new strategy (2008-2011). This takes a step back from the wider agenda of improving general public health through physical activity spearheaded by the Department of Health, and re-focuses attention exclusively on sport and the needs of sport participants (Sport England, 2008a). This is partly driven by the Olympics which will be held in London in 2012. The strategy states that greater clarity will be given to the Youth Trust which focuses on school sport; Sport England will focus on opportunities beyond the school gates and community sport; and UK sport will cover elite sport.

The 'Health challenge England' (Department of Health, 2006 p33) report outlines the next steps that need to be taken from the 'Choosing health' white paper. Improving health and tackling health inequalities are seen as key issues:

*'Today, government, society and individuals are engaged in a new dialogue. Together we need to stand up to the health challenges we all face. After all, health does not belong to the Government, but to people. For this reason alone we must always put them at the heart of improving health and tackling inequalities'.*

A new National Obesity Observatory was set up in 2007 to be a central source of data and evidence on obesity, being overweight and their determinants. A new cross-government strategy was published in 2008 'Healthy weight, healthy lives' to encourage people to lead healthier lives (Cross Government Obesity Unit, Department of Health, Department of Children, Schools and Families, 2008). One of the five key areas focuses on the need to encourage people to become more physically active. The document recommends the establishment of a new agency called 'Active England' to promote general physical activity and to complement the work of Sport England. In 2009 the 'Change4life' campaign was launched with a focus on encouraging families to eat well and to be more active (DoH, 2009a). Importantly for the environment sector the recent strategy 'Be active, be healthy' (DoH, 2009b) identifies the natural environment as an important setting for health and physical activity and as a factor that can help to reduce stress, and have a restorative effect on adults and enhance well-being.

## The importance of woodlands and green spaces for health

There is an increasing body of research that suggests that contact with and the use of woodlands and green spaces can be beneficial to people's health and well-being (Ulrich et al., 1991; Hartig, 1991; Kaplan, 1995; Henwood, 2001; Rhode and Kendle, 2004; Bird, 2004; Pretty et al., 2005). Kaplan (1995) and Hartig (1991) have focused on the restorative benefits of green spaces which allow people to recover from stress and fatigue. Pretty (2005), O'Brien (2005) and others have outlined the importance of public green spaces as social spaces allowing opportunities for contact with family, friends and local communities. People can often undertake a range of physical activity in green spaces and may be motivated to do this by having contact with the natural environment and getting out into the fresh air (O'Brien, 2006). Environmental volunteering which includes activities such as tree planting, footpath repair and coppicing provides volunteers with physical challenges that can improve health. The Green Gym run by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers gets volunteers to undertake a range of environmental activities to improve their health and well-being (Reynolds, 2002). Educational activities such as Forest School and school visits to woodlands also provide opportunities for children and young people to undertake physical activity and improve their mental well-being (O'Brien, 2007 and 2009).

## Forestry Commission and Community Forest focus on health

The Forestry Commission (FC) set up its first health project in the West Midlands in 2003, using the Woodland Grant Scheme to try to encourage more people to become physically active (O'Brien, 2005). Since then a wide range of projects have been delivered by the FC in England, Scotland and Wales. One particularly notable example is the campaign called 'Active Woods' that has been developed with partners to raise awareness of the use of woodlands for physical activity and mental well-being. The FC is strongly promoting the government's health agenda and highlighting where trees and woodlands can help people to become more physically active and to develop healthier

lifestyles. The FC is also part of the Outdoor Health Forum set up in 2005 with representation from all the major environmental organisations involved in promoting the natural environment as a major contributor to human health.

There are twelve Community Forests (CF) in England that aim to deliver urban economic and social regeneration. The CFs are a partnership between local authorities, FC and other local and national organisations. The key work areas of the CFs are 1) to support regeneration and growth, 2) create better places and 3) build sustainable communities (no author England's Community Forests, 2008).

## Under-representation, exclusion and social inclusion

There are many often complex causes of under-representation and exclusion in sport and physical activity. The general term 'social exclusion' was defined by the Social Exclusion Task Force (Cabinet Office, 2008) as:

*'It is a short–hand term for what can happen when people or areas have a combination of linked problems, such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime and family breakdown. These problems are linked and mutually reinforcing'.*

Social inclusion is often seen as the reverse of exclusion. However, social inclusion refers less to the state of being included, and more to an active process whereby policies and initiatives are organised in an attempt to improve the circumstances of a particular group of people. Some also use the term 'social cohesion'. In 2003 a select committee (2004) explored this issue and decided that a cohesive community was one where:
- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities;
- strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

DEFRA's (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2008) recent publication 'Outdoors for all?' provides an action plan to increase the number of people from under-represented groups who access the natural environment. Particular emphasis is placed on the need to encourage participation amongst disabled groups, BME groups, the young, and residents of inner cities. Outreach is often viewed as a key component in work to facilitate participation by excluded groups. Outreach officers can be employed to work with target communities or individuals that are excluded from, or do not have contact with particular services. A key approach in outreach work is to go to communities and groups and work with them on issues that are of concern to them and to support them in accessing relevant services. In the context of woodland management

outreach workers will go into communities to identify woodland users and non-users in order to begin working with them to encourage and facilitate visits to existing woodland sites, or to provide information/education in communities about the broad range of benefits associated with trees and woodlands.

The Active England Programme engages directly with the social inclusion agenda by targeting lower socio-economic groups, disabled groups, people from BME groups, women, girls, and young people. These groups that have been identified as victims of health inequalities and as under-represented in sport and physical activity and, often, in woodland and green space access.

## 2.1 The Active England Programme

The Active England programme was established in 2003 with £94.8 million from the Big Lottery Fund (formerly the New Opportunities Fund) and Sport England.  The overall aim of the programme was to increase community participation in sport and physical activity in England. The programme involved funding 241 projects over a four year period (running until approximately December 2008).

The three main objectives were to:
- create sustainable, innovative multi-activity environments for sport, social and health deprivation;
- increase participation in sport and physical activity among all sections of society, but particularly those sections of society that are under-represented in sport and physical activity participation;
- ensure new ways of working are spread to and adopted by the sports sector and key partners (Hall Aitken and Bearhunt, 2007).

Sport England's (no date) 'Monitoring and evaluation guide' had a particular focus on promoting increased participation in sport by priority groups including:
- people on low incomes[5]
- people with disabilities
- women and girls
- BME groups
- 45+ years age group
- young people (under 16).

The projects funded under the programme could themselves target one or more of these groups and could also create their own target groups relevant to their area.

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[5] Low income has not been defined in the Sport England Active England documents. In this research we define low income as households with an income of 20K or less per annum.

Two Community Forests and three woodland sites bid for Active England Programme funding and were successful. These included Great Western Community Forest in Wiltshire, Greenwood Community Forest in Nottinghamshire, Rosliston in the National Forest Derbyshire, Bedgebury Forest in Kent and Haldon Forest Park in Devon (Map 1). The Community Forest projects were not based at single sites, but delivered a range of organised activities and events across a number of sites and areas. In contrast, Rosliston, Bedgebury and Haldon were single site based and, in addition to activities and events, involved capital expenditure in the form of infrastructure improvements and the acquisition of new physical activity equipment.

**Map 1: Location of the five Active England Woodland Projects**



## The Active People Surveys

As part of the focus on increasing physical activity and the need to explore whether the numbers of people undertaking physical activity are increasing through initiatives such

as the Active England programme and other programmes Sport England commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake a sport and recreation survey in England called the Active People Survey. The first survey was the largest such sport and recreation survey ever carried out, and over 360,000 people were interviewed by telephone between October 2005 and October 2006. The research found that 21% of the adult population (16 years and over) take part in regular[6] sport and active recreation. Of particular interest to the Forestry Commission and other countryside and environment sector organisations, walking was the most popular recreational activity, followed by swimming, going to the gym and recreational cycling (Sport England, 2007a). Eight million people (adults over 16 years) had undertaken a recreational walk of at least 30 minutes in the previous four weeks.

The survey has been repeated, this time with a sample approximately half that of the first survey. A national indicator (8)[7] has been created that will be measured by the Active People Survey: 'the percentage of adults (16 and over) who participate in sport and recreation for at least 30 minutes on at least 12 days out of the last 4 weeks' (i.e. 3 or more days of the week). The preliminary results of the second Active People survey were becoming available at the time of writing this report. The survey reports that adult participation in sport (rather than broader recreation) had risen from 15.5% to 16.5% between the two surveys. However, the definition of sport does not include recreational walking or infrequent recreational cycling. On current evidence, reporting of the second survey appears to give more attention to formal sporting activities, than to less formal forms of active recreation (Sport England, 2008b).

Sport England is now committed to delivering a 'one million' indicator, referring to the target of getting one million more people participating in sport by 2012/13. This will be measured by a further repeat of the Active People survey. This indicator does not include recreational walking or cycling; however it does include recreational cycling if done at least once a week at moderate intensity for 30 minutes. It also includes strenuous walking activities such as backpacking, hill trekking, hill walking, rambling, power walking and sport walking (Sport England, 2008c). The third Active People Survey started in October 2008 and will run until October 2009.

## 2.2 The Active England Woodland Projects

This section provides background information about the design, funding and implementation of the five Active England woodland projects evaluated in this report.

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[6] Regular was classed as taking part on at least 3 days a week for at least 30 minutes. Recreational walking and cycling were included. It is interesting to note that this is less than the Chief Medical Officer recommendation of 30 minutes of exercise on at least five days of the week.
[7] National indicators are for local authorities and local authority partnerships and were created out of the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. This indicator was created by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

## Bedgebury in Kent

Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest in Kent is managed by Forestry Commission England (FCE) and consists of 850 hectares of Bedgebury Forest and 121 hectares dedicated to the Bedgebury National Pinetum. The Pinetum contains the finest collection of conifers on one site in the world. It has nearly 10,000 trees and shrubs, including 1,800 different species from five continents. Capital investment was made on the Bedgebury Forest site. The total cost of the project was approximately £2.2 million with £1.1 million from the Active England award (Sport England, 2005). This funding was used to create:

- a children's play area - the play area was designed with a theme, connected to the National Pinetum, to reflect the challenges faced by plant hunters through the ages. The area provides opportunities for children to become involved in adventurous play.
- a visitor centre with bike hire facility, a café and classroom/community room.
- surfaced 10 kilometre (km) track for family cycling.
- surfaced walking trails.
- free ride area, mini north shore and dirt jump course for downhill riders and dirt jumpers – professionally designed.
- a challenging 12 km single track trail for mountain bikers.
- showers available for both riders and their bikes.
- development of a cycling club.
- toll riding for equestrian activity.
- concessions scheme (to aid those on low income to access the site for free).

The new facilities at the site were officially opened in April 2006. As well as capital investment in the site Active England funding was used to recruit an outreach officer and partnership manager to deliver the project. Through their and existing staff efforts, a series of events such as concerts, guided walks and children's activities have been run, along with new regular activities such as health walks, archery and cycling. Bedgebury focused on all the Active England target groups.

## Haldon Forest Park in Devon

Haldon Forest Park in Devon is managed by FCE. The site is approximately 1,416 hectares in size and is about fifteen minutes by car from Exeter. Capital investment of £1,181,415 at Haldon included an Active England award of approximately £800,000 (Forestry Commission, 2004; Sport England, 2007b) and led to the creation of the following facilities:
an all ability play trail with traditional and natural play features.
- a central hub where information and a ranger presence is available.
- a butterfly trail.
- a sensory trail at Mamhead (this is away from the central hub at Haldon).
- a family cycle trail.

- cycle trail.
- adventure trail.
- a single track for mountain bikers.
- freeride area.
- freers red run – technical single track.
- horse riders trail.
- concessions scheme.

A project manager and outreach ranger were employed as part of the project, which started in early 2006. As part of the project Wistlandpound, which is in the FC's south west district and is situated in north Devon, also gained funding. 'Discover Wistlandpound' is a partnership between Calvert Trust Exmoor, FC and South West Lakes Trust[8]. The key goal of the partnership was to provide open access to the trails and visitor facilities on site to people with disabilities. Part of the funding for the Active England project for Haldon Forest Park went to developing an activity trail and disability trail at Wistlandpound. A range of activities and events were developed as part of the project at Haldon Forest Park through outreach work.

## Rosliston in Derbyshire

The 'Get Active in the Forest' project at Rosliston was delivered by the 'Get Active in the Forest' Partnership, made up of the FC, South Derbyshire District Council, Rosliston Forestry Centre, and the National Forest Company. It aimed to deliver an innovative programme of opportunities to encourage sedentary people to become physically active and to make Rosliston Forestry Centre the activity centre of the National Forest. The project involved the delivery of a wide ranging programme of physical activity development, involving both the provision of new facilities (particularly a climbing wall and equipment for laser quest and archery), the organisation of activities and events, and a programme of volunteer development, centred around the physical activities of walking, cycling, outdoor activity (orienteering, archery, bouldering, high ropes and low ropes), and conservation/environmental activity (Rosliston, 2008).

The project's 'Development plan' sets out the delivery strategy for each of the above activities, detailing a number of specific delivery actions and their target groups. 'Get Active in the Forest' selected the following additional target groups to the Active England ones: sedentary, unemployed, working families and those recovering from ill health, whether cardiac or mental health. Existing site staff delivered the project.

## Great Western Community Forest in Wiltshire

Great Western Community Forest in Wiltshire was part of the 'Active Swindon' project that covered Swindon, Shrivenham and parts of North Wiltshire. Active England funding

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[8] The South West Lakes Trust is a conservation and recreation charity. The Calvert Trust Exmoor provides challenging outdoor activities for people with disabilities.

totalled £500,000 and the project started in late 2005. The 'Active Swindon' team and the funds were managed by Swindon Primary Care Trust. The key objectives of the 'Active Swindon' project were to:

- deliver a range of innovative, outreach, sport and physical activity programmes, focusing particularly on identified target neighbourhoods and groups which will engage people in physical activity on a long term basis by removing or overcoming barriers which currently prevent them from participating;
- create a physical activity and sporting culture in Swindon;
- ensure residents are aware of the benefits and importance of physical activity to their quality of life;
- develop the partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors which will steer the physical activity agenda in Swindon;
- establish a sustainable professional team of paid and recruited voluntary staff to deliver innovative physical activity programmes;
- to have a co-ordinated information service to ensure residents know where and how physical activity and sport programmes can be accessed.

The target groups for the project were:
- general population                        - children and young people
- vulnerable groups                         - those referred by GP for physical activity
- BME groups                                - families
- older people                              - those in cardiac rehab
- those in the work place                   - those with highest social needs.

A range of activities and initiatives were delivered across the whole area, such as making the most of walking and cycling paths, creating a bus service for people to get to activity hubs, Green Gym, Whitworth Parks outreach, inspirational events and woodlands for activity. The Great Western Community Forest gained a development officer for family based learning who was employed through Swindon Primary Care Trust and based with the Community Forest for two years. The project officer focused on walking, woodlands for activity, health walks, Forest School and family based learning. The key objective was to build families' confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding of how to enjoy and regularly use woods and open spaces for physical activity. In discussions with the project officer, Penhill Park, Stratton Woods and Stanton Country Park were chosen as the study sites for this evaluation.

## Greenwood Community Forest in Nottinghamshire

Greenwood Community Forest in Nottinghamshire secured Active England funding for a project called 'Park Life'. The overall aim of Park Life was to increase participants' levels of regular participation in physical activity, whilst improving their health awareness and sense of well-being. The Park Life project focused on seven park and country park sites within Greenwood CF, including:

- Bestwood Country Park
- Sherwood Forest Country Park
- Sherwood Pines Country Park
- Vicar Water Country Park
- Kings Mill Reservoir
- Bull Farm Park
- Bramcote Hills Park.

The approach taken was to run sixty events per year across the seven sites and to develop a staff and volunteer training programme to deliver and sustain the new activities. Each event had a physical activity element, with health promotion information and other materials provided where possible. Annual walking and cycling festivals were also held in 2006 and 2007.

The target groups for Greenwood CF were identified as ethnic minorities, women and girls, people with disabilities, young people, families and 50 years plus.  A project officer was employed as part of the project. In discussions with project staff, Bestwood Country Park and Kings Mill Reservoir were chosen as the study sites for this evaluation.

## Engaging target groups

Table 2 provides a summary and examples of key delivery mechanisms used by the Active England Woodland projects to encourage people to become more physically active. Each of the five projects chose different combinations of approaches depending on their specific objectives and the funding made available. For example, 'facilitated' access was used at Haldon and Rosliston to engage very hard to reach people.  This proved a useful approach because it involved bringing specific target groups to the sites and organising an activity for them to do. This provided them with the initial support necessary to get a flavour of what was on offer at each site. 'Led' activities, such as organised health walks were used by all the projects to encourage people to become more active on a regular basis. Led activities proved particularly useful in reaching people who want to socialise with others or who may not have the confidence to visit a site on their own.  In an attempt to reach a broader audience, some projects delivered infrastructure improvements in order to attract a wider range of people (e.g. Bedgebury and Haldon) or purchased equipment that could be taken to different places (e.g. Rosliston). The Community Forest projects placed a significant emphasis on the delivery of one-off events to provide 'taster sessions' of different activities and to raise awareness of the sites themselves. Of key importance to the successful delivery of all of these different mechanisms was the outreach staff or existing site staff that played a central role in the engagement of target groups and the delivery of each project.

**Table 2: Types of changes and activities undertaken through the five woodland projects.**

| | Examples | Strategic objective | Potential outcomes | Single site based, multi-site based or movable? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Site infrastructure improvements** | New paths (cycle, walking). Catering facilities. Visitor centre. Play areas with play furniture. | Can benefit all site users. Can attract new users, target groups. Can keep people on site longer as there is more to do. | Longer term change to a site's visitor profile e.g. attracting more families, or a wider user group. More frequent and longer visits as visitors can undertake a range of activities. | Single site based e.g. Bedgebury and Haldon Forest Park. |
| **Equipment purchases** | Laser quest, climbing wall, archery equipment. | Transportable, so can be taken to where groups/individuals might benefit e.g. schools, playing fields, community centres. | People are introduced to new activities leading to more involvement. Focus is on having fun, rather then on being physically active. | Some equipment can be moved and taken to different sites and communities making it accessible to a broader range of people e.g. 'Get Active in the Forest' (Rosliston Forestry Centre). |
| **Events** | One off events e.g. fun runs, crafts fairs, cycle events, activity days, tree festivals. | Provides taster sessions for new activities and to raise awareness of sites. Provides a fun day out for families and individuals. | Interest in new activities, raises awareness of sites and provides information about further opportunities to get involved. | Can be undertaken at a range of sites e.g. events programme delivered at the seven Greenwood CF sites and a number of sites in Great Western CF. |
| **Led activities (led by project/site staff or volunteers).** | Health walks, cycle rides, nature walks. | Provides opportunities for people to undertake regular activity once a week or fortnightly. | Can potentially lead to healthier lifestyles as activity takes place on a regular basis. Establishes activity groups that may last beyond the project. | Single site based e.g. Rosliston, Bedgebury and Haldon or walks that take place on a different route every week e.g. Great Western CF. |
| **Facilitated access (organised and led by project/site staff).** | Targeting specific groups and transporting them to a site to undertake an activity such as a walk or cycle ride. | Can reach groups who would not be confident visiting a site alone or with their friends/family, or people who might not know a particular site is open to public access. | Raises awareness that a site and facilities are open to all. Gives confidence to visit a site informally in the future. Provides valuable contact time between project staff and community groups. | People are taken to a single site to take part in an activity e.g. Haldon Forest Park work with young mums, BME engagement at Rosliston. |

# 3. Methodology and methods

## 3.1 Monitoring and evaluation of the Active England Programme

Hall Aitken and Bearhunt (HAB) were contracted as consultants to set up a framework to monitor and evaluate (M+E) the Active England Programme across all of the funded projects (241 projects). Sport England set up the 'Active England learning zone' website[9] which provided documents and advice on M+E. An important part of the overall M+E of the Active England Programme was the development of a set of seventeen Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that would provide a focus for projects to gather quantitative data on the progress of their work (Appendix 1). 'Active England learning zone' conferences were held annually and thematic workshops run to discuss new ideas, innovations and to exchange information. Each project was to receive support from HAB in order to help choose and implement relevant KPIs. Data gathered for each project was to be input into a 'value mapping' website designed to ensure that data on KPIs was captured across the whole programme. Key results would then be reported on each year by HAB (HAB, 2007).

### Monitoring and evaluation of the five Active England Woodland Projects

Forest Research worked with each project to help develop a M+E framework. A mixed methods approach, involving three core phases, was developed:

**Phase 1:** On site surveys to monitor changes in visitors and the frequency / type of visitor activities (starting with a baseline survey of existing users before the new projects were developed).
**Phase 2:** Spatial analysis to produce a catchment profile of the surrounding population of each site (within an approximate 20 mile radius).
**Phase 3:** Qualitative research within surrounding communities to explore the benefits of and barriers to using green spaces for physical activity (targeting both 'users' and 'non-users' of each project). Interviews with project staff to explore the challenges and successes of each project.

As part of their M+E obligation to the Active England Programme, project staff themselves also gathered a range of data relevant to the KPIs discussed above, such as the number of visitors, the number of cars in the car park and the number of people participating in specific events and activities.

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[9] Active England learning zone  http://www.aelz.org/index.asp

The Active England projects were delivered over 3 years, starting in 2005/6 and ending in 2008/9. FR started the research in 2005/6, before the launch of the projects to obtain baseline data about visitors and visits to the sites.

## 1) On site survey work

On site surveys were conducted at Bedgebury, Rosliston and Haldon in autumn 2005 and at Greenwood CF and Great Western CF in spring 2006 (see Appendix 2 for questionnaire used at Bedgebury) to establish baseline data of existing site users and use. The questions were developed by Forest Research, with input from the FC's Economics and Statistics group. The questions were designed to gain insights into who was visiting the sites, how physically active they were, and what activities they were undertaking, in order to build up a baseline visitor and visit profile for each site. Follow-up surveys were conducted at each site (except Great Western CF[10]) in 2006/7 to determine whether the visitor and visit profiles were changing due to each Active England project. A small number of additional questions or adaptations were made to the questionnaires used in the baseline surveys, in accordance with specific site requirements. In particular, questions were inserted to explore whether people were visiting the sites because of the project, and whether the new facilities and activities would encourage them to become more physically active.

In total, 2898 questionnaires were completed across eight sites (Table 3). The on site surveys were undertaken either by an independent contractor, site staff or students employed to assist site staff. Those undertaking the surveys were given instructions in approaching groups and a sampling strategy covering times of day and days of the week in which data could be collected. The on site survey period usually lasted about two to three weeks.

Data was analysed using SPSS[11] to produce descriptive statistics about changes in visitor and visit profiles for each site. Statistical significance was quantified through the use of 'p values' which relate to the probability that the obtained results are due to chance. A 'p value' of $<0.05$ means that there is less than a 1 in 20 probability of that result occurring by chance alone, under the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the wider population.

## 2) Spatial analysis of the catchment

Phase 2 of the research involved the profiling of each project site's catchment area. The catchment area was defined as the area within an approximate 20 miles radius from

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[10] Further surveys were not undertaken at the Great Western CF sites as the focus of the project activities were not primarily based at the sites surveyed but across many areas and sites in Swindon. However, the surveys at Great Western CF provide valuable information for the CF and site owners and managers about who uses the sites and why.
[11] Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

each site's centre point, reflecting the distance that people might reasonably be expected to travel for the purposes of regular physical activity. The profiling work presents basic socio-economic and demographic data about the catchment population, focusing on indicators relevant to the target groups defined by the Active England Programme. These data, in addition to the postcodes provided by on site survey respondents, were processed using GIS[12].

Catchment profiling was an essential component of the overall M+E undertaken by Forest Research as it enabled comparisons to be made between levels of target group representation amongst visitors to the project sites, on the one hand, and levels of target group representation amongst the catchment population, on the other. Through this analysis it would then be possible to see whether a given target group was adequately or under-represented amongst visitors to the site. The spatial analysis of the catchments and the analysis of visitor and catchment populations also provided the basis for the subsequent targeting of qualitative research (Phase 3), based on the identification of under-represented target groups. The catchment profiles for each of the five woodland projects included:

- a basic spatial analysis of current visitors within the catchment (using people's postcodes from the on site survey and locating them within the catchment).
- the spatial representation of Census (2001) data relevant to each target group, presenting a socio-economic and demographic geography of the catchment area.
- spatial representation of visitor profile data provided by the baseline surveys, based on responses to questions about income, health, activity and fitness levels, gender, ethnicity, age and employment. Target group relevant data for each visitor who provided their postcode was overlaid onto maps displaying census data relevant to the same target group. This analysis shows whether visitors who fall within each of the target group categories are from wards where there is either a high or low concentration of people from that target group. This adds to the analytical scope of the evaluation by showing whether visitors fit the demographics of their ward, thereby informing the targeting of the qualitative research phase.

## 3) Qualitative research

Qualitative research was undertaken to gather insights from both users and non-users of the Active England projects. For both groups, the research focused on their perceptions of, and attitudes towards physical activity and the use of woodlands and green spaces. With project users, the analysis also covered the benefits they had derived from being involved in a given project. With non-users, the research provided the opportunity to explore barriers to participation.

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[12] Geographic Information System.

Research with users involved the researchers participating in a scheduled project activity (usually a health walk or cycle ride), followed by a focus group discussion (often including lunch or tea/coffee and refreshments). Discussion topics included how people got involved, their motivations, what they gained from their involvement, what they thought about physical activity and healthy lifestyles and their attitudes to green spaces and woodlands. A key advantage of this approach was that joining in an activity with respondents enabled the researchers to chat informally with participants and to observe how respondents interacted both with one another and with the site itself.

The researchers also wanted to gain an understanding of some of the barriers to getting involved in the projects experienced by specific target groups. In order to do this they developed an action research approach (see below) and, building on the spatial analysis of the surrounding catchments, worked with relevant project staff to choose and recruit groups of non-users for the qualitative research phase. A group would then be invited to the site (transported by minibus or taxi) and taken on a led walk around the site before participating in a focus group (with lunch or tea/coffee and refreshments) to explore perceptions of the site, attitudes to health and physical activity, and the barriers to using woodlands and green spaces for physical activity.

In total, 114 users[13] and non-users over the five sites participated in the qualitative research phase. Each respondent was asked to fill in a short questionnaire, covering basic demographic data such as age, income, ethnicity, and a questions relating to activity levels and frequency of visits to green spaces (details are shown in Table 4 and Appendix 3).

In addition to targeted research with users and non-users, interviews with project staff were also carried out to provide the opportunity for a self-evaluation of project delivery. During these interviews, the researchers and project staff discussed how the projects had progressed and what were considered to be the key success and challenges.

The focus groups were recorded using dictaphones, and later transcribed and analysed. Detailed notes were taken during interviews with site representatives and were later analysed. Analysis involved the identification of a number of key themes that structure the evaluation presented in this report.

## Action Research

The idea of action research is to change practice; researchers work directly with practitioners and community members so that research findings can be used to inform changes that are reflected in the delivery of a given project or programme. Action research is usually carried out through an iterative cycle of planning, acting, observing, evaluating, reflecting, and then feeding back into future planning. The researchers in this

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[13] Demographic information is available for 102 of the 114 participants.

evaluation worked with the delivery staff for each project to discuss the collection of KPIs, but also to help assist them in identifying non-user groups that could be brought to the sites and introduced to the project. Through the walks/cycle rides and subsequent focus groups, project staff and researchers were able to explore barriers to using the sites. The research allowed contact time between project staff and non-user groups, providing an opportunity to encourage individuals to come back and join in regular activities such as health walks or events, or to provide information about concessions schemes and transport. By participating in the focus group discussions, project staff themselves were able to gain an understanding of some of the barriers people faced in accessing sites and to explore possible management responses to those barriers.

**Table 3: Quantitative data collection**

| Sites | August 2005 | Spring 2006 | August 2006 | Spring 2007 | Summer 2007 | All years total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Haldon** | 319 | | 68 | Event cards[14] – 80 completed. | 307 | 694 |
| **Bedgebury** | 249 | | 142 | | Activity cards – 58 completed | 391 |
| **Rosliston** | 185 | | 197 | | | 382 |
| **Great Western** Penhill Park Stanton Country park Stratton Woods | | 550 (across the three sites) | | Not undertaken due to activities not being linked to the three survey sites specifically. | | 550 |
| **Greenwood** Bestwood Country Park Kingsmill Reservoir | | 421 (across the two sites) 204 217 | | 460 | | 881 |
| **Total – 8 sites** | **753** | **971** | **407** | **460** | **307** | **2898[15]** |

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[14] At Haldon and Bedgebury events/activity cards consisting of a short number of questions were given out at a range of events or in general for participants to complete. Completed cards went in to a prize draw and acted as an incentive for people to fill the cards in. The questions captured some demographic data and some information on the events attended or general use of the site.
[15] This total number excludes the event/activities cards at Haldon and Bedgebury.

**Table 4: Qualitative data collection**

| Sites | Active England user groups | Active England non-user groups |
|---|---|---|
| Haldon | Women mountain bike group (5 women and 1 male. 2 female instructors) | Over 55s (8 female and 1 male) |
| Bedgebury | Health walk group (10 walkers and 4 extra people i.e. health walkers who were not fit to walk that week, but joined the focus group discussions. Included people from a number of different target groups).[16] | Low income and young people group from Hastings (8 people) |
| Rosliston | Asian walkers (10 men)<br><br>Over 50s cycling group (8 people) | Pakistani womens group (10 including 1 translator. 2 children) |
| Great Western | Forest School participants (2 women)<br><br>Health walkers (13 people) Over 45s. | Low income Dads group (7 adults, 6 children and 2 staff – 1 NSPCC[17] and 1 Sure Start[18])<br><br>Women with children group (6 women no demographic data) |
| Greenwood | Over 50s health walkers (9 people) | Over 45s womens group (9 people) |
| Totals | 64 | 50[19]    (Total = 114) |

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[16] 40 young mountain bikers aged 13-35 were studied at Bedgebury as part of a PhD research project. Findings from the study are included in the Bedgebury project report.
[17] National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.
[18] Government initiative to give children the best start in life.
[19] Excluding staff and children with the Dads group and children with the Pakistani womens group.

# 4. Results: on site surveying and project monitoring

This section of the report presents an analysis of the quantitative data gathered for each project through the annual on site surveys organised by Forest Research and the data gathered by project staff for the purposes of project reporting against Active England KPIs. Comparisons are made within two broad project groupings, based on a distinction between the single site based projects, which all involved changes to infrastructure and/or equipment improvements as well as the creation of specific site based activities and events. The CF projects on the other hand did not involve changes in infrastructure, but focused on the delivery of events and activities across a network of sites. Therefore the groupings are:

1. Community Forests (CF) – Great Western and Greenwood (hereafter called the community group/ing)
2. Single site based projects – Haldon, Rosliston and Bedgebury (hereafter called the site based group/ing).

## 4.1 Significant changes in visitor and visit profiles

The data presented in this section divides the projects into the two groupings outlined above. The diagrams and charts give a 'before' and 'after' reading for the community grouping, based on data gathered during the baseline (2005/6) and follow-up year (2006/7). Baseline data only was collected at Great Western CF, so readers need to be aware that, within the community grouping, the baseline data includes the two CFs but follow-up data is from the Greenwood CF sites only (Bestwood and Kings Mill). However, based on an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two Community Forests, there are some instances where we can be confident in saying that any changes that took place at Greenwood are likely to be applicable to Great Western.

As there was no predetermined weighting of sites making up the community and site based groupings, it was considered appropriate that every individual questioned as part of this study was given equal weight. Consequently, all percentages calculated for the analyses of grouped data are based on this weighting.

### Changing visitor profiles

#### Age of visitors (under 16s and over 45s target groups)

There was a significant increase in the 16-44 age class as a proportion of all total visitors at the site based grouping (Table 5). There was a significant increase in family use of the site based grouping, suggesting a rise in the number of under 16s using the sites as part

of a family group. This is potentially due to the infrastructure improvements at Bedgebury, Rosliston and Haldon. The creation and improvement of play areas and creation of family friendly walking and cycling trails and equipment provided for specific activities, such as adventure play, archery and laser quest and these proved to be particularly attractive to young people and families. The increase in the 16-44 age class is reflected in a decrease in over 45s as a proportion of total visitors to the site based grouping. However, because there were substantial increases in total visitor numbers to these sites, this does not necessarily imply a decrease in the total number of visitors over 45s.

**Table 5: 45+ Age Group**

(% difference within Before or After)

| Community or Site based groups | | Before or After | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | before | after |
| Community group | 16-44 | 46.9% | 47.8% |
| | 45+ | 53.1% | 52.2% |
| Total | | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Site based group | 16-44 | 39.7% | 59.4% |
| | 45+ | 60.3% | 40.6% |
| Total | | 100.0% | 100.0% |

## Visitor incomes (low income target group)

There was a change in income profile for both groupings, with more people from low income households visiting the community grouping after the projects and more people from higher income brackets visiting the site based grouping as a proportion of total visitors (Figure 1). The increase in higher earners in the site based grouping is primarily due to the sites attracting a younger, wealthier audience, due to the reasons outlined above. The CFs are located in urban/peri urban areas with a broad range of income levels amongst the resident population. As such, there is more potential for the CFs to be accessed by people from low income households.

**Figure 1: Annual income**
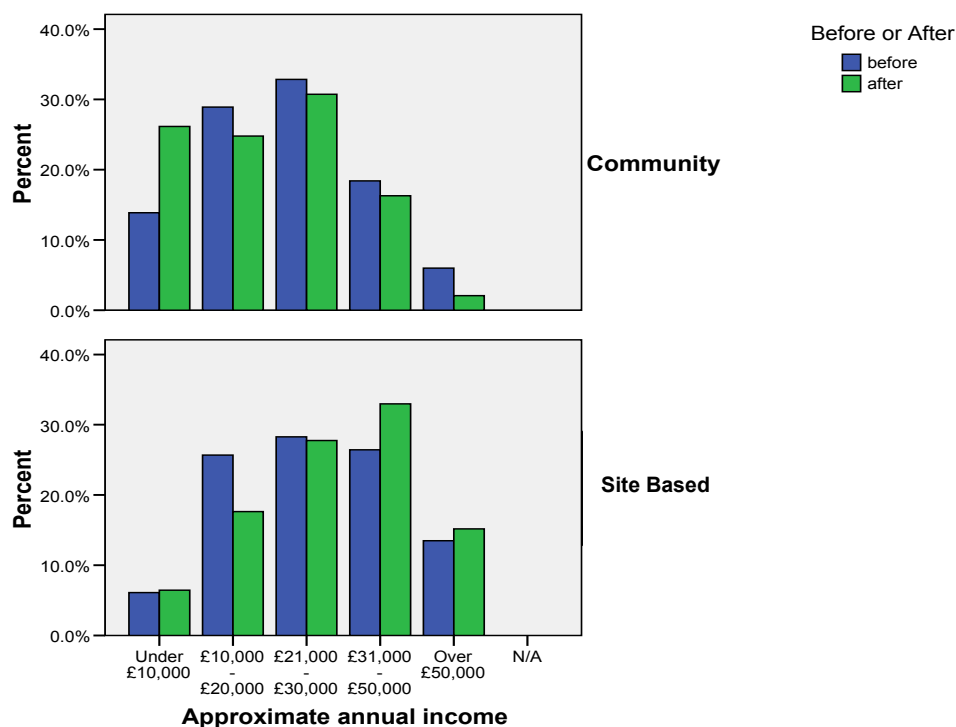


Both groups showed similar work patterns (Figure 2). A significant change is the fall in the number of retired people as a proportion of total visitors to the site based grouping, and an increase in the number of full time workers. These changes are also reflected in the changing age profile of visitors to the site based grouping.

**Figure 2: Work patterns of visitors**
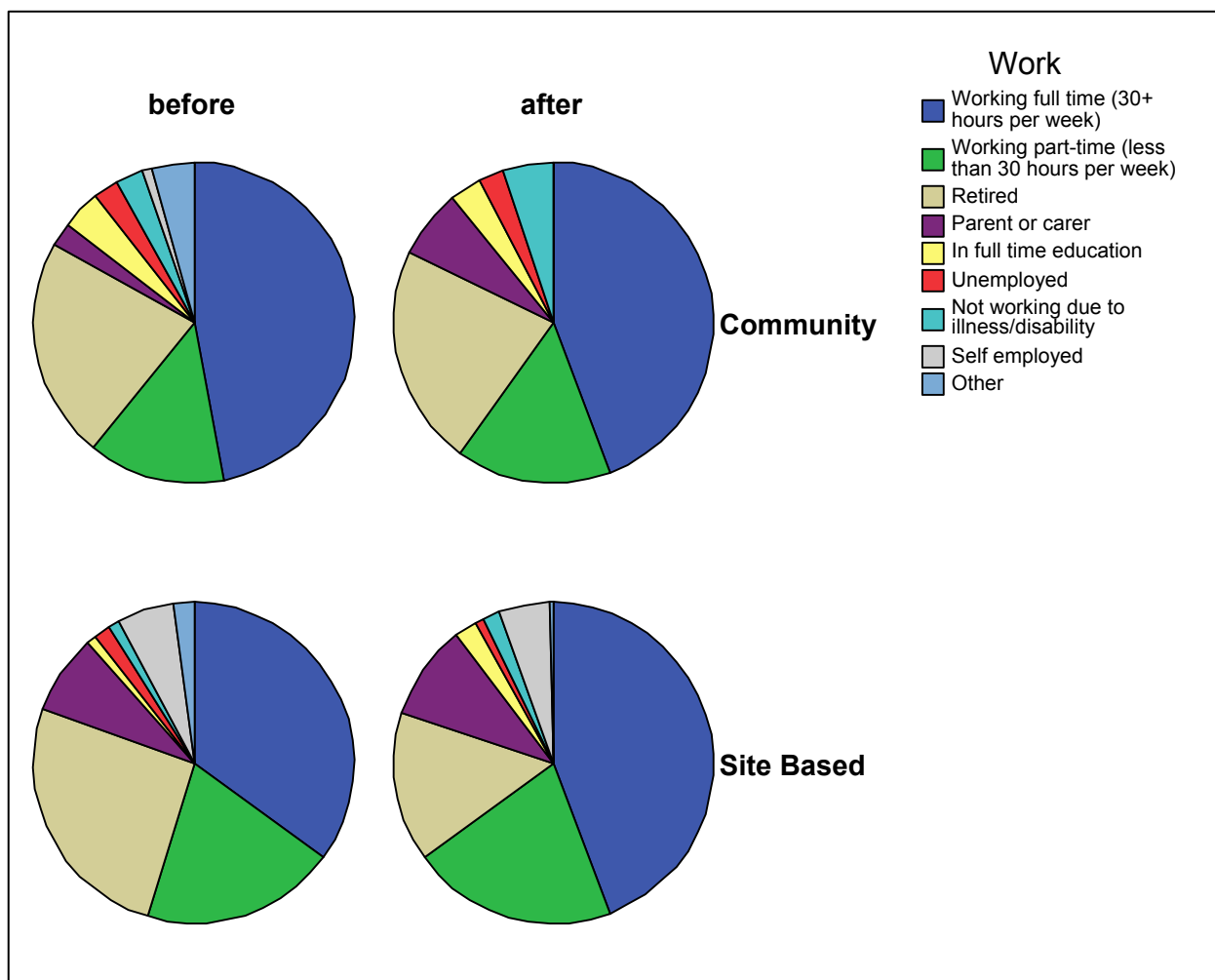


**Black and minority ethnic groups**

Both groupings showed an increase in the number of BME groups as a proportion of total visitors to the sites, with an increase in the community grouping from 1.8% to 2.8% (p<0.06) and for the site based grouping an increase from 1.7% to 5.2% (p<0.001). The BME groups included white Europeans who were not British (Table 6).

Similar results were found with the number of respondents stating that their doctor had recommended an increase in physical activity, with a fall in the number of recommendations as a proportion of visitors to the site based grouping, and an increase in the community grouping.

## Women

The overall proportion of female visitors increased at the Greenwood CF sites from 44% to 57%. Proportions of females remained similar for the site based grouping and women made up approximately 50% of overall visitors at Great Western CF, Bedgebury and Haldon. There were extremely high numbers of women visiting Rosliston, at a ratio of 3:1 compared to male visitors. This may be due to the child friendly activities provided at Rosliston, which attracted women and their children.

## Further information

In terms of factors which prevent people from using the sites more often for physical activity, the most significant change was in the number of respondents citing the weather as a barrier (Figure 3). Care needs to be taken with the community grouping as a much higher percentage of visitors to the Greenwood sites cited the weather as a barrier than visitors to the Great Western CF sites. Poor summer weather in 2006 and 2007 may also have contributed to people identifying the weather as a barrier. Lack of time, anti-social behaviour and lack of facilities were also cited by visitors to the community sites. Anti-social behaviour can be more of an issue in CF sites as they are often located in deprived urban/peri-urban areas. There was a decrease in the proportion of visitors to the site based grouping citing 'lack of facilities' as a barrier, showing that the infrastructure and equipment improvements at these sites are having an impact and may be encouraging people to visit more often.

**Figure 3: Barriers to accessing the forests for more physical activity**
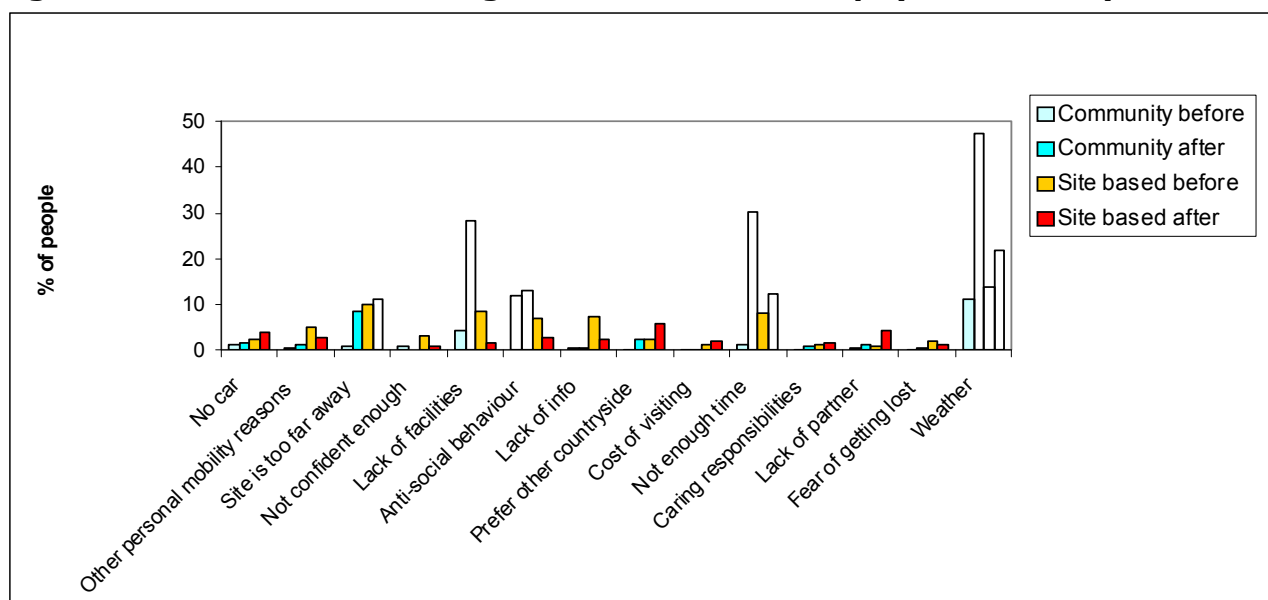


## Changing visit profiles

### Who people visited the sites with

There was a highly significant increase in the proportion of respondents making family visits for both groupings (p<0.001). However, Greenwood CF did get more family visitors in their baseline data than Great Western, so the assumption that the 'after' data from Greenwood can be used to represent changes at Great Western should not necessarily be made (Table 8).

**Table 8: Who people visited with**

| Community or Site Based groups | | | Before or After | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | before | after | |
| Community group | Q8 Who did you come with? | On own | 49.8% | 27.0% | 42.5% |
| | | Family | 26.1% | 38.0% | 29.9% |
| | | Partner | 15.9% | 20.7% | 17.4% |
| | | Friends | 7.2% | 14.1% | 9.4% |
| | | Organised Group | 1.0% | .2% | .8% |
| | Total | | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Site based group | Q8 Who did you come with? | On own | 17.7% | 9.5% | 13.7% |
| | | Family | 35.9% | 59.5% | 47.4% |
| | | Partner | 30.4% | 11.5% | 21.2% |
| | | Friends | 13.4% | 12.7% | 13.1% |
| | | Organised Group | 2.7% | 6.7% | 4.6% |
| | Total | | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

## Frequency of visits

The community grouping tended to get much higher proportions of visitors visiting the sites every day or 4-6 times a week than the site based grouping (Table 9). This is borne out by data on the average distance people travel to visit the sites. Due to the CF sites' close proximity to highly populated areas, there are large numbers of people who live very locally to a given site and who, therefore, are more likely to use them on a regular basis.

**Table 9: Frequency of visits**

% within Before or After

| Community or Other | | | Q2 How often? | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Every day | 4-6 times per week | 1-3 times per week | 1-3 times per month | 4-6 times per year | 1-3 times per year | Less often | Total |
| Community | Before or After | before | 35.6% | 13.4% | 25.2% | 12.4% | 6.4% | 4.1% | 2.8% | 100.0% |
| | | after | 18.7% | 13.6% | 31.3% | 16.0% | 6.7% | 9.1% | 4.5% | 100.0% |
| | Total | | 30.3% | 13.5% | 27.1% | 13.6% | 6.5% | 5.7% | 3.4% | 100.0% |
| Site Based | Before or After | before | 7.3% | 6.7% | 19.0% | 22.3% | 9.0% | 19.7% | 15.9% | 100.0% |
| | | after | 2.2% | 3.0% | 19.0% | 27.6% | 19.2% | 18.8% | 10.1% | 100.0% |
| | Total | | 4.8% | 4.9% | 19.0% | 24.9% | 13.9% | 19.3% | 13.1% | 100.0% |

## Activities undertaken

There were significant increases in the proportion of visitors using the site based grouping for activities such as cycling, use of play areas and mountain biking. This is due to the investments in infrastructure and equipment made on these sites (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Activities undertaken**
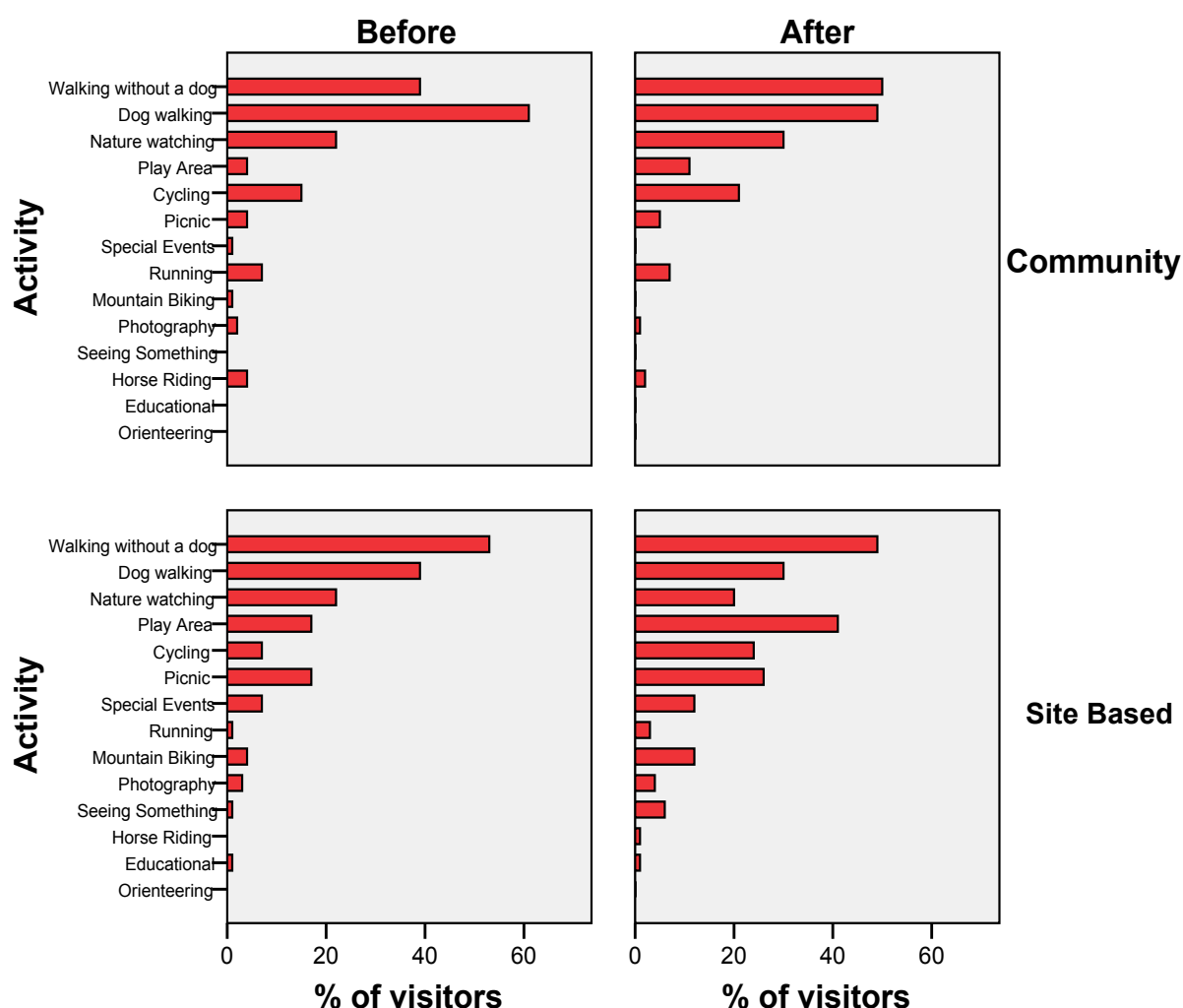


Table 10 shows that the mean duration of visits has increased for both groupings. It shows that, on average, people stay longer at the site based grouping and this most likely reflects the fact that there is now more to do on the sites, and that people have travelled further than is the case for the community grouping (Table 11). The CF sites, on the other hand, are often nearer to where people live. As such, visitors tend to travel less far, visit more frequently, and spend less time on site.

**Table 10: Visit duration**

| | | before visit time Mean | before visit time s.e. | after visit time Mean | after visit time s.e. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Before or After | | | |
| Community or Site based | Community Site Based | 1.05 | 0.02 | 1.22 | 0.03 |
| | | 1.74 | 0.04 | 2.33 | 0.04 |

**Table 11: Distance travelled to sites**

| | | before travel distance Mean | before travel distance s.e. | after travel distance Mean | after travel distance s.e. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community or Site based | Community Site Based | 2.9 | 0.1 | 4.0 | 0.2 |
| | | 10.0 | 0.2 | 10.5 | 0.2 |

Friends and relations play an important role in identifying a given site to a future visitor. Before the projects, 17% of site based forest visitors had become aware of the forest through a friend or family member and this figure increased to 45% after project implementation. For the community grouping there is a reverse of this trend (35% before and 16% after).

There was a significant decline in the proportion of visitors taking 5+ days exercise per week in the site based group (p<0.001) which could be attributable to the changing age structure of visitors to these sites (Table 12).

**Table 12: Exercise levels**

| Community or Other | | | before | after | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community | 5+days exercise | No | 50.3% | 55.4% | 52.0% |
| | | Yes | 49.7% | 44.6% | 48.0% |
| | Total | | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Site Based | 5+days exercise | No | 44.1% | 63.9% | 53.7% |
| | | Yes | 55.9% | 36.1% | 46.3% |
| | Total | | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

## 4.2 Data collected by project/site staff

A range of data were collected by project or site staff, with different approaches being adopted by the five projects, depending on what was thought to be most relevant and which KPIs were chosen for project performance reporting. For example, the data gathered and reported for Haldon, Rosliston and Bedgebury highlight the increase in total visitor numbers to the sites. For those projects that focused on total visitor numbers, it can be difficult to separate out the impact of the Active England projects from the impacts of other concurrent projects or initiatives. For example, Bedgebury and Haldon both had 'Go Ape'[21] facilities installed on site, and while this has not been part of the respective Active England projects, the trails have nonetheless attracted large numbers of people to the sites to take part in physical activities.

### Community grouping

#### Great Western CF

Great Western CF had a specific focus on Forest School and through data collected by the project team it was found that towards the end of the project 28% (24 schools) of Swindon schools had a qualified or training Forest School leader. In 2007/8 7,000 children benefited from Forest School. There were 29 trained Forest School practitioners in schools in Swindon and 5 independent leaders to support and run Forest School activities. Six health walks were set up and running weekly and 23 people had trained as health walk leaders. The 'Tree-mendous' festival held in 2007 attracted 400 people.

#### Greenwood CF

The 'Park Life' project at Greenwood CF focused on the delivery of community events and organised activities across a number of sites (Bestwood Country Park, Sherwood Forest Country Park, Sherwood Pines Forest Park, Vicar Water Country Park, Kings Mill Reservoir, Bull Farm Park and Bramcote Hills Park) with the aim of raising awareness and encouraging people to make use of their local green space for healthy exercise. Traditional activities such as walking and cycling were provided, but the project also delivered a range of innovative activities tailored to local needs, including mini beast trails, a range of team building activities and games, 'Scavenger Art', shelter building, Nordic walking, 'Tri Golf' and Tai Chi. From data collected by project staff it was identified that over the three years of the project, a total of 12,951 people attended community and school events. In the projects final year, events were enjoyed by 1,304 pupils from schools within the 25% most deprived wards within the Greenwood Community Forest. In addition, 50% of participants were female and the representation of non-white participants at events and activities was twice the representation within Nottinghamshire's population as a whole (Park Life Final Report, 2008).

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[21] 'Go Ape' is a high wire forest adventure course with rope bridges and zip wires.

## Site based grouping

### Bedgebury

There was a large increase in visitor numbers at Bedgebury, with many attracted by the new facilities and activities available (Table 13).

**Table 13: Numbers of visitors**

|  | Number of visitors[22] |
|---|---|
| 2005/6 | 51,837 (before the project started) |
| 2006/7 | 182,426 |
| 2007/8 | 273,081 |

In 2006/7, 671 people were recorded as visiting through the concession scheme, aimed at lower socio-economic groups, and in 2007/8 this had risen dramatically to 13,162. In 2005/6, 25,000 visits were non-paying, which included the Friends of Bedgebury (FoB) Pinetum members and those attending concerts run on the site. In 2007/8 nearly 46,575 entries were via the FoB. Those who joined the FoB and pay a membership fee are given free access to car parking at the site and this is the main reason for the large increase in FoB members.

By April 2008 the cycling club had 208 members, 20 people were volunteers and 300 children had accessed 'Go Ride'[23] courses run by the club (Sport England, 2008).

Twelve volunteer health walk leaders have been trained to lead health walks.

### Haldon

There was a large increase in visitor numbers at Haldon through the project (Table 14).

**Table 14: Visitor numbers**

| Year | Total number of visitors to Haldon |
|---|---|
| 2003 | 10,000[24] |
| 2006/7 | 80,000 |
| 2007/8 | 224,280 |

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[22] These figures are derived from the site visitor numbers spreadsheet – data comes from the car park counters, cycle club numbers, education visits numbers etc.
[23] Go ride is British cycling clubs development programme aimed at improving young riders and clubs.
[24] Davies, A. 2008. Mapping active travel among children (MATCH) progress report.

In 2006/7 there were 97 events at Haldon, 21 ranger led events, 76 externally organised events, 346 group visits, 233 car park season tickets sold and 52 ranger led conservation and green gym activities involving 432 people (Powles, 2007).

## Rosliston

There was a large increase in total visitor numbers at Rosliston from approximately 129,340 in 2005/6 to 189,905 in 2007/8. 4,867 people took part in the 'Get Active in the Forest' activities, including 2,149 women, 1,581 over 45s, 1,469 individuals from low income households, 280 BME, 132 disabled and 2,132 under 16s. There were 94 coaches, activity leaders, instructors or teachers involved in the project (Rosliston, 2008).

# 5. Results: catchment profiling

## Catchment area

Part of the overall evaluation involved the spatial 'profiling' of the catchments surrounding the sites within an approximate 20 miles radius. 2001 Census and Index of Multiple Deprivation data were used in a Geographic Information System (GIS) to produce maps characterising the communities living around the sites and to show the extent of Active England target group representation within each catchment. Conclusions about the level of representation of a specific target group at each site could be drawn by comparing concentrations within each catchment with the representation of the same group within a site's visitor profile, as revealed by the on site survey results. Postcode data from respondents to the baseline on site surveys were also overlaid onto the maps, showing where visitors came from within the catchment. This revealed whether visitors were coming from areas with particularly high, or low representations of a given target group. For example, Map 2 shows low income distribution within the Rosliston (near Swadlincote, Derbyshire) catchment area. The red dots denote postcodes of individual people in the 2005 survey and the small blue triangle (in the centre of the catchment) marks the centre point of the Rosliston site. This map shows that the catchment contains areas with relatively high concentrations of families on low income (21 to 37%).  Results from the on site survey show that in 2005 48% of visitors to Rosliston were from households with an income of 20K or less, suggesting that low income representation amongst visitors to Rosliston is higher than in the catchment population. We can conclude, therefore, that low income families were not under-represented at Rosliston.

**Map 2: Low income distribution within the Rosliston catchment area**
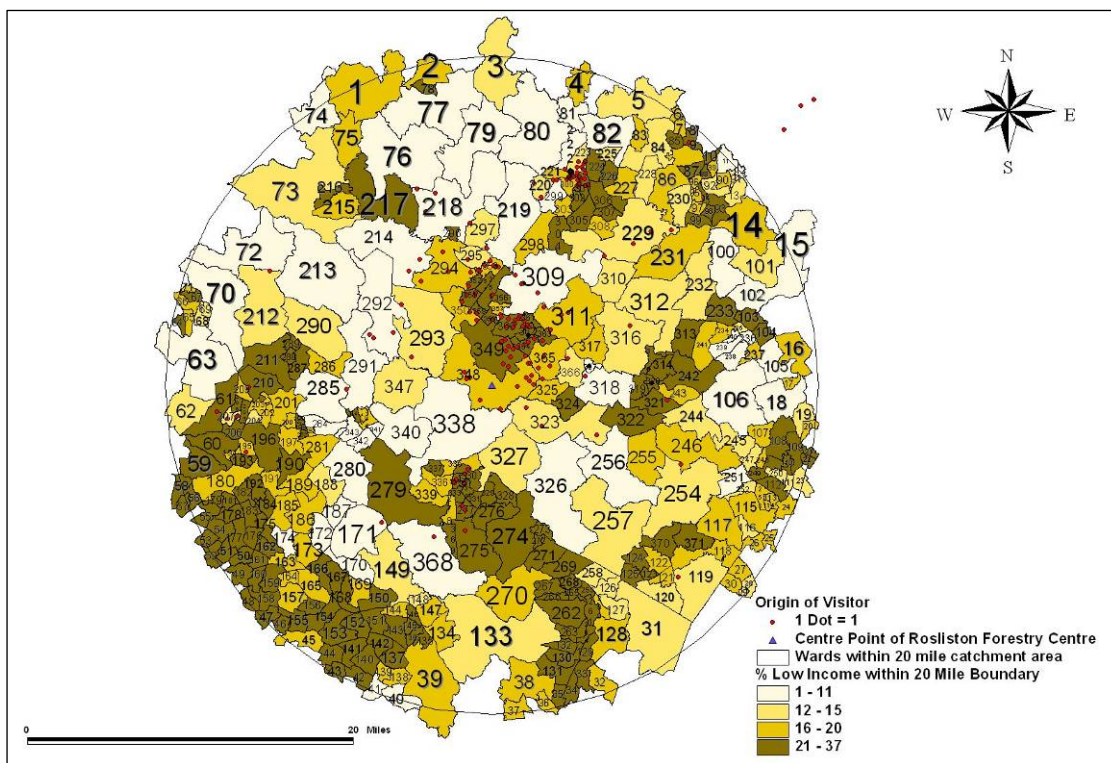


The analysis of results from the catchment profiling and on site surveys highlighted that proportionally more visitors to sites within the community grouping live close to each site than is the case with visitors to the site based grouping. The individual site reports show the analysis for each site in much greater detail.

## Low income

There was higher representation of people from low income households amongst visitors to the community grouping than was the case for the site based grouping. This is probably a reflection of the more urban location of the Community Forest sites, rather than an indication of the relevant projects' successes in attracting more visitors from low income households.

## People with long term illness

Comparisons between visitor and catchment profiles reveals that people who suffer from long term illness tended to be under-represented at the site based projects and to some extent at the Community Forest projects, although the extent of under-representation was less marked for the community grouping.

## Women and girls

Women were well-represented in both groupings. There was a significant shift in the gender profile of visitors to the two Greenwood CF sites, with more women visiting once the projects were underway. At Rosliston nearly 76% of visitors were women, marking a particularly high level of representation compared with the average for the catchment. The on site surveys did not capture data from girls or boys. However there was a significant increase in family visits to all projects suggesting that the under 16 age category increased because of this.

## 45+ years

There were generally reasonable levels of representation of those aged 45 years and over participating in the projects. However, at the site based projects the proportion of visitors within this group did fall once the project was up and running, reflected by the fact that greater numbers of families are now attracted to the sites by the new infrastructure and facilities on offer. The catchment areas for both Rosliston and Bedgebury contain wards with relatively high numbers of people within the 45+ yrs age category (49% to 82%), highlighting the need for staff to consider whether they need to redress the current imbalance.

## Black and minority groups

Comparisons between visitor and catchment profiles reveal that BME groups were under-represented at most of the sites during the baseline year. The repeat surveys, undertaken once the projects were up and running did show relative increases in BME representation across the sites. Increases, however, were often not sufficient to be able to say that BME groups are well represented. For example, the on-site surveying at Rosliston revealed a small but significant increase in the proportion of BME visitors, from 0% in 2005 to 3.2% in 2006. However, given that many respondents are from wards showing a 5% to 88% representation of citizens belonging to BME groups, comparisons between the visitor and catchment profiles suggest that these groups are still under-represented within Rosliston's visitor profile.

## Young people 16 and under

The on site surveys did not yield responses from children under 16 years of age, as parental permission would have been required to interview them. However, adult respondents were asked who they visited the sites with and whether they had children in their household. The findings highlight that there were significant increases in family visits, particularly in the site based grouping. The survey results also show an increase in the use of the play areas that were put in place specifically to attract children.

# 6. Results: project evaluation with users and non-users

This part of the evaluation involved action research in which the researchers participated in shared activities on site with project users and non-users. These shared activities were followed by a recorded discussion. During the discussions the respondents were able to suggest improvements to the projects and identify how barriers that prevented them from getting involved might be addressed. Project staff joined most of these sessions and were able to start thinking about how some of the issues raised by respondents might be tackled. Staff were also able to provide respondents with more information about the projects and sites. As such, these research encounters also provided an opportunity for outreach work with target groups.

## 6.1 Demographic profile of focus group participants

114[25] people participated in the qualitative research, involving an activity followed by a focus group discussion[26].  Activities included going for a walk, a health walk, or cycling. Of the participants, fifty nine had been involved in the Active England projects (users) and forty three had no previous involvement (non-users). More women than men were involved in the focus groups (see Figure 5 below).

**Figure 5: Gender profile of respondents involved in qualitative research**



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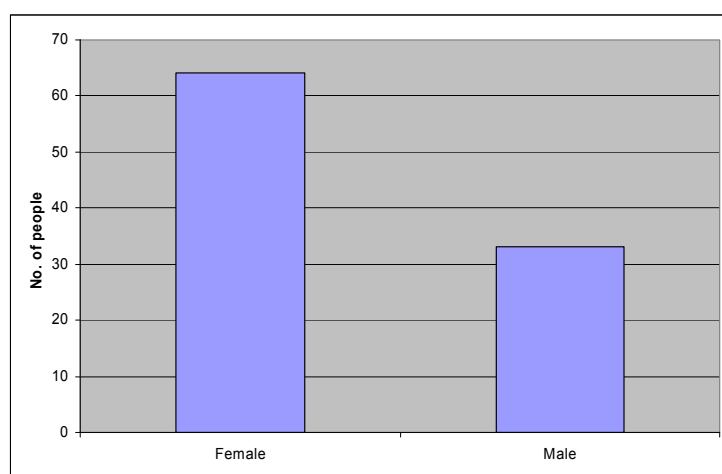
[25] Demographic details were collected from participants. However we only have these details for 102 out of the 114 participants (some people declined to fill in forms, while a few had to leave before filling in a form). Not all numbers in the figures add up to 102 (out of the 114 total) as many people only completed part of the questionnaire asking for demographic data (Appendix 3).

Figure 6 shows that the number of participants in the qualitative research phase was fairly evenly split between the five sites.

**Figure 6: Distribution of qualitative research respondents across the sites**
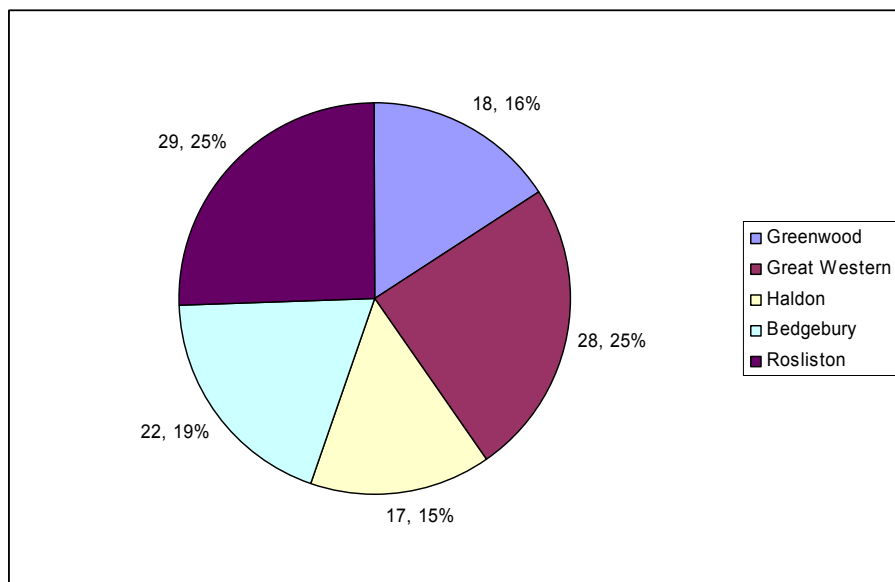


In terms of the target groups, Figure 7 shows the number of relevant respondents interviewed at the community and the site based groupings. Only 3 respondents did not fall within an Active England target group, and many belonged to more than one target group. The fact that many respondents fell into more than one target group  (i.e. being male, over 45 years of age and on a low income) presented problems for the evaluation because it made it difficult to isolate a given project's impact on a specific target group. Furthermore, some of the user groups did not consist of people from a single target group. For example, the Bedgebury health walkers consisted of a variety of people including the disabled, those on low income, those over 45 years of age and women. This also made it difficult to focus the discussions on issues specifically pertaining to a given target group.

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[26]  40 young mountain bikers aged 13-35 were studied at Bedgebury as part of a PhD research project. Findings from the study are included in the Bedgebury project report.

**Figure 7: Distribution of qualitative research respondents within target groups**
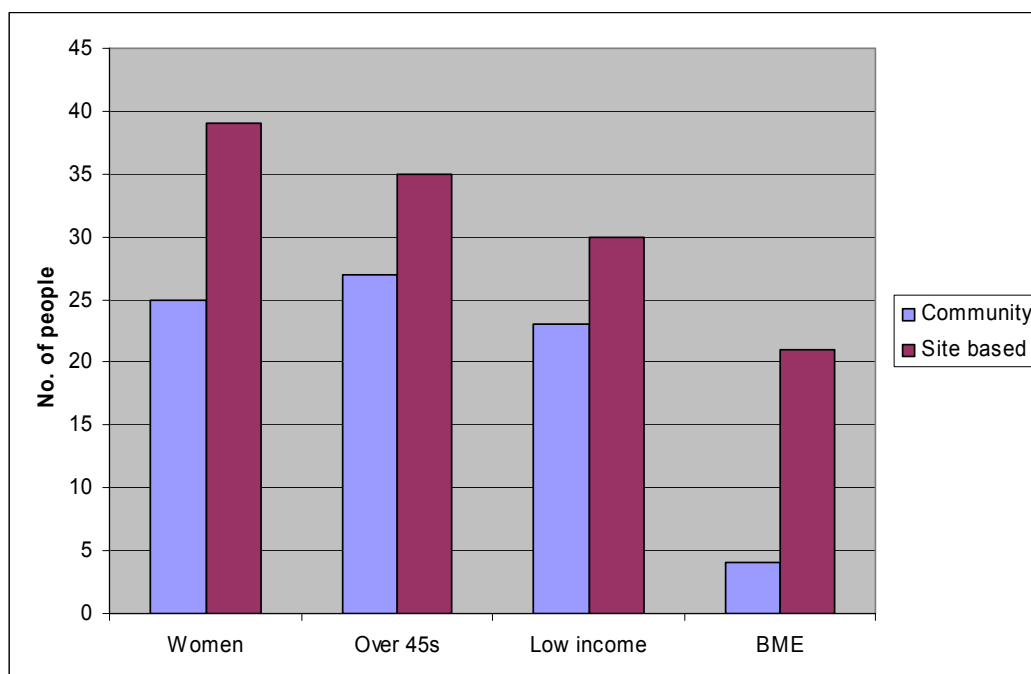


A range of ages were represented in the qualitative research with users and non-users. More people from younger age groups were represented in the site based grouping, whilst older people had a higher representation amongst respondents in the community grouping (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Age range of focus group participants**
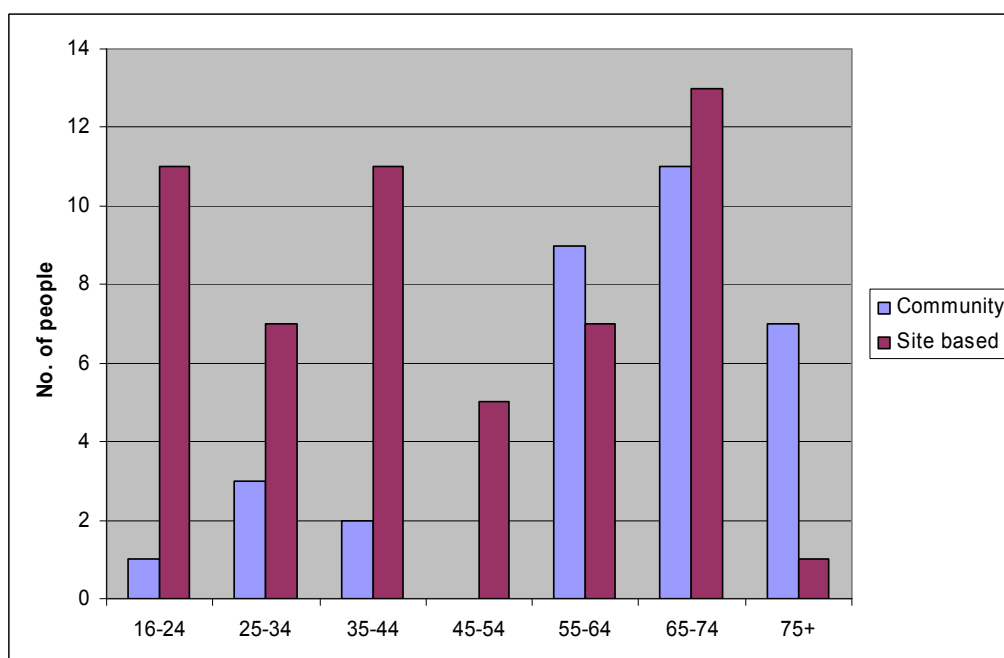
The majority of respondents were either retired (58%), working part time (12%), or were a parent or carer (9%) (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Occupation of participants**
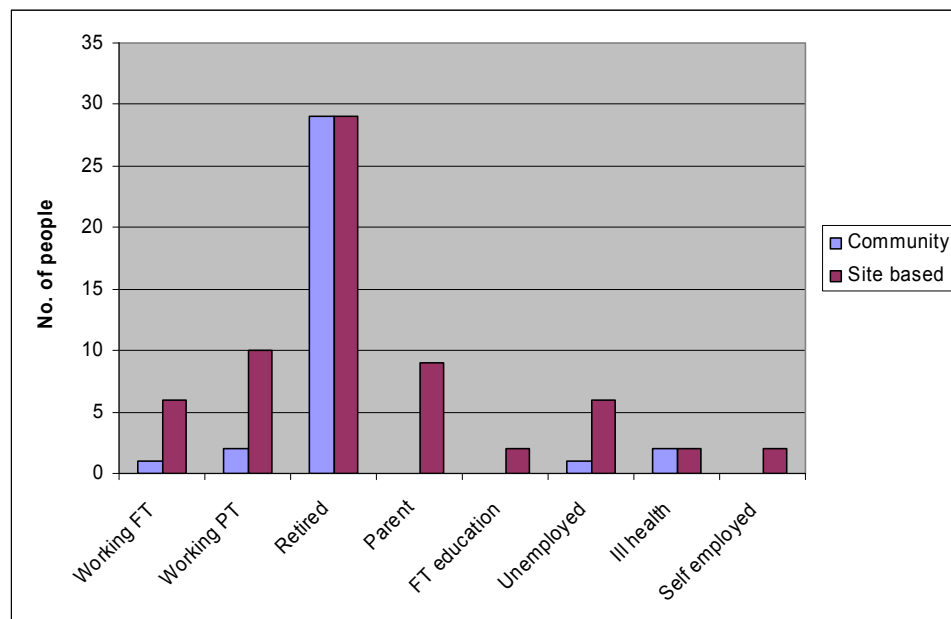


The majority of respondents (75 people) classed themselves as white, whilst 25 people were Asian / Asian British or Black / Black British (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Ethnic background of participants**
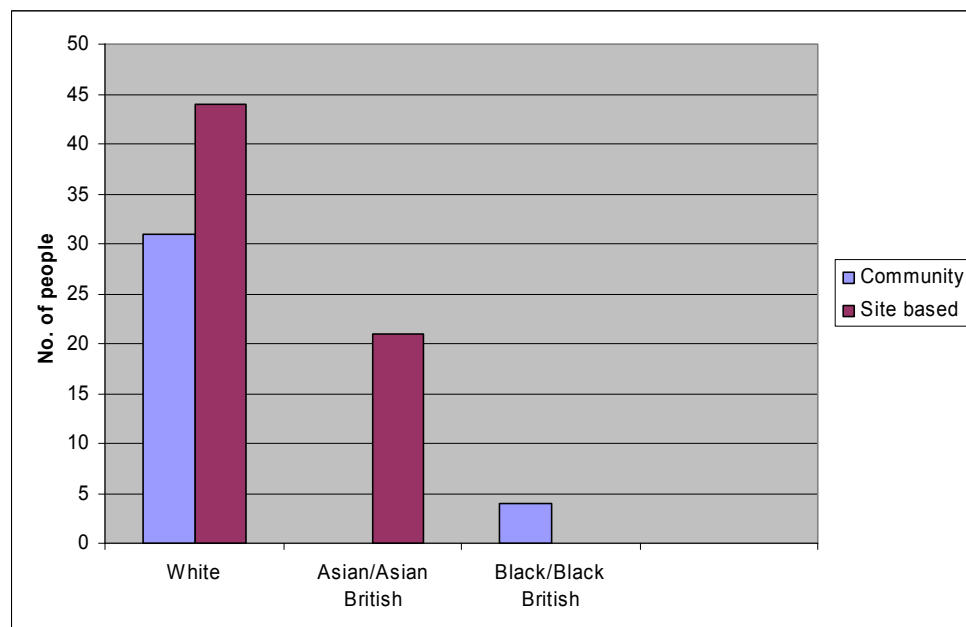
The majority of respondents (76%) were from low income households (defined for the purposes of this report as 20K or less per household). 38% of those had a household income of under 10K per annum[27] (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Household income of participants**
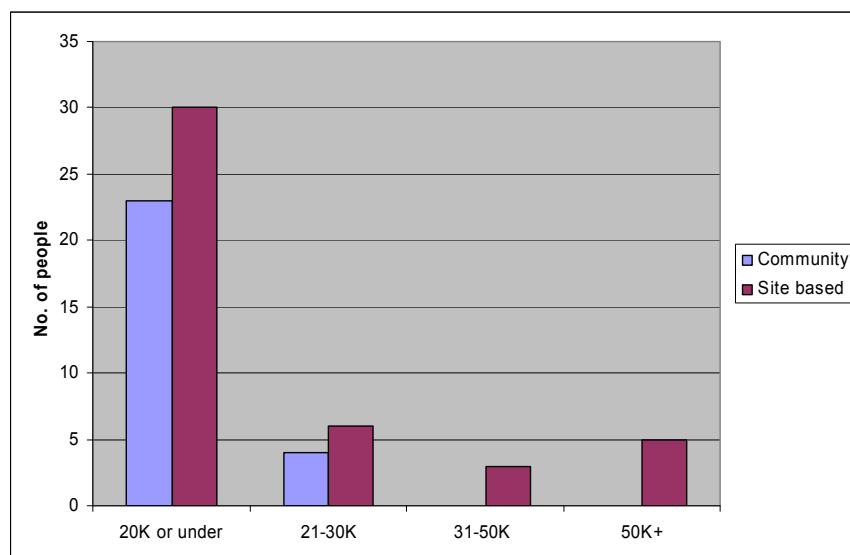


Figure 12 shows the number of days in which participants were physically active. The results show that the proportion of people meeting the '5 days a week or more' recommendation were fairly evenly split between users and non-users.

**Figure 12: Frequency of physical activity**



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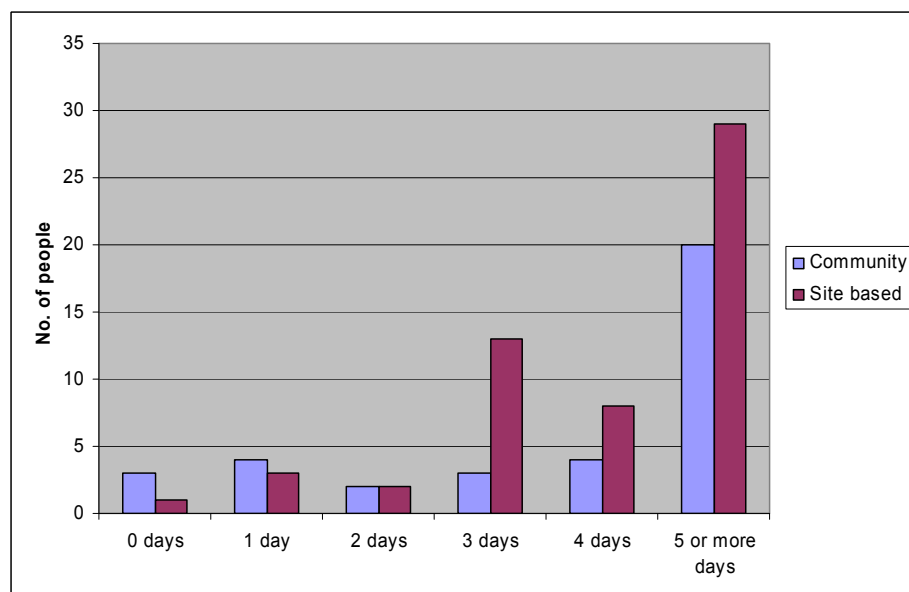
[27] One definition used by the Office of National Statistics of low income is where a household is below 60 per cent of median disposable income. In 2002/03, 17 per cent of the population lived in households with income below this level (£194 per week); this is just over £10K per annum.

Users of the projects were more likely to make frequent visits to green space than non-users (Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Frequency of visits to green space**
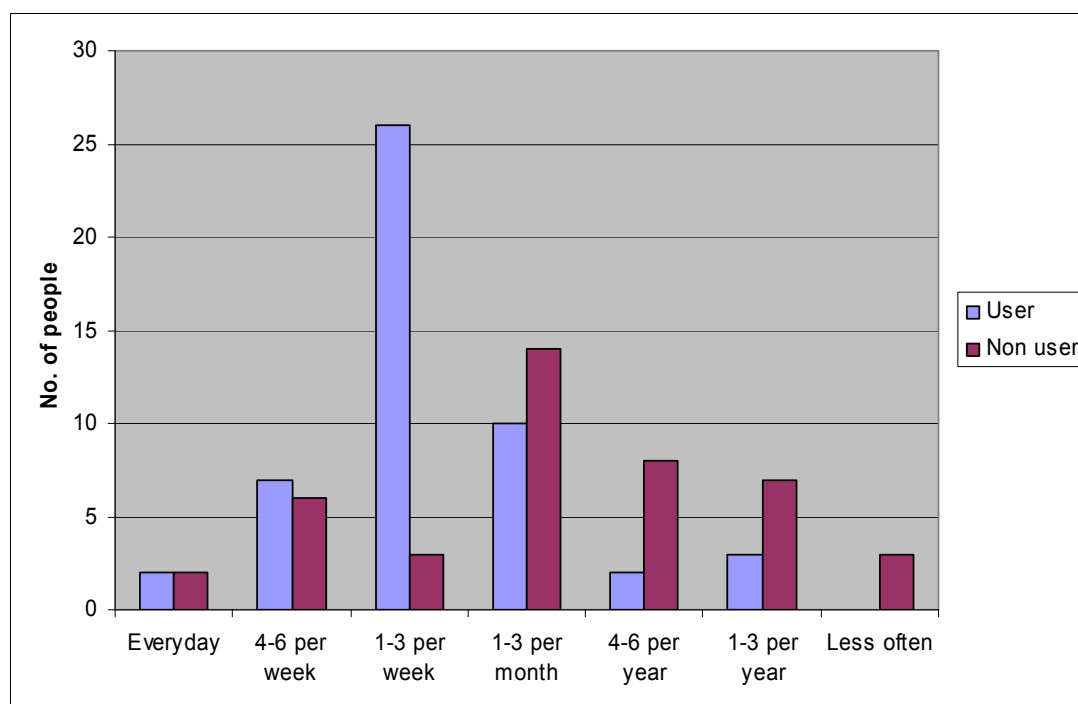


## 6.2 Motivations to participate

The two main motivations for users to get involved in the projects were:
1) to meet and socialise with other people
2) to become more active and improve health.

Socialising was a key motivation for all groups, but was particularly apparent amongst those who were new to an area, those who did not have a partner, older participants, and women. Some participants were acting on a recommendation made by their doctor or nurse to undertake more physical activity, whilst others realised that they needed to remain mobile as a way of tackling minor health problems. Being encouraged to join the projects or finding out about them from a friend were also important motivating factors. Participating in a regular, organised activity was often critically important in motivating people to continue their involvement. Respondents stressed the attraction of not having to think about where to go themselves. They liked the fact that they just needed to turn up on time at a particular location and join in. This was particularly important for those who had busy lives and those who lacked the confidence to access woodlands and green spaces alone. For some user groups, the group itself had begun to take on equal significance to the activity.

*'This is a commitment which actually gets you to do a specific walk'* (over 50s walk group, Greenwood CF).
*'It keeps your spirits up because you're meeting people and getting out'* (Health walk group, Great Western CF).

## 6.3 Benefits of participating in the project activities

The 'benefit themes' outlined in Table 15 below relate to the benefits cited by users and non-users in relation to project activities (users) and general contact with woodlands and green spaces (users and non-users). The table (2nd column) also provides a summary of respondents' own references to each theme, drawn from accounts of personal experiences of accessing woodlands and green spaces provided during the focus group discussions. The themes show that both users and non-users derive a wide range of benefits from activities within woodlands and green spaces. Although not directly involved in the Active England projects, many non-users made visits to woodlands and green spaces (Figure 13 above) and they also cited a number of benefits that they derive from these visits.

A key distinction between users and non-users appears in relation to the benefit theme 'Social networks and socialising'. This benefit was much more in evidence amongst users, who stressed how highly they valued being involved in the regular, facilitated group activities provided by each of the projects. Being part of a group was often critically important to individual respondents and was often the factor that initially motivated them to join, and encouraged them to maintain their regular attendance.

> *'I think it's a good way, as you say, of meeting people. It's not the same when you go for a walk on your own; you haven't got anyone to talk to. So if you come at least you are meeting other people'* (Health walk group, Bedgebury).

This was particularly important for those who had been bereaved, lacked a partner, or did not feel confident to access a site alone, or for those who were worried about feeling 'out of place' visiting alone.

The theme 'wider life impacts' was also primarily relevant to users, who stated that being involved in the projects had led to the adoption of healthier lifestyles and an increase in physical activity levels. The theme 'achievement and learning' was again most relevant to the user groups as they derived benefits by learning from project staff about health issues and about the site and its environment. Some users also stated that they had developed specific skills, such as improved cycling/mountain biking technique.

**Table 15: Key benefit themes**

| Benefit themes | Respondents' references to benefit themes | Users that identified with this theme | Non-users that identified with this theme[28] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal childhood use of green space, and interest in opportunities for children in nature | • Adults own experiences and issues for their children of contact with nature.<br>• Childhood use and experience<br>• Memories<br>• Family experiences<br>• Play – climbing trees and building dens<br>• Children can expand energy and let off steam | Bedgebury health walkers.<br>Haldon women mountain bikers. | Great Western CF Women and children and Dads Group .<br>Rosliston Pakistani Women |
| Nature – outdoors, senses and aesthetics | • Being outdoors<br>• Older people, women with children and unemployed can get out and not be cooped up.<br>• Fresh air<br>• Scenery<br>• Variety<br>• Woodland can screen things visually, keep noise down.<br>• Seeing, feeling, smelling<br>• Changing seasons<br>• Being away from traffic | Haldon women mountain bikers.<br>Bedgebury health walkers.<br>Greenwood over 50s walkers.<br>Rosliston Asian male health walkers. | Great Western CF women and children<br>Haldon over 55s groups<br>Bedgebury low income group.<br>Greenwood over 45s. |
| Social networks and socialising (relevant primarily to users) | • Joining an existing health walk gave people confidence to walk<br>• Socialising often motivated people to continue with an activity<br>• Allowed people to go to places they might not otherwise<br>• Meeting people you may not otherwise meet e.g. older people, younger people, BME groups<br>• Support and advice from staff/instructors e.g. walk leaders | Bedgebury health walkers.<br>Haldon women mountain bikers.<br>Greenwood over 50s walkers.<br>Rosliston Asian male health walkers.<br>Rosliston over 50s cyclists. | |

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[28] Non-users who identified with the themes in this table spoke from their experience of visiting the site on the day and also from experience of visiting other woodlands and green spaces.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Health – physical and mental** | • Keeping mobile through activity<br>• Benefits of physical activity<br>• Energised<br>• Mental well-being – relaxed, therapeutic<br>• Stress reduction<br>• Breathe better<br>• Feel healthy<br>• Keep active | Bedgebury health walkers.<br>Haldon women mountain bikers.<br>Great Western Community Forest health walkers.<br>Greenwood over 50s walkers.<br>Rosliston Asian male health walkers.<br>Rosliston over 50s cyclists. | Great Western Community Forest women and children group.<br>Haldon over 55s groups.<br>Rosliston Asian women.<br>Bedgebury low income group. |
| **Achievement and learning (relevant primarily to users)** | • Sense of achievement<br>• Accomplishment<br>• Developing skills/abilities e.g. volunteer leaders, on mountain bikes<br>• Gaining confidence (related to previous experiences)<br>• Flexibility – you can go at your own pace | Bedgebury Health walkers.<br>Haldon women mountain bikers.<br>Great Western CF health walkers | |
| **Enjoyment** | • Adventure<br>• Fun<br>• Escapism<br>• Having a laugh<br>• Sharing enjoyment<br>• Exhilarated | Haldon Women mountain bikers.<br>Bedgebury health walkers.<br>Rosliston Asian male health walkers.<br>Rosliston over 50s cyclists | Haldon over 55s group.<br>Great Western CF Dad's group |
| **Wider life impacts (relevant primarily to users)** | • Leading on to further exercise e.g. race for life, extended walking.<br>• New friends and networks.<br>• Leaving the car behind or leaving car further away than usual and walking further.<br>• Training to be a volunteer health walk leader. | Bedgebury health walkers.<br>Haldon Women mountain bikers.<br>Great Western CF health walkers<br>Bedgebury Health walkers. | |

Table 16 is an adaption of Table 15 and shows the key benefits experienced by the different target groups. Under 16s and disabled people are not included here as no relevant data from the qualitative research was not gathered from these target groups.

**Table 16: Key benefit themes for each target group**

| Target group | Respondents' (users and non users) references to benefit themes |
|---|---|
| Women | <ul><li>Personal childhood use of green space and interest in opportunities for children in nature</li><li>Nature – outdoors, sensory experience and aesthetics</li><li>Social networks and socialising</li><li>Health physical and mental</li><li>Achievement and learning</li><li>Enjoyment</li><li>Wider life impacts</li></ul> |
| Over 45s | <ul><li>Nature – outdoors, sensory experience and aesthetics</li><li>Social networks and socialising</li><li>Health physical and mental</li><li>Achievement and learning</li><li>Enjoyment</li><li>Wider life impacts</li></ul> |
| Low income | <ul><li>Personal childhood use of green space and interest in opportunities for children in nature</li><li>Nature – outdoors, senses and aesthetics</li><li>Health physical and mental</li></ul> |
| BME groups | <ul><li>Personal childhood use of green space and interest in opportunities for children in nature</li><li>Nature – outdoors, sensory experience and aesthetics</li><li>Social networks and socialising</li><li>Health physical and mental</li><li>Enjoyment</li></ul> |

# 6.4 Attitudes to health and physical exercise

The qualitative research shows that for many users, involvement in project activities has translated into generally more active lifestyles and positive changes in attitudes towards healthy exercise. The majority of users and non-users thought that health issues were important and were generally aware of the health benefits of physical exercise. Mental benefits of exercise and being in woodlands and green spaces were also widely recognised by users and non-users alike. Many people thought that activities around the house, such as housework and gardening, counted in terms of having a positive impact on health, however housework in particular was not considered as pleasant as using green space. For those referred by health professionals, together with some of the older health walkers, moderate physical activity was useful in helping them maintain or lose weight and also helped with various health complaints such as mobility issues, arthritis and back pain. For those in full- or part-time employment, finding the time to exercise was particularly an issue. Members of the Pakistani women's group (non-users) at Rosliston, in particular, found it difficult to find the time because of child care duties. However, they did describe themselves as reasonably active through housework, gardening and 'running round after the kids'.

*'I work and I spend a lot of time in front of the computer so it's really really hard to work out with 2 daughters.  Come evenings I'm cooking and doing things like that and I don't get out, I can't physically find the time. My one day off is Fridays and here I am!'*(Health walk group, Bedgebury).

## 6.5 Attitudes to green space and woodlands

Data obtained through national surveys, such as the Public Opinion of Forestry Survey, and survey research undertaken as part of Forest Research's study of 'Forestry for People' in Scotland have demonstrated that that those who have visited woodlands in the previous twelve months are more likely to gain greater benefit and enjoyment from, and are more likely to appreciate them, than those who had not visited in the previous twelve months (Edwards et al, 2008; Forestry Commission, 2007).

Through our in-depth action research with users and non-users of the Active England woodland projects we have found that those who visit woodlands and green spaces more often tend to express a broader range of benefits, and to convey more detailed and emphatic descriptions of those benefits than those who visit less frequently. Users, for example,  who were likely to use woodlands and green spaces more frequently than non-users, talked about their enjoyment of woodlands and green spaces, emphasising in particular the benefits of getting out into the fresh air and enjoying seasonal changes in the natural environment.

However, a more general appreciation of woodlands and green spaces was not limited to users. The low income non-user group at Bedgebury, for example, talked animatedly about the peaceful and quiet of the site and particularly enjoyed not being able to hear traffic.

> *'It's nice and peaceful to be honest (agreement from the group) you can't actually hear traffic anywhere'* (Low income and young people's group, Bedgebury).

All of female respondents expressed some concern about personal safety issues when visiting woods and green spaces alone. This does corroborate a number of other research findings concerning women and green spaces (Burgess, 1995, O'Brien, 2004, Weldon et al. 2007). Many stated that issues of safety were a barrier to visiting more often alone, while for others it was more a question of adjusting behaviour in accordance with an awareness of personal safety issues. Of all the respondents, the Dads group (non-users) at Great Western CF were those who visited local green spaces least frequently, although some stated that they sometimes took their children to play areas in or near parks.

For those at Bedgebury, Rosliston and Haldon, in particular, there was an appreciation of the attractiveness and scenic qualities of the sites. Participants also talked about the size

of the sites being beneficial in providing a variety of interesting paths and routes, enabling them to get away from other users if they wanted to.

> *'It's a very good forest, it is much much more accessible and you can tell by the number of people who come up here, whether it's for cycling or whatever they do, it has massively improved'* (Women mountain bike group, Haldon).

## 6.6 Barriers identified by target groups

Although the users identified some barriers to accessing woodlands or green space in general, they found that the Active England project activities had greatly helped to reduce those barriers. For example, many women alluded to feeling safer participating in led walks as they did not have to worry about getting lost or about personal safety issues. For the women mountain bikers at Haldon, going out as part of a group helped them to try new routes they might not have attempted on their own.

The barriers (Table 17) to more frequent use of woodlands and green space identified by non-users are similar to those reported in previous research (O'Brien and Tabbush, 2004; Weldon et al. 2007; Open Space Research Centre, 2008). Physical and structural barriers included not having convenient public transport links to the sites (within walking distance from home). This was an issue for the young low income group from Hastings who visited Bedgebury and also for some of the women in Swindon. For the Dads group in Swindon the barriers seemed particularly difficult to overcome as these men suffered from a range of problems, in terms of deprivation, health, low income, mobility, and transport. The extent of this 'embedded' deprivation means that groups such as this are especially hard to reach and engage with, and the chances of bringing about sustained behavioural change are probably limited. However, the men did describe enjoying their day out and project staff reported that this did lead on to some taking their families to green spaces afterwards.

Psychological and perceptual barriers for the non-users revolved around issues of personal safety, particularly for women if they were on their own or only with their children. A lot of the women recognised that the likelihood of something actually happening to them was low. However, due to the high media profile given to stories about attacks in the outdoor environment, they found it difficult to dismiss these thoughts and this affected their choices of places to visit. For those respondents with previous experiences of visiting woods and green spaces where there was evidence of problems such as litter, anti-social behaviour, or drug taking, this led to greater feelings of concern and fear for personal safety.

Some barriers were more of an issue to certain groups of people. An understanding of the barriers experienced by particular groups can potentially inform managers and project staff about the needs of specific groups and help them to tailor community

engagement work to meet these needs. For example, young people from low income households in Hastings described an incident where they had been moved on by the police. They explained that they now feel discouraged from visiting the green space in question. They also found the financial cost of visiting green spaces prohibitive.

> *'Yeah most of us don't really exactly have a lot of money between us. To get up here is probably one of the hardest things to actually do. Apart from that we could come up here any time but it's just transport really'* (Low income and young people group, Bedgebury).

Black and Minority Ethnic non-users stated that lack of confidence and a lack of cultural affinity with visiting woodlands and green spaces were significant factors that prevented them from visiting more often. For example, one young Pakistani woman described not feeling confident to use public transport alone, a feeling partly attributable to the cultural practice of young women being accompanied by a chaperone, but also referring to a deeply felt lack of confidence. Dogs and irresponsible dog owners were particularly an issue for the Pakistani womens group. This group also identified how language and not having appropriate information in different languages was an important factor. The group suggested that the male members of their community needed to be introduced to the site and that this would be the best way of enabling women and children to access Rosliston. The Asian male walkers at Rosliston discussed barriers for the wider Sheikh community, particularly women and children, whom they felt might find the site intimidating. They stressed the need for group activities to engender a sense of security, confidence and belonging. In the site surveys (Figure 3) distance to the sites, lack of facilities, lack of time and weather emerged as key barriers for many site visitors.

**Table 17: Barriers to accessing woodlands, green spaces and the countryside for target groups**

| Target group | Barriers to accessing woodlands and green spaces |
|---|---|
| **Low income target group**<br><br>Bedgebury young low income group<br>Great Western CF Dads group | • Lack of transport.<br>• Health problems and restricted mobility either physically or mentally.<br>• Money issues (cost of transport/buses, cost of paying for treats for children e.g. ice creams etc.<br>• Lack of information, knowing where to go and what to expect, lack of sign posting on site.<br>• Embedded deprivation restricting social and actual mobility and motivation.<br>• Being moved on by police (adolescents) |
| **Women target group**<br><br>Great Western CF women and children<br>Great Western Forest School women | • Lack of transport<br>• Loss of green space to development – business or housing<br>• Lack of facilities for children e.g. good play areas, car free roads.<br>• Safety concerns for themselves and for children.<br>• Work patterns and time constraints<br>• Littering – rubbish, needles used for drugs. |
| **BME target group**<br><br>Rosliston Pakistani women<br>Rosliston Asian Male health walkers | • Lack of transport<br>• Wet weather, bad weather<br>• Lack of information, knowing where to go and what to expect, lack of sign posting on site.<br>• Lack of awareness that the site/s were public access sites. Minimal cultural norms of accessing these sorts of spaces<br>• Confidence – to feel able to access a site, to feel that one does not stand out from other users. |
| **Over 45s target group**<br><br>Greenwood over 45s<br>Greenwood over 50s walkers<br>Haldon over 55s group | • Lack of transport<br>• Confidence – to feel able to access a site, to feel that one does not stand out from other users.<br>• Wet weather, bad weather<br>• Lack of information, knowing where to go and what to expect, lack of sign posting on site.<br>• Safety concerns for themselves and for children.<br>• Littering – rubbish, needles used for drugs.<br>• Being on own e.g. recently bereaved or divorced or lacking a partner. |

# 6.7 Areas for improvement identified by users

The majority of users valued their involvement in the projects highly. However, when asked to give suggestions about improvements to the sites, or to project delivery, they did provide some valuable feedback. For example, the Greenwood over 50s group felt that the Bestwood Country Park lacked facilities, particularly for younger people. They suggested that a place to have a cup of tea would also make the site much more attractive as a place to visit. The women mountain bike riders at Haldon suggested a small area with bumps and jumps to improve their technical skills. They felt that this sort of 'skills zone' would be a useful addition, bridging the gap between the trails currently provided for beginners and extreme riders. The health walkers at Great Western CF felt that more publicity for the health walks would be useful to raise awareness of the project and to draw in more participants.

*'I don't think it's been advertised enough for us to see. Most of us get the free paper and I wish they would have half a page highlighting a walk in the Community Forest'* (Health walk group, Great Western).

The over 50s cyclists at Rosliston felt that sometimes the rental bikes available on site were not in a particularly good condition.

# 6.8 Site representatives' views

Interviews were conducted with project staff at all sites except Greenwood Community Forest, as the project worker left the project before she could be interviewed. Project staff talked about the key delivery successes and challenges of the projects.

## Key successes

### Activities and facilities

Project staff from the site based grouping felt that the projects had been extremely successful in attracting more visitors to the sites. This was particularly the case at Bedgebury, Haldon and Rosliston where the extensive improvements to infrastructure and equipment had been hugely successful in terms of attracting new visitors. Mountain biking and cycling trails at both Haldon and Bedgebury have been very popular, as has been the case with the play areas at both sites, which are largely responsible for the significant increase in the number of family visits. At Rosliston new equipment such as laser combat, archery and climbing equipment has proved extremely popular with younger people. Forest School was particularly important at Great Western CF and the health walks and other facilitated activities within both CF projects have been very popular.

## Outreach work and volunteering

All project staff interviewed stressed the importance and value of outreach work, which was seen as critical to accessing the Active England target groups and to providing a communication link with potential users and enabling the tailoring of services to meet the specific needs of some groups. Volunteers were also seen as pivotal to the successful and sustained delivery of services and led activities. This was particularly the case at Rosliston where project staff stated that without the substantial volunteer base built up during the project, it would have been impossible to deliver the range and frequency of organised activities. In this sense, volunteers provided a vital project delivery mechanism, allowing project staff to spend some time on other elements of the projects, such as community engagement and outreach.

## Sustainability

Project staff at the site based projects were happy to report that the investments in infrastructure and equipment will help to ensure service delivery in the long term, significantly increasing the chances of sustaining the projects' positive impact at the sites. This was particularly stressed by staff at Rosliston who felt that the equipment and infrastructure improvements will be available to groups beyond the three year life of the projects and are likely to be used and appreciated long into the future. These investments in the site based projects have also led to increased revenue, with more people paying to hire equipment, paying for car parking, and spending money in the café.

# Key challenges

Site staff working on the Active England Woodland Projects identified a number of key challenges that can be grouped under the following headings:

- developing and running projects
- long term planning and sustainability
- monitoring and evaluation
- working with target groups
- dealing with success and/or problems.

## Developing and running projects

When funding is won for a project there is often a specific deadline in which capital funding should be spent. For the site based projects money had to be spent quickly in developing on site infrastructure and this was a challenge for all three sites (Bedgebury, Rosliston and Haldon).

Running the projects was also challenging in terms of staff recruitment and the accommodation of project delivery within existing work and service delivery commitments. The delivery of outreach and community engagement work streams also caused some concerns as this often lay outside the skills-base and experience of existing

staff. For example, representatives from two sites described concerns about outreach work raised by existing staff who were feeling over-stretched just delivering the on site services and dealing with the impact of large increases in visitor numbers. Time for planning, business development, community engagement and outreach were seen as very important, but were things that staff found difficult to achieve because of other pressures on their time.

Relationships with the main funder, Sport England, varied across the sites, depending to some extent on how the regional Sport England representatives viewed woodland based activity. This was somewhat outside the experience of Sport England, which has focused more on community recreation and sports centres, football and rugby pitches, than on natural spaces. Delivery staff encountered some difficulties in discussions about their projects and agreeing a satisfactory approach to monitoring numbers involved in activities and total numbers visiting the sites. For example, it is more difficult to determine the total throughput of people in woodlands with multiple entry points than to a sports centre with a single main entrance.

## Long term planning and sustainability

Projects which last for 2 to 3 years and which are only funded for this period can sometimes lack long term planning and can struggle to maintain service delivery once the funding runs out. Some of the Active England Woodland Projects, particularly Bedgebury and Haldon, do appear to be sustainable, with some project staff being employed permanently or gaining new positions within the organisations running each of the sites. The Active Swindon workers have amalgamated with Swindon Borough Council's sports development team to carry on activities in the area and, although the project officer's post at Great Western CF came to an end, alternative funding has been secured to create a new post that will take forward healthy woodland activities.

Project staff clearly identified the need for internal support to advise not only on how to develop projects and gain funding, but also to provide support and input when funding is secured to ensure that the positive impact of project funding and delivery can be sustained in the long term.

## Monitoring and evaluation

The site representatives did not feel that they always received support from HAB who were overseeing the monitoring and evaluation (M+E) for the whole of the Active England programme. Staff also felt that training in monitoring and evaluation would have been useful to help them capture data that could inform their delivery of the projects. However, staff did find meetings and workshops that allowed them to share their experiences with other projects very useful; these were set up by HAB or Sport England. Staff meetings also occurred through the FC's staff development network. Time for M+E was often said to be an issue and opportunities to collect anything other than

basic, essential data were rare. At Bedgebury the existing permissions[29] system has been adapted so that data for the project could be collected. Through the projects the Forest Research evaluators were able to work with project staff to take forward the M+E and add value to the ongoing process of site based data collection. Project staff also highlighted the fact that there is sometimes a mismatch between M+E data required by the funders and data that is of use and relevance to site managers and staff.

## Working with target groups

Quite a few of the project teams viewed the target groups set by Sport England as very broad.  For some, this was seen as an advantage because it allowed them to target the groups they felt were most appropriate for their project. However, there was some concern that targeting certain groups might not necessarily or easily map on to the expectations and needs of the wider forest user base. For example, setting up a womens or BME walking group might exclude others who wanted to join and might mean that the group did not mix with other site visitors, potentially reinforcing isolation rather than aiding integration.

A key finding of this research is that project staff found it difficult to find time to undertake extensive outreach work as they were so busy delivering and running projects on site. This was something many regretted not having the time to do as they recognised the importance of focused and targeted outreach. Being able to target appropriate groups could also be an issue. Rosliston staff, for example, found it hard to identify autonomous disability groups in the area which is more a reflection on the status of local and regional organisations, rather than on the success of project design or delivery.

## Dealing with success or problems

For those projects that successfully engaged large numbers of people, coping with the resulting increase in visitor numbers sometimes proved difficult. Rosliston, Haldon and Bedgebury, in particular, all experienced large increases in visitor numbers which led to staff capacity issues. Under-staffing was particularly an issue at Rosliston, where existing site staff delivered the project. At Bedgebury, the huge increase in visitor numbers led project staff to question whether the new visitor centre and café should have been larger. Plans have been put in place to address this by moving the bike hire facility into the car park and allowing the café area to expand within the visitor centre. The sheer volume of visitors has also impacted on the time staff have had to adequately monitor and evaluate their projects. The key message from staff is that planning and funding for

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[29] The FC has a permissions procedure on the public forest estate in which groups wanting to carry out particular activities e.g. a fun run, group activity etc. need to seek permission so that any safety and logistical issues can be managed appropriately.  Through this scheme numbers of groups can be recorded and the activities they engage in.

adequate numbers of front line delivery staff are critical to the successful delivery of these popular projects and sites.

# 7. Discussion and lessons learnt

At the site based projects and CF projects the normal activities of the organisations carried on such as site management, raising awareness, encouraging people to use woodlands and green spaces and working in partnership with other organisations to meet key objectives. The Active England funding allowed extra activities, events and infrastructure to be put in place and, in some cases, additional staff to be employed. From this research we have provided details of the changes that have taken place for each project, who has been engaged and how, and where there remains potential for further engagement of those groups who remain persistently under-represented. This research has highlighted some examples of considerable delivery successes for individuals and groups for whom the projects have not only facilitated increased physical activity, but have also provided a framework for more general positive outcomes, such as a move towards healthier lifestyles, reduced social isolation, and increased levels of confidence. The research reveals that involvement in physical activity in woodlands can act as a gateway to a range of personal and social benefits.

Engaging people in physical activity through the Active England projects has had an impact on people physiologically. Many project respondents in the focus groups described improvements in fitness, mobility and weight loss, for example. There was also evidence of positive psychological impacts, with some testifying to increased levels of confidence, improvements in general well-being and the joy and sense of belonging that comes from meeting new people and becoming part of an organised group. Our research has highlighted that the physical activity itself is often not the central feature of people's enjoyment. For many, the activity is valued because it facilitates meeting other people, making friends and sharing the experience of being outside in pleasant, green surroundings. This has implications for marketing and encouraging people to become more active. Recent research reported in the New Scientist suggests that because people's behaviour is strongly influenced by others, ideas for marketing or promoting healthy behaviours should be developed through localised social groups which then influence others around them (Bond, 2009).

Recreational walking and cycling, play areas and play equipment emerge as the most popular activities in the Active England projects we have evaluated. These activities have attracted more family groups and therefore under 16s to the sites. Also, these types of activities appeal to a broad range of people of different ages and are likely to attract people from the target groups more than traditional sports. Unfortunately, these activities will not be included in the 'one million indicator' of Sport England (see Section 2) and we see this as regrettable. Participants especially valued undertaking these activities in wooded and green spaces. The fact that people enjoyed their contact with nature can be a key motivator for their continued participation in healthy exercise, in a way that going to a gym or a class in a community hall may not.

Infrastructure and equipment at the site based projects led to large increases in visitor numbers at Bedgebury, Haldon and Rosliston. However, not all increases were from the Active England target groups. Furthermore, the research shows that many visitors are not exercising to the recommended levels. However, the focused outreach work with target groups was able to reach people and groups who had not previously used the sites or those who had not participated in these types of activities before. This type of engagement is critical in attracting people with little previous experience of green spaces. For these people, the initial introduction to the outdoors can lead to major changes in lifestyle and attitudes to health and exercise. A few will go on to challenge themselves through activities, such as sponsored walks or runs. Others may become volunteer activity leaders, gaining new skills, confidence and self esteem.

Organised 'led activities' have proved critical in reaching target groups and encouraging people to participate on a regular basis. These have provided people with social networks and the confidence to access woodlands and green space and to try out new activities for the first time. These have been highly valued by participants who reported a wide range of physical and mental health benefits. It is often thought that led walks or other led activities will lead on to independent activity. While this can happen, it does not always take place. People in this research described the importance of the activities being led and organised. This was linked to the social contact people found so important; for some, exercising alone is just not something they want to do.

'Facilitated access' in which specific groups were brought to the sites and accompanied on guided activities provided valuable, introductory 'taster' sessions to those with no previous experience of the sites. This form of direct facilitation emerged as a vital mechanism for engaging hard to reach groups. The qualitative research itself also linked project staff with non-users, enabling staff to publicise the projects and invite groups back to the sites, either to enjoy them with family or friends, or to participate in one of the regular led activities.

## 7.1 Key recommendations

- **Led activities** and **'facilitated access'** are critical to reaching target groups and should be supported as they provide an invaluable form of assistance and encouragement to get involved. Led activities are less resource intensive than facilitated access in which people are brought to a site by minibus.

- **Led group activities** should be provided on a **regular basis** as they are more likely to bring about sustained changes in behaviour than one-off events that attract large audiences. Led activities are particularly important for those who lack familiarity with a site, confidence, or a partner, and those who need support.

- The high social value of **group activities** should be recognised in project design.

- **Volunteers** provide a **vital human resource** and need to be adequately valued and supported as they can ensure the **sustained impact** of projects.

- Adequate **staff allocation, training** and **support** is needed for targeted outreach and community engagement work if new users are to be encouraged to visit woodlands and green spaces.

- **Outreach work** needs to be **adequately funded** and the **time** needed to engage with hard to reach groups should be realistically factored into project design and delivery.

- Project staff need to identify **target groups** relevant to their sites and to put in place the necessary activities or infrastructure that will attract these groups. Project design should also involve a consideration of whether the needs of different target groups are compatible.

- Project staff need **support** and **adequate time allocation** for long term strategic and business planning, particularly when there are likely to be changes in the types and quantity of visitors.

- **Monitoring and evaluation** needs to be thought about and planned before projects are started so that appropriate data can not only be collected, but also used by operational staff to inform decisions about **ongoing project** and **wider service delivery**. Thorough and robust monitoring and evaluation can also highlight significant similarities and differences between impacts across a number of sites and projects, providing invaluable information for **policy** and **funding decision-making**.

- Project publicity, support and encouragement for under-represented groups should be targeted at the **local level**, using existing **community structures**. Word of mouth and communication through local social networks are critical to successful engagement.

- Led activities and events should be promoted as ways in which to **meet new people** in **pleasant natural surroundings**, as well as emphasising the benefits of sport and physical activity.

- **Partnership** working is needed with wider service provision to address those barriers that lie outside the immediate influence of a project's lead organisation.

## 7.2 Methodological reflections

The three stage methodological approach used for this evaluation was more appropriate for the site based projects than the Community Forest projects in which activities and events were more dispersed across a number of sites. This is primarily because it was easier to track changes through visitor surveys on a single site. It was also better suited to gaining an understanding of the impacts of regular led activities and improved infrastructure in the site based projects than the impacts of the one-off events that were a key dimension of the CFs' project delivery. However, it was not possible to capture the full impact of any of the projects with the time and resources available.

We argue that longitudinal research is important to see how sustainable the projects prove to be over the coming months and years. How long will the led activities carry on? Can the equipment and infrastructure be maintained in the long term? A useful addition to the research would have been to track individuals before and after their engagement in the projects. Although we were able to get an idea of changes in attitudes and behaviour through qualitative research respondents' accounts of how they had got involved and the ways in which they had benefited, we currently have no way of telling how long users will continue to participate in project activities and, therefore, how long the positive impacts of the projects will last.

Pedometers or accelerometers could have been used to track movement and activity levels over time. This can be a useful addition to other forms of data collection and can be used to assess whether people are undertaking enough activity to benefit their health (Lovell, 2009).

It has not always been easy or possible to separate out the specific impacts of the projects from the impacts of other 'non-project' activities taking place at the sites. Alternative methods could be used such as repeat questionnaires filled in by project participants. Participant diaries might also have been used to identify changes related to specific aspects of the project activities.

Site and project staff have limited time to commit to monitoring and evaluation. As such, they need guidance and support to explore what data can be collected and how to identify ways in which data can inform the ongoing process of project delivery. Developing appropriate recording systems is crucial to tracking not only changes in numbers of participants over time, but also the positive impacts of participation in order to adapt and deliver effective and appropriate services. This calls for ever-closer working relationships between researchers and delivery staff.

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**Appendix 1: Key performance indicators**

**(taken from Sport England: monitoring and evaluation guide for the Active England Learning Zone)**

KP 1 Participants – the total number of individuals taking part in your activity

KP 2 Throughput – the total number of participants in each activity or session totalled for the month

KP 3 Active Members – this is a count of the total number of active members of your club

KP 4 Organisation accreditation – accreditation of your project to a nationally recognised Quality Management System

KP 5 Coaches – this is the number of coaches, leaders or instructors involved in your project who have coached at least once in the past year

KP 6 Regular coaching – the number of coaches who provide at least one hour of coaching to your project each week, on average over the year

KP 7 Sports Qualifications – number of people gaining sports related qualifications. If an individual gains more than one qualification, count each time they do this

KP 8 Volunteers – number of volunteers involved in your project who have been active in your project at least once in the past year

KP 9 Regular volunteering – number of individuals volunteering for at least one hour each week on average over the year.

KP 10 Health referrals – number of individual referrals from a health professional to your project who take part until the end of the prescribed course

KP 11 Regular adult participation – number of adults who do 30 minutes of moderate physical exercise in a day and the number of days in a week they do this

KP 12 Regular youth participation – number of young people (under 16) who do 60 minutes of moderate physical exercise in a day and the number of days in a week they do this.

KP 13 Young people at risk – number of young people aged under 25 who are 'at risk' who take part in structured physical activity sessions lasting over 6 weeks or more.

KP 14 Non sports qualifications – number of individuals gaining non sport qualifications through involvement in your project.

KP 15 Jobs and training – number of individuals taking part in your project who move on to other education opportunities or employment.

KP 16 Sports Jobs – number of full time equivalent permanent (12 months or more) jobs created or safeguarded in your project or organisation by this Active England project.

KP 17 Funding – the further investment that your project has secured for sport and physical activity after it started.

**Appendix 2. Active England - Public Questionnaire 2006 (used at Bedgebury once the project was up and running)**

"Hello, I'm …….. (use 1st name) from the Forestry Commission. We want to find out more about the people who visit Bedgebury so that we can ensure that any changes that are made within the wood meet the needs of the people who use it. We are also interested in types and amounts of physical activity because we want to know how to encourage this.  Would you mind answering a few questions – it'll only take about five to ten minutes of your time? The information gathered for this survey will not be used for anything other than research purposes. None of the questions are compulsory and no ones name will be used to preserve anonymity.

**Date:** …………… **Time of day** ……………..        **Interviewer:** ……………………………………………

**Weather Conditions:** ………………………………………        **Interview Location**……………………………………..

_____

1.  **Please tick all the statements that are true for you:**

(a)     **I have visited Bedgebury before**                         O
(b)     **I am aware of the new facilities at Bedgebury**         O
(c)     **I am a member of the Friends of Bedgebury Pinetum**
        ***If yes is that:***
        ***Gold membership***                                     O
        ***Standard membership***                                 O
(d)     **The new activities and publicity for Bedgebury have made /will make me more**
         **active**                                                O
(e)     **This is my first visit to Bedgebury**                   O
     ***If you have ticked option (a) go to Question 2 and carry on through all the questions except 6***

      ***If you have ticked option (e) go to Question 5 then carry on through all the questions***

_____

*If you have visited Bedgebury before:*

**2. How often would you say that you visit Bedgebury?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Everyday | O |
| 4 to 6 times per week | O |
| 1 to 3 times per week | O |
| 1 to 3 times per month | O |
| 4 to 6 times a year | O |
| 1 to 3 times a year | O |
| Less often | O |

**3. Do you tend to visit the forest? (tick all that apply)**

| | |
|---|---|
| All year round | O |
| Spring | O |
| Summer | O |
| Autumn | O |
| Winter | O |

**4. What do you usually do in the forest?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Walking without a dog | O |
| Dog walking | O |
| Running | O |
| Mountain biking | O |
| Cycling | O |
| Horse riding | O |

*If this is your first visit:*

**6. What do you intend to do/did in the forest today?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Walking without a dog | O |
| Dog walking | O |
| Running | O |
| Mountain biking | O |
| Cycling | O |
| Horse riding | O |
| Attend special events | O |
| Picnic or barbecue | O |
| Children's play area | O |
| Nature watching | O |
| Orienteering | O |
| Photography | O |
| Visit the pinetum | O |

*All visitors:*

**7. Might you visit the forest again in the future?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | O |
| No | O |

| | |
|---|---|
| Attend special events | O |
| Picnic or barbecue | O |
| Children's play area | O |
| Nature watching | O |
| Orienteering | O |
| Photography | O |
| Visit the pinetum | O |
| Seeing something in the forest e.g. sculpture | O |
| Other (specify) | |

………………………………..……..

**5. How did you first hear about Bedgebury?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Publicity about the new Bedgebury facilities | O |
| Forestry Commission leaflets/ website | O |
| Local guide book/map | O |
| Tourist information centre | O |
| Library | O |
| Sports centre | O |
| Advert in press/on television | O |
| Newspaper article | O |
| Programme on television or Radio | O |
| Friend/relation | O |
| Road signs | O |

**8. Who did you come to the forest with? (include numbers in party, including person being interviewed, on dotted line for family, friends and group)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Family | ………… | O |
| Partner | ………… | O |
| Friends | ………… | O |
| An organised group | | O |
| On your own | ………… | O |
| With the dog | ………… | O |

**9. Do you or anyone in your household own a car?**

Yes
No

**10. How did you get to the forest?**

Walk
Car
Bus
Bicycle
Minibus or coach
Other (specify) ………………………………

**11. On average how long does your visit last/or how long will it last today?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Up to 15 minutes | O |
| 15 to 30 minutes | O |
| 30 minutes to 1 hour | O |
| 1 hour to 2 hours | O |
| 2 hours to 3 hours | O |
| 3 hours to 5 hours | O |
| More than 5 hours | O |

**12. How far away do you live from Bedgebury?**

Less than 1 mile
1 to 3 miles
4 to 10 miles
11 to 20 miles
Over 20 miles

**13. 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 a week | O |
| 1 day a week | O |
| 2 days a week | O |
| 3 days a week | O |
| 4 days a week | O |
| 5 days a week | O |

**14. Do you regularly attend a gym or sports club?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | O |
| No | O |

**15. How would you rate your current level of fitness?**

Very unfit
Unfit
Neither fit nor unfit

| | |
|---|---|
| Fit | O |
| Very fit | O |
| | O |
| | O |

**16. Are any of the following considered as barriers to you using Bedgebury for physical activity? (tick all that apply)**

I don't have a car
I have other personal mobility reasons
The forest is too far away
I am not confident to visit
The lack of facilities
Fear of anti-social behaviour
Lack of information about visiting the wood
I prefer other areas of countryside
Cost of visiting
Not enough time to visit
Caring responsibilities

| | |
|---|---|
| Lack of partner | O |
| Fear of getting lost | O |
| Weather | O |
| Other (specify) | O |

……………………………………………………..

**17. Which of the following activities offered as part of the new facilities at Bedgebury have/would encourage you to do more exercise**

| | |
|---|---|
| Health walks | O |
| Adventure playground | O |
| Events | O |
| Family cycle track | O |
| Bike Hire | O |
| Showers | O |
| Horse riding trails | O |
| National pinetum | O |
| Plant hunters play trail | O |
| Free ride | O |
| Mountain bike track | O |
| Visitor centre | O |
| Bedgebury pantry | O |

O

**18. Are you a smoker? Please tick box that most closely matches your smoking habits.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Non smoker | O |
| Occasional | O |
| 1 to 10 cigarettes a day | O |
| 11 to 20 cigarettes a day | O |
| 21 + cigarettes a day | O |

**19. What is your level of your fruit and vegetable intake?**

| | |
|---|---|
| High (more than 5 pieces per day) | O |
| Medium (5 pieces per day) | |
| Low (Less than 5 pieces per day) | O |

_____

**A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF:**

**Sex:** Male O Female O

**Age:**………………….….. (ask if the respondent would be willing to provide their exact age, if not tick box below)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 16-24 O | 25-34 O | 35-44 O |
| 45-54 O | 55-64 O | 65-75 O |
| 75+ O | | |

**Are you a blue badge holder?**

Yes

No

**Are you a registered disabled person?**

Yes

No

**Do you have any long-term illness or health problems which limit your daily activities or the work you can do?**

Yes

No

**Has your doctor recommended an increase in physical activity to you?**

Yes
No

**What is the approximate total annual income in your household?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Under 10K | |
| 10 to 20K | O |
| 21 to 30k | O |
| 31 to 50K | O |
| 50K+ | O |

**Are you?**

| | |
|---|---|
| Working full time (30+ hrs per week) | |
| Working part time (less than 30 hrs per week) | O |
| Retired | |
| Parent or carer | O |
| In full time education | O |
| Unemployed | O |
| Not working due to illness/disability | O |
| Self employed | O  O |
| Other (specify) | |

**What is the occupation of the chief income earner in your household?**
..............................................................

**How would you describe your ethnic background?** *(Please tick one box only)*

**White**

| | |
|---|---|
| British | O |
| Irish | O |
| Any other white background | O |
| Chinese | O |

**Mixed race**

| | |
|---|---|
| White and black Caribbean | O |
| White and black African | O |
| White and Asian | O |
| Any other mixed background | O |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Asian or Asian British** | O |
| Indian | O |
| Pakistani | O |
| Bangladeshi | O |
| Any other Asian background | O |

**Black or British Black**

| | |
|---|---|
| Caribbean | O |
| African | O |
| Any other black background | O |
| Other ethnic group (specify) | |

…………………..………..

**Do you have any children living in your household aged 16 and under?**

Yes     O
No      O

▸ **If yes, how many are aged?**

0-4 years old        ………………(number)
5-10 years old …………(number)
11-16 years old   ………………(number)

**To give us an idea of where visitors come from can you tell me your home postcode?**
[Yes ]
(record full postcode or first four letters if possible)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | |

………………………………………..
[No ]
(ask respondent if they can say instead which town/city or village they live in?

…………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………….
**Would you be interested or encouraged to participate in more regular health activities if they were targeted at any of the following groups?**

Women only          O
Over 60s             O
Children             O
All ability          O
All ages             O
Other…………………………………………..

**What would you like to do?**
Cycling              O
Walking              O
Archery              O
Other…………………………………………

**When would you like to do this?**
Weekdays                          O
Weekends                          O
Regularly (every week/fortnight)    O
Occasionally (every 1 or 2 months) O

**The Forestry Commission will be developing and introducing new activities to the forest in partnership with other organisations. Would you like to be kept informed or be willing to be contacted by the Forestry Commission and its partners about these future developments?**

If yes take address, phone number or email
Tel No. Home

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Business No.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Mobile No.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Email

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

The rights of all participants in this survey will be protected under the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Appendix 3: Active England Research project – Forest Research (data collected from focus group participants)**

**Group: Health walk**　　　　**Date: 3rd July 2008**　　　　**Location: Haldon Forest**

**Initials** ………..

**Sex:**　　Male　O　　Female　　O

**Age: 16-24　O**　　　**25-34　O**　　　**35-44　O**　　　　**45-54　O**　　　**55-64　O**　　　**65-75　O**　　　**75+　O**

| **Are you?** | | Parent or carer | O |
| Working full time (30+ hrs per week) | O | In full time education | O |
| Working part time (less than 30 hrs a week)O | | Unemployed | O |
| | | Not working due to illness/disability | O |
| Retired | | Self employed | O |

**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 a week  O | 1 day a week  O | 2 days a week O |
| 3 days a week  O | 4 days a week O | 5 days a week or more  O |

**How would you describe yourself? (please tick one circle only)**

White　　O　　　　Chinese O　　　Mixed race O　　　Asian or Asian British　　O　　Black or British Black O　　　　Other ethnic group　　O

**What is the approximate total annual income in your household?**
Under 10K  O　　　10 to 20K  O　　　21 to 30k　O　　　　31 to 50K　O　　　　　50K+　O

**How often would you say that you visit woodlands or green spaces?**

| Everyday | O | 4 to 6 times per week | O |
| 1 to 3 times per week | O | 1 to 3 times per month | O |
| 4 to 6 times a year | O | 1 to 3 times a year | O |
| Less often | O | | |

This information will be used for this project only and not for other purposes.

*'You feel elated as well? I mean I feel really good and positive and much more proactive when I've done that exercise... I've got energy'*
(Female Health Walker, Bedgebury)

The Research Agency of the
Forestry Commission