

Active England

‘Park Life’ – Greenwood Community Forest

Liz O’Brien and Jake Morris
Social and Economic Research Group

2009

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
1.1	Key findings	4
2.	Park Life: Design and implementation	6
3.	Results: on site surveying and project monitoring	9
3.1	Greenwood's changing visitor profile	9
3.2	Greenwood's changing visit profile	17
3.3	Changes in target group behaviour at Greenwood	23
4.	Results: catchment profiling	27
4.1	Catchment areas (Bestwood & Kings Mill)	27
4.2	Target groups (Bestwood & Kings Mill)	30
4.3	Targeting qualitative research (Bestwood)	40
5.	Results: project evaluation with users and non-users	40
5.1	Summary of results from users	41
5.1.1	Over 50s walkers	41
5.2	Summary of results from non users	47
5.2.1	Over 45s	47
6.	Discussion	52
	References	53

1. Introduction

This report provides background information about the design and delivery of an Active England funded project, 'Park Life', within Greenwood Community Forest (hereafter 'Greenwood'), and the results of the research conducted by Forest Research between 2005 and 2008 to monitor and evaluate the project. The report focuses on two sites within Greenwood where Forest Research carried out its evaluation: Bestwood Country Park (hereafter, 'Bestwood') and Kings Mill Reservoir (hereafter, 'Kings Mill').

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. Five woodland projects were funded, including 'Park Life' in Greenwood, together with projects at Bedgebury in Kent, Haldon Forest Park in Devon, Great Western Community Forest in Wiltshire, and Rosliston Forestry Centre in the National Forest.

Forest Research adopted a range of methods to carry out a three year monitoring and evaluation of these woodland projects. These included:

1. On-site surveys to profile visitors and visits (a total of 881 questionnaires were completed at the two sites in 2006 and 2007).
2. Spatial analysis to produce a catchment profile of the surrounding population of each site/s (within an approximate 20 mile radius).
3. Qualitative research involving focus groups with 'users' and 'non-users' of the projects to explore the benefits and barriers to using woodlands and green spaces for physical activity (a total of 18 people participated in the focus groups).

In this report, the monitoring activities at the sites are presented in Section 3, covering the changing 'visitor' and 'visit' profiles at each site, as indicated by the results of the on-site surveys conducted in 2006 and 2007. Survey results that highlight changes in behaviour amongst Active England 'Target Groups' are also presented.

Section 4 presents a comparison between the visitor profile, provided by the on-site surveying, and the profile of the two sites' catchment populations, provided by the spatial analysis of socio-demographic variables for an area within a 20 mile radius from each of the sites. Comparisons between visitor and catchment profiles and, in particular, comparisons between levels of representation of Target Groups within each profile,

provide a basis for evaluating how successful 'Park Life' has been at increasing participation and attendance within these groups.

Section 5 presents the targeting and results of the qualitative research with groups of 'users' and 'non-users' at Bestwood. Here, the analysis of perceptions of, and attitudes to the site, the project, health, healthy exercise, and barriers to use, is presented as an additional level of project evaluation.

1.1 Key Findings

Impact on target groups: on site surveys and monitoring

- There was little change in the income profile of visitors to both sites between 2006 and 2007. However, low income families are well represented amongst visitors to both sites.
- There was a significant shift in the gender profile of visitors between the two survey years, with women making up 59% of visitors to Bestwood and 54% of visitors to Kings Mill in 2007. These results suggest that women are well represented amongst users of both sites.
- There was a significant improvement in the self-reported fitness levels of visitors to both Bestwood and Kings Mill, with significant reductions in the number of respondents judging themselves to be either 'very unfit' or 'unfit'.
- 'Lack of facilities', 'Lack of time' and 'Weather' were popular reasons given for not using the sites more often. Both sites saw a reduction in the number of respondents citing 'Anti-social behaviour' as a barrier.
- The most popular activities at Bestwood are dog walking, walking without a dog, cycling and using the children's play area. For Kings Mill, the most popular activities are walking, nature watching, 'other' (defined by respondents as 'visiting the café' or 'feeding the ducks') and cycling.
- Very few visitors to either site were aware of the 'Park Life' project. In 2007, 1% of visitors to Bestwood and 5% of visitors to Kings Mill said they had heard of the project.

Catchment profiling

- The on-site surveying reveals that the vast majority of visitors to both sites are from the 'White British' ethnic category. Comparisons with the BME representation within the catchment populations of both sites reveals that there is significant potential to increase use of the sites amongst this target group.

- For Bestwood, the 45+ yrs group accounted for 42% of visitors in both 2006 and 2007. Catchment profiling revealed a relatively high concentration of this age group living in Bestwood Village (49-82%), where a significant proportion of visitors reside. From this we conclude that there is certainly potential to increase attendance amongst this target group at Bestwood, focusing on communities within Bestwood Village itself.

Qualitative research with project users and non-users

- Research respondents with prior involvement in 'Park Life' project events ('users') stressed how much they valued the group health walks, but were critical of the lack of facilities at Bestwood.
- Users reported clear physical and mental health benefits from the health walks.
- Users highlighted the importance of group activities, providing opportunities to meet new people and to develop and strengthen bonds of friendship and mutual support.
- Lack of confidence and fear of anti-social behaviour were cited by users as the most significant barriers to increased levels of participation, reaffirming the importance of group activities and 'facilitated' access.
- Research respondents with no prior involvement in 'Park Life' project events ('non-users') enjoyed the walk around Bestwood enormously and were keen to express how good they felt afterwards: *'I feel rejuvenated!'*
- Non-users expressed a liking for green spaces in general, and forests and woodlands in particular. All agreed that the chance to see wildlife is a key attraction of a woodland environment, and some stated that going into a woodland provides a welcome escape from modern life.
- Non-users felt that trees, woods and forests inspire healthy activities like walking. This inspirational function was closely connected with the clean environment associated with woodlands.
- Women non-users stated that they wouldn't feel safe alone in a woodland. Here the source of danger or risk was clearly of a social nature, and had little to do with the physical environment of the forest or woodland. All agreed on the critical importance of being part of an organised group, to provide a sense of security, company in which to enjoy visits to green spaces, and also to provide a structure and schedule for activities.

2. 'Park Life' - design and implementation

The 'Park Life' project is delivered by Greenwood Community Forest, working in partnership with six local authorities (Nottinghamshire County Council, Gedling Borough Council, Newark & Sherwood District Council, Ashfield District Council, Mansfield District Council and Broxtowe Borough Council) and the Forestry Commission. The project delivers events and organised activities across a number of sites within the Green Community Forest network (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 are provided, but the project also delivers 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.

'Park Life' places particular emphasis on working with so-called 'hard-to-reach' groups. In the project's final year, for example, 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).

Recognising that introducing school age children to the outdoors will increase the likelihood of them continuing to visit green spaces in later years, thereby increasing opportunities to improve health and fitness, 'Park Life' places a particular emphasis on working with local schools. The project administers a 'School Travel Fund' to help schools from deprived areas meet the travel costs associated with site visits to attend organised events and activities (schools are awarded up to £200 a visit). The project's focus on working with schools and school age children led, in 2007, to the publication and dissemination of the Park Life Education Pack, designed to encourage schools and other children's and youth groups to use the seven Park Life sites to help stimulate physical activity and increase health and fitness amongst young people. The pack provides information about the wider project, the specific facilities, activities and events at each of the seven sites, and provides guidance on planning and conducting physical activity visits to the sites.

The evaluation conducted by Forest Research focused on project activities at Bestwood and Kings Mill. In the tables below, summary details are presented for the two sites,

covering events and activities delivered, their target audiences, and the number of participants over the duration of the project (2005 to 2008).

Table 1: 'Park Life' events / activities at Bestwood:

Event / activity	Target audience	No. participants
2005 / 06		
Community activity day: mountain bike ride, guided walk, "Nordic" walking, kite-making & flying workshop, Tai Chi, an inflatable football pitch, football skills, tri golf	Open community event	161
2006 / 07		
Easter Hunt Trail	Beck Meadow Day Centre	26
Mini beast walk, parachute games, horse riding, scavenger art	Bracken Hill Primary School	100
Sport Relief mile	Open community event	80
2 day summer school	Open community event	44
Street dance road show	Open community event	12
Horse riding taster session	Top Valley Youth Club	17
Horse riding taster session	Family First – adults and families living with mental health	13
Horse riding taster session	Williams Olds Youth Centre	14
Horse riding taster session	Lenton Abbey Play Project	16
Christmas trail & storytelling walk	Top Valley Play Project	23
Horse riding taster session	Positive Adults for Young People, Youth Services	15
2007 / 08		
Midday stroll and healthy lunch	Open community event	33

Source: Park Life annual reports (2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08)

Table 2: 'Park Life' events / activities at Kings Mill:

Event / activity	Target audience	No. participants
2005 / 06		
Scavenger hunt	Crescent Primary School	62
Nature walk	Ladybrook Primary School	28

Fun day: pond dipping, mini beast & orienteering	Nottinghamshire Scouts Group	48
--	------------------------------	----

2006 / 07

Scavenger art / mini beast trail	Croft Primary School	67
Scavenger art / mini beast trail	New Rose Primary School	34
Climbing wall and team building	Garibaldi School	11
Orienteering & scavenger art	Kirkby Woodhouse Primary	63

2007 / 08

Wildlife walk	Open community event	12
---------------	----------------------	----

Source: Park Life annual reports (2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08)

3. Results: on site surveying and project monitoring

This section provides information on the changing visitor and visit profiles at Bestwood and Kings Mill between 2006 and 2007 and presents an analysis of changes in behaviour amongst those respondents from the Active England target groups. It also presents data relevant to the Active England Key Performance Indicators collected by staff from Greenwood Community Forest as part of their reporting obligations to Sport England.

3.1 Greenwood's changing visitor profile

Representation of target groups

- The priority target groups for the Active England programme include:
- Women and girls
- 45+ yrs age group
- People on low incomes
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- People with disabilities
- Young people (under 16)

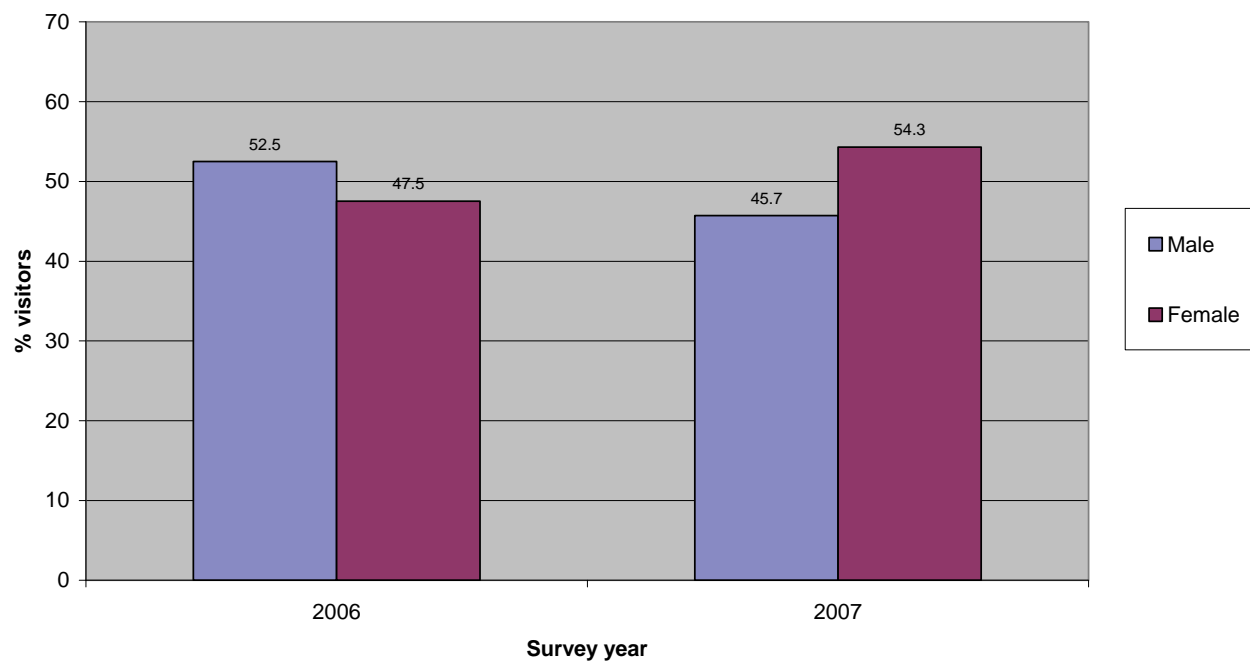
As discussed in the introduction to this section, our monitoring of site use amongst young people (under 16s) and girls was restricted by legislation controlling research practice with respect to vulnerable groups. As such, our analysis of the first target group is limited to women only (all respondents are over 16 yrs), and our monitoring of site use by young people must be approximated from responses to questions about family use.

A total of 881 people were surveyed within the Greenwood Community Forest. In 2006, 204 and 217 people were questioned during visits to Bestwood and Kings Mill respectively, whilst 230 people from each site were questioned in 2007.

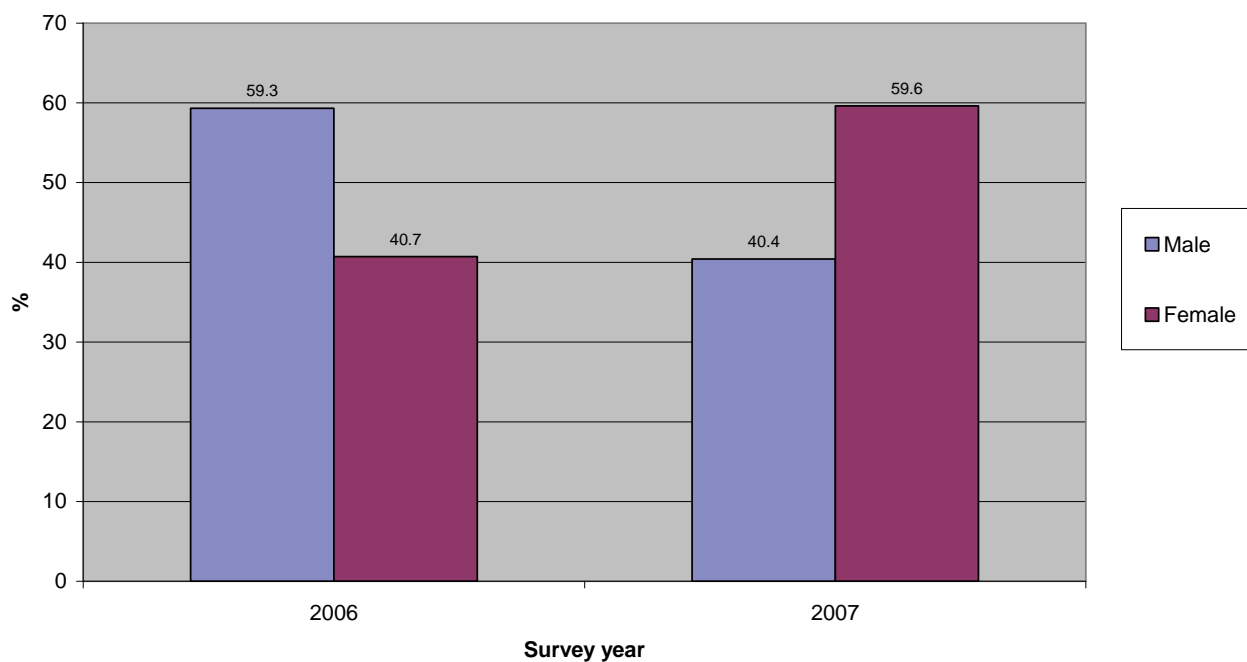
Women and girls

The research indicates that a significant shift in the gender profile of visitors occurred between the two survey years ($p < 0.001$, see graphs below). In 2006, men accounted for 59% of visitors to Bestwood and 53% of visitors to Kings Mill. In contrast, in 2007 there were more women than men coming to both sites, with women making up 59% of visitors to Bestwood and 54% of visitors to Kings Mill.

Male / Female visitors at Kings Mill



Male / Female visitors at Bestwood



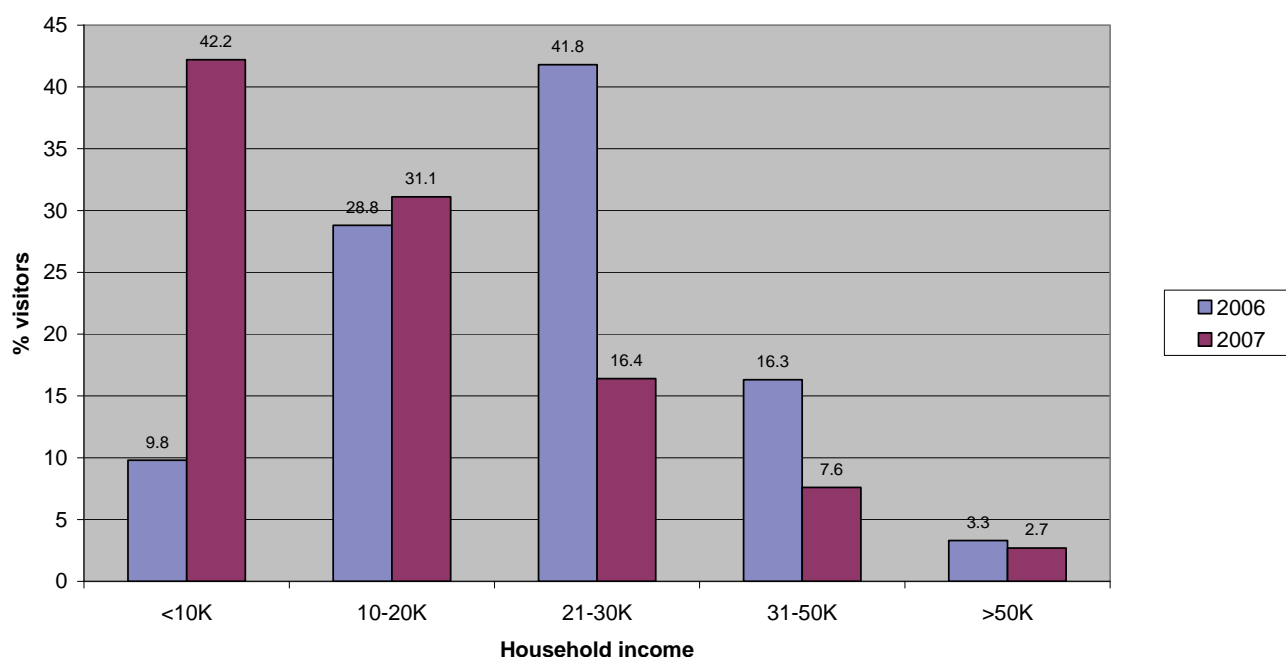
45+ yrs age group

Between 2006 and 2007 there was very little change in the age profile of visitors to Bestwood and Kings Mill. Visitors falling within the 16–44 yrs age group accounted for about 48% of all visitors in both survey years, while those from the 45+yrs age group accounted for about 52% of all visitors.

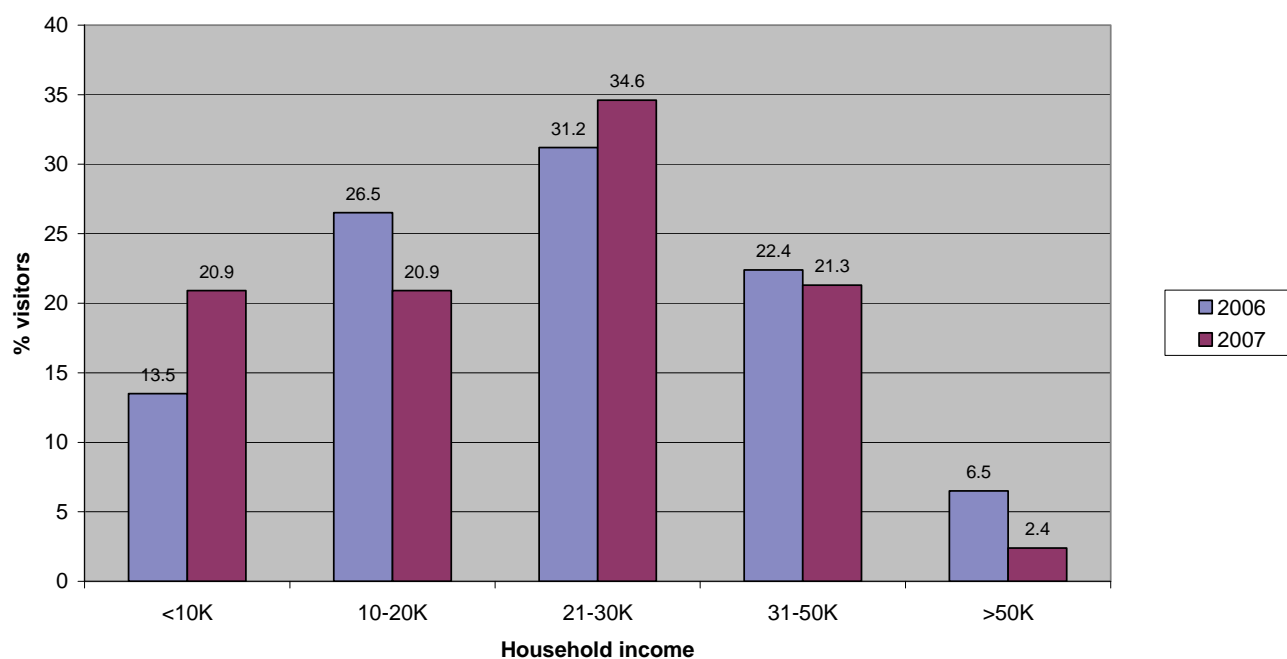
People on low incomes

The survey results show little change in the income profile of visitors to both sites between the survey years. In 2006, people from households with low incomes (20K or less) accounted for 40% of visitors to Bestwood and about 59% of visitors to Kings Mill. In 2007, there was little change at 42% for Bestwood and 60% for Kings Mill. However, the results do show that people from low income households do make up a significant proportion of visitors to both sites.

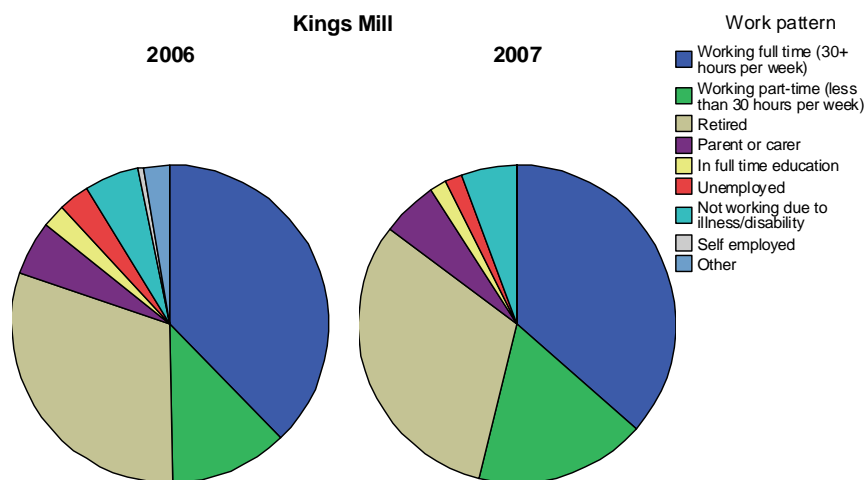
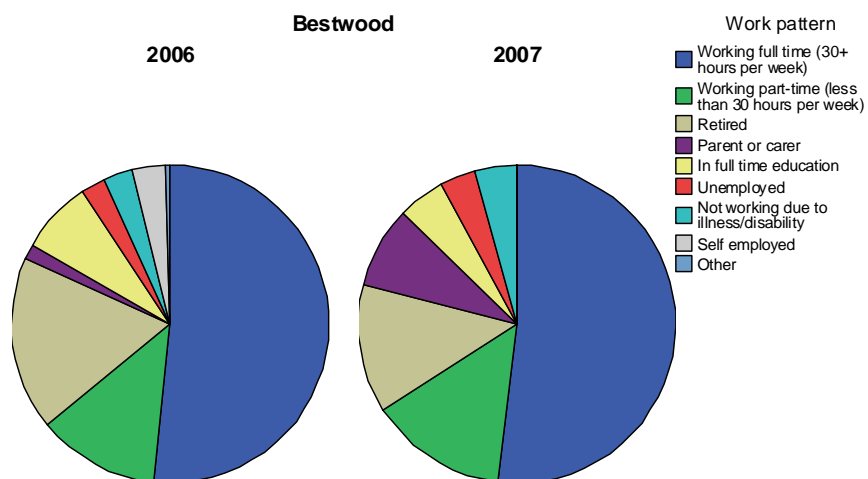
Income levels at Kings Mill



Income levels at Bestwood



The indication of a high representation of people from low income households is corroborated by the occupation profile of visitors to both sites (see charts below). Retired people, those working part-time, unemployed people, those in full time education and those not working due to illness / disability make up a significant proportion of all visitors to both Bestwood (41%, averaged over the two years) and Kings Mill (55.8%, averaged over the two years).



Black and ethnic minority groups

The results of the on-site surveying reveal that the vast majority of visitors to both sites are from the 'White British' ethnic category, accounting for 98% (2006) and 96% (2007) of visitors to Bestwood and 99% (2006) and 98% (2007) of visitors to Kings Mill.

People with disabilities

Taking an average of results from across the two sites and across the two survey years, 4.8% of visitors are Blue badge holders (3.7% Bestwood and 5.8% Kings Mill) and 4.8% (3.9% Bestwood and 5.6% Kings Mill) are registered disabled. There was no significant change in the representation of people with disabilities at either site between the two survey years.

Young people (under 16)

In both the 2006 and 2007 surveys respondents were asked if they had any children living in their household aged 16 and under. There was no significant change in 'family use' between the survey years at either site. In 2006 the results indicate that 37% of visitors to Bestwood were from households with children under 16, while in 2007 this number rose slightly to 41%. In 2006 30% of visitors to Kings Mill were from households with children under 16, while in 2007 this number fell slightly to 29%. This is corroborated by responses to the question 'Who did you come with?', which showed little change in family use between the survey years. 33% of respondents at Bestwood said they had come with family in 2006, rising slightly to 37% in 2007, while the results for Kings Mill were 32% and 39% for 2006 and 2007 respectively.

Further information about visitors

Exercise levels

The survey results indicate that visitors to Bestwood and Kings Mill are not meeting the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation of 30 minutes moderate intensity exercise on at least five days a week. Visitors to Bestwood in 2006 visitors took exercise on a mean of 4.8 days per week, falling to a mean on 3.9 days per week in 2007. Contrastingly, a mean of 3.98 days per week for visitors to Kings Mill rose to 4.1 days per week in 2007.

Current fitness

The survey results demonstrate a significant improvement in the self-reported fitness levels of visitors (Bestwood and Kings Mill both $p < 0.01$). There were significant reductions in the number of respondents judging themselves to be either 'very unfit' or

'unfit'. Correspondingly, there were noticeable increases in the number of respondents falling within the 'fit' and 'very fit' categories.

Table 3: Greenwood Community Forest fitness levels (Bestwood and Kings Mill combined):

Self-reported fitness level	2006	2007
Very unfit	1.7%	0.2%
Unfit	11.5%	6.8%
Neither fit nor unfit	24.1%	17.6%
Fit	52%	59.7%
Very fit	10.7%	15.7%

Long term illness

Respondents were asked whether they had a long term illness or health problem which limited their daily activities. Positive responses to this question remained static between 2006 and 2007 (8% at Bestwood and 15% Kings Mill).

Recommended exercise by doctor

Respondents were asked whether their doctor had recommended that they increase their physical activity levels. Doctors can advise people to become more active or formally prescribe more activity through the GP (General Practitioner) referral scheme. As with the data relating to long term illness, there was no change measured between the survey years, with 6% at Bestwood and 12% at Kings Mill stating that their doctor had recommended them to increase their physical activity.

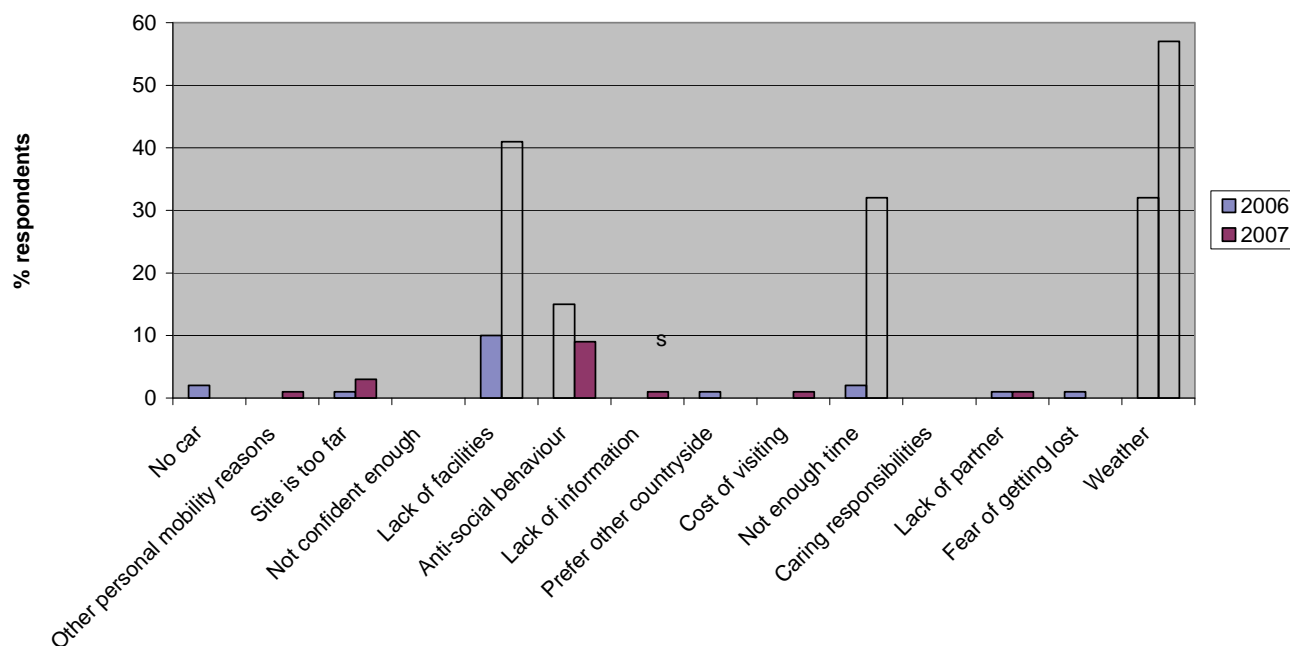
Barriers to visiting Bestwood and Kings Mill

Respondents were asked about barriers to using the two sites more often for physical activity. The response categories were pre-determined by the researchers based on previous studies outlining the potential range of barriers to accessing woodlands. Interestingly, there was a much higher response rate for this question at both sites during the 2007 survey. At Bestwood only 23% of respondents answered this question in 2006, rising to 62% in 2007. At Kings Mill only 30% of respondents answered this question, rising to 64% in 2007.

Despite the differences between the survey years in the proportion of respondents answering this question, the results do show that there were significant increases in the number of people citing 'Lack of facilities', 'Lack of time' and 'Weather' as barriers to

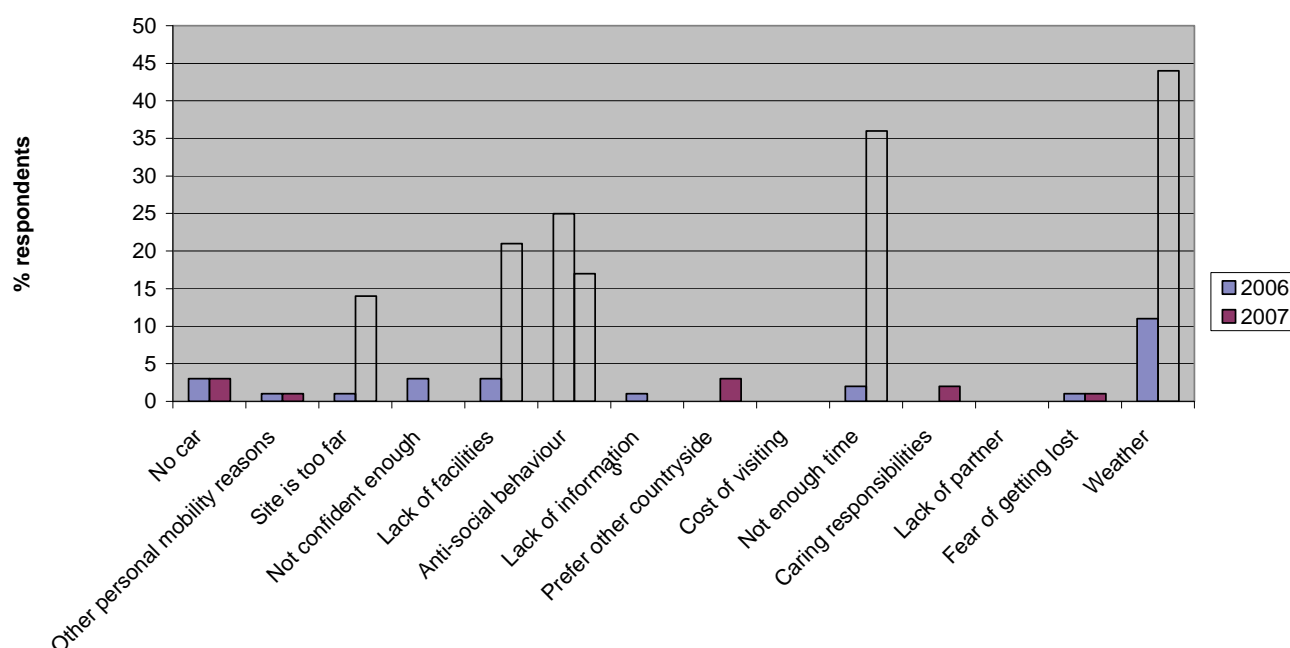
using the sites more often. Furthermore, both sites saw a reduction in the number of respondents citing 'Anti-social behaviour' as a barrier. The most significant barrier at both sites was the weather, which was cited by significantly more respondents in 2007 – a fact that might be related to the wet summer weather experienced that year.

Barriers to using Kings Mill for more physical activity



Barriers

Barriers to using Bestwood for more physical activity



Barriers

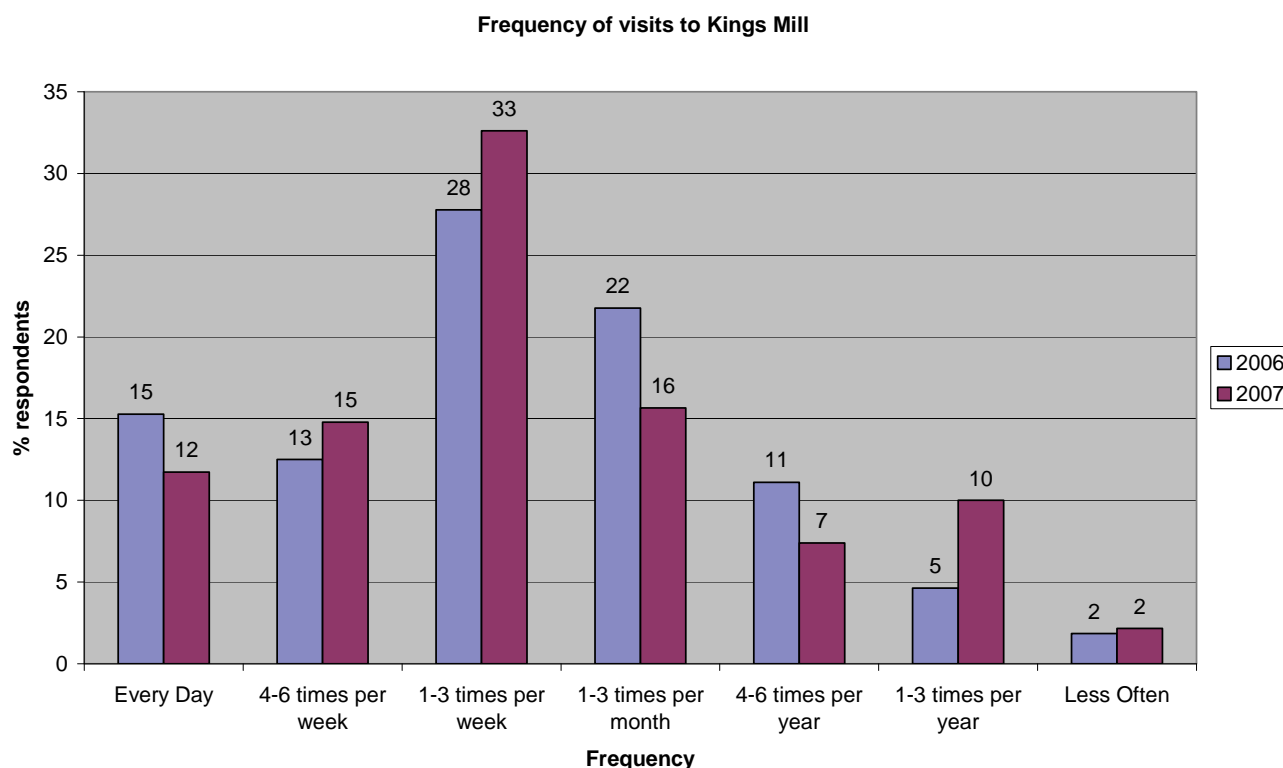
3.2 Greenwood's changing visit profile

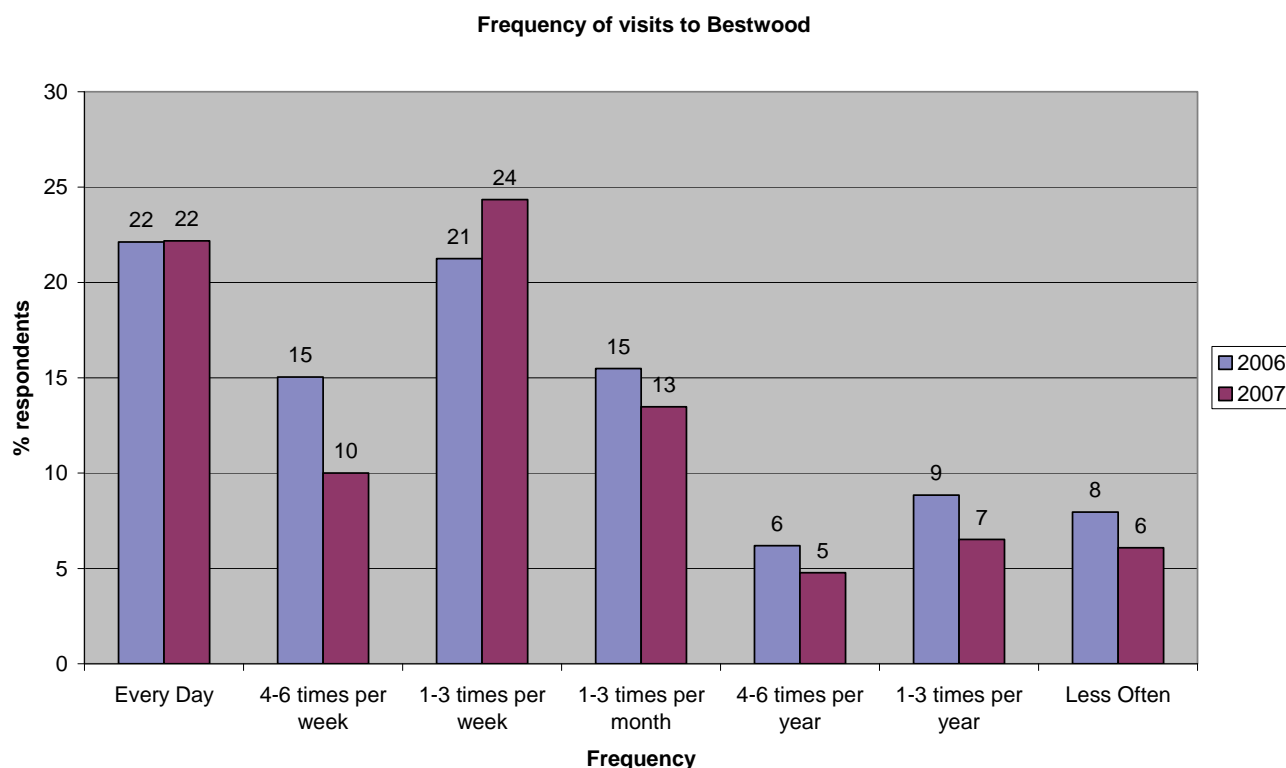
Over the two survey years there was little change in the proportion of respondents who were 'first time' or 'repeat' visitors to Kings Mill. First time visitors accounted for 5% of respondents in 2006 and 6% in 2007. Contrastingly, at Bestwood there was a significant rise in the proportion of first time visitors, from 3% in 2006 to 13% in 2007.

In 2007, 1% of visitors to Bestwood and 5% of visitors to Kings Mill said they were aware of the 'Park Life' project. The majority, 99% and 95%, were unaware of the project (this question was only asked in the 2007 survey). None of the respondents in 2007 (both sites) had attended any 'Park Life' events or activities and, consequently, none said that the events / activities would encourage them to be more active.

How often do you visit Bestwood / Kings Mill?

The results of the surveys reveals a slight decline in the proportion of frequent visits to Bestwood (at least once per week) from 58% to 56% of respondents over the two survey years. This is contrasted by a slight increase in the proportion of frequent visits to Kings Mill from 56% to 60%.



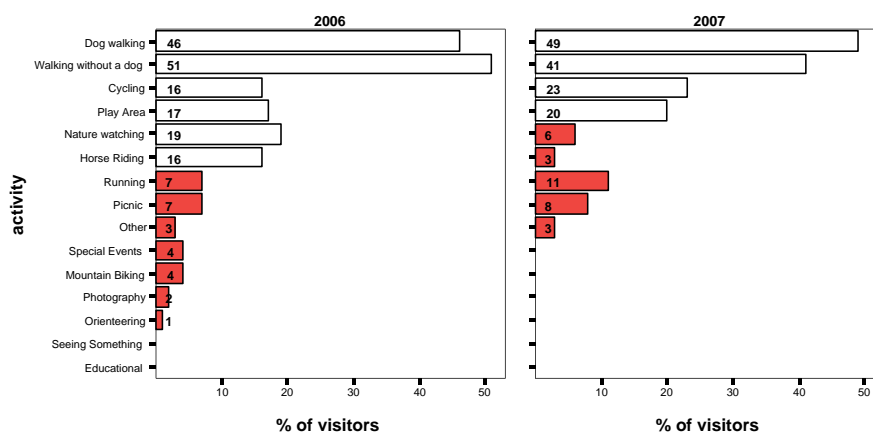


What do you usually do at Bestwood / Kings Mill?

The results from both survey years show little change at either site in the proportion of visitors engaging in single or multiple activities. The majority of visitors to both sites take part in multiple activities during one visit. Averaged across the two survey years, about 40% of visitors to Bestwood took part in a single activity, while about 60% take part in multiple activities. At Kings Mill, these figures were 29% (single activity) and 71% (multiple activities).

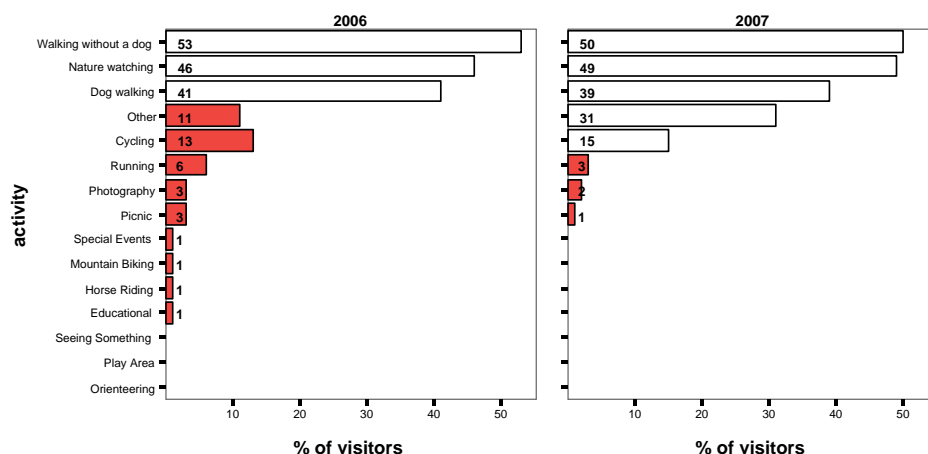
The graph below shows that the most popular activities at Bestwood are dog walking, walking without a dog, cycling and using the children's play area. There was little change in the activity profile between the survey years.

Bestwood



The graph below shows that the most popular activities at Kings Mill are walking, nature watching, 'other' (defined by respondents as 'visiting the café' or 'feeding the ducks') and cycling. As with Bestwood, there was little change in the activity profile between the survey years.

Kings Mill



How did you hear about Bestwood / Kings Mill?

The survey results reveal that word of mouth (Friend / family) and road signs are the way many people first become aware of Bestwood and Kings Mill. Interestingly, no respondents at either site cited 'Park Life' publicity as an initial source of information.

First-time visitors to Bestwood and Kings Mill identified the following sources as promoting an initial awareness of the forest:

Table 4: Sources of information for first-time visitors to Bestwood

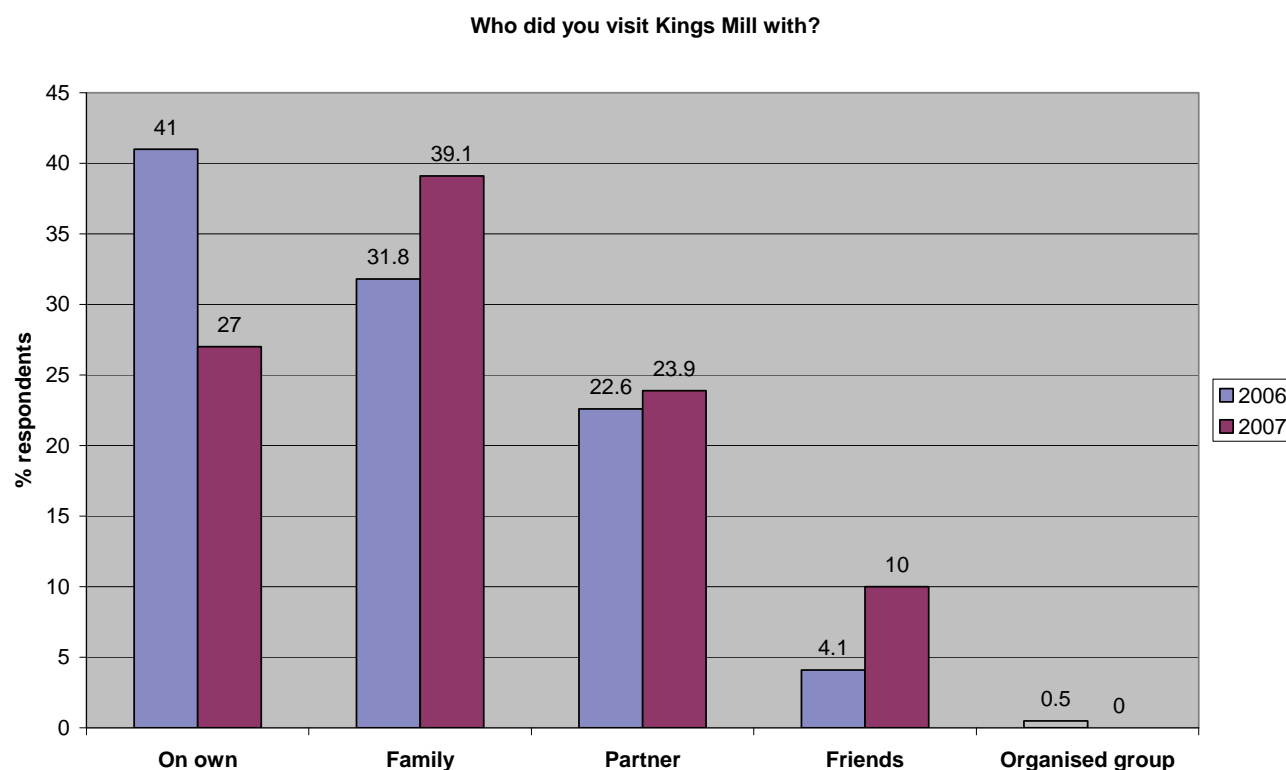
Information source	2006	2007
'Park Life' publicity	0%	0%
Forestry Commission leaflets/website	0%	17%
Local guide book/map	17%	0%
Tourist information centre	0%	0%
Library	0%	0%
Sports centre	0%	0%
Advert in press/on television	0%	0%
Newspaper article	0%	0%
Friend / relation	66%	78%
Road signs	17%	4%

Table 5: Sources of information for first-time visitors to Kings Mill

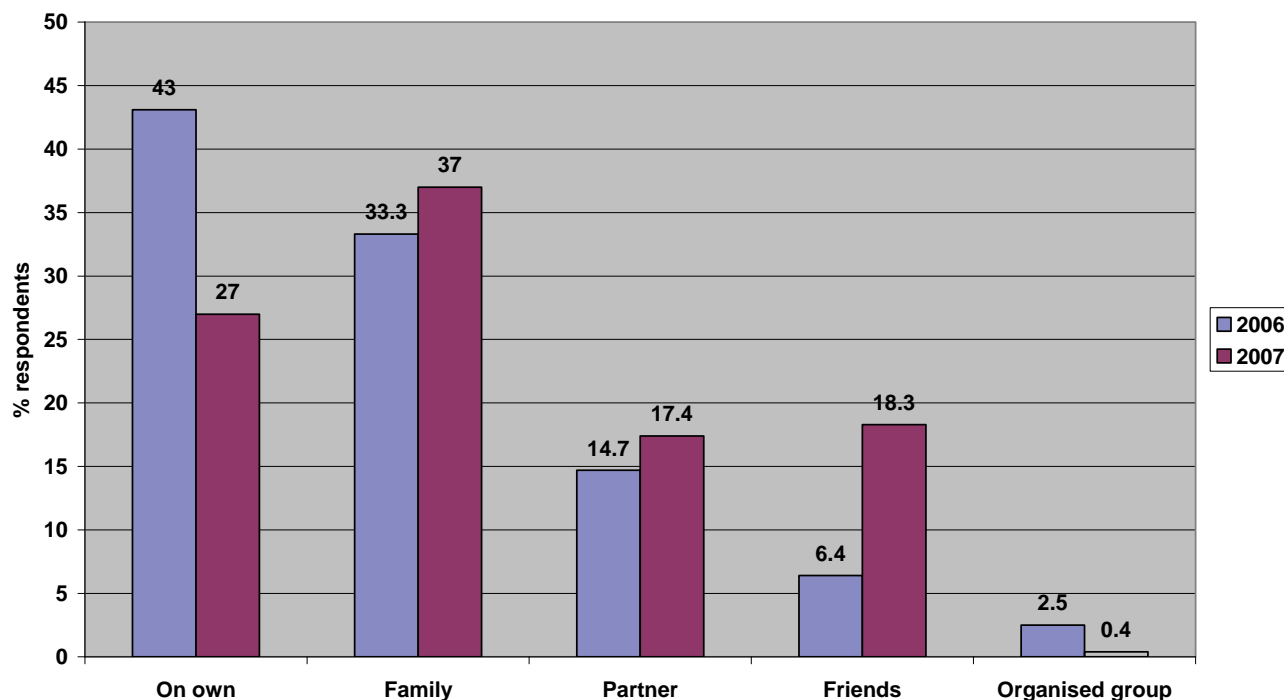
Information source	2006	2007
'Park Life' publicity	0%	0%
Forestry Commission leaflets/website	0%	0%
Local guide book/map	0%	0%
Tourist information centre	0%	0%
Library	0%	0%
Sports centre	0%	0%
Advert in press/on television	0%	0%
Newspaper article	0%	0%
Friend / relation	44%	69%
Road signs	56%	31%

Who did you come to Bestwood / Kings Mill with?

The results show significantly fewer solitary visits to both sites and more accompanied visits, with a significant rise in the number of visitors who come with friends and those who come with family.



Who did you visit Bestwood with?



How did you get to Bestwood / Kings Mill?

Most visitors arrive by car. At Bestwood 53% of visitors arrived by car in 2006, rising to 57% in 2007. At Kings Mill 68% of visitors arrived by car in 2006, rising to 70% in 2007. However, many people walk to both sites. At Bestwood 37% of visitors arrived on foot in 2006, 33% in 2007. At Kings Mill 24% of visitors arrived on foot in 2006, 22% in 2007. Significant numbers also arrive by bicycle; 5% of visitors to Bestwood in 2006 arrived by bike, rising to 9% in 2007. For Kings Mill 3% arrived by bike in 2006 and 5% in 2007.

How long does your visit last, on average?

The average length of a visit to Bestwood and Kings Mill did not change significantly between the two survey years. For Bestwood, the average visit time in 2006 was 1 hour 30 minutes, and 1 hour 24 minutes in 2007. For Kings Mill, the average visit time in 2006 was 1 hour, and 1 hour 6 minutes in 2007.

How far do you live from Bestwood / Kings Mill?

On average, visitors do not travel very far to come to Bestwood and Kings Mill. Furthermore, the average distance travelled by a visitor to both sites remained almost unchanged between the two survey years. The average journey to Bestwood was 3.6 miles in 2006 and 4.2 miles in 2007. The average journey to Kings Mill was 3.6 miles in 2006 and 3.8 miles in 2007.

3.3 Changes in target group behaviour at Bestwood and Kings Mill

Due to the low numbers of respondents from diverse ethnic groups and disabled groups in the surveys, the discussion of changes in target group behaviour presented here is restricted to women, over 45s and those from low income households. For each of these target groups, statistically significant changes in activities, self-reported fitness levels, exercise levels and barriers are presented.

Bestwood:

Women

Changes in activities:

Amongst women horse riding and nature watching decreased in popularity between the two survey years (33% -4% ($p<0.001$) for horse riding, 19%-5% ($p<0.01$) for nature watching).

Changes in self-reported fitness:

There was a significant increase in self-reported fitness levels amongst women between the two survey years ($p<0.01$).

Changes in exercise levels:

There was a significant decline in the number of female respondents who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years, from 65% in 2005 to 37% in 2006 ($p<0.001$).

Changes in barriers:

There were significant changes in the proportion of female respondents citing the following reasons for not using Bestwood for more physical activity:

- "site too far away" 1% to 15% ($p<0.001$)
- "not confident enough" 7% to 0% ($p<0.01$)
- "lack of facilities" 4% to 28% ($p<0.001$)

- "not enough time" 5% to 36% ($p < 0.001$)
- "weather" 12% to 47% ($p < 0.001$)

45+ yrs

Changes in activities:

Amongst over 45s, walking decreased in popularity from 57% to 39% ($p < 0.05$). Cycling increased in popularity from 7% to 19% ($p < 0.05$). Nature watching decreased in popularity from 24% to 9% ($p < 0.01$).

Changes in self-reported fitness:

There was no significant change in self-reported fitness levels amongst over 45s between the two survey years.

Changes in exercise levels:

There was a significant decline in the number of over 45s respondents who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years, from 67% in 2005 to 35% in 2006 ($p < 0.001$).

Changes in barriers:

There were significant increases in the proportion of over 45s respondents citing the following reasons for not using Bestwood for more physical activity:

- "site too far away" 1% to 13% ($p < 0.01$)
- "lack of facilities" 2% to 13% ($p < 0.01$)
- "not enough time" 2% to 27% ($p < 0.001$)
- "weather" 10% to 35% ($p < 0.001$)
-

People from low income households

Changes in activities:

Amongst this target group, walking decreased in popularity from 63% to 36% ($p < 0.01$). Dog walking increased in popularity from 40% to 60% ($p < 0.05$). Horse riding decreased in popularity from 15% to 2% ($p < 0.01$). Nature watching decreased in popularity from 24% to 6% ($p < 0.01$).

Changes in self-reported fitness:

There was no significant change in self-reported fitness levels amongst respondents from low income households between the two survey years.

Changes in exercise levels:

There was a significant decline in the number of respondents from low income households who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years, from 69% in 2005 to 42% in 2006 ($p < 0.01$).

Changes in barriers:

There were significant increases in the proportion of respondents from low income households citing the following reasons for not using Bestwood for more physical activity:

- "site too far away" 2% to 14% ($p < 0.01$)
- "lack of facilities" 2% to 24% ($p < 0.001$)
- "not enough time" 3% to 25% ($p < 0.001$)
- "weather" 10% to 47% ($p < 0.001$)

Kings Mill:

Women

Changes in activities:

Amongst women running decreased in popularity between the two survey years from 9% to 2% ($p < 0.05$). 'Other'* increased in popularity from 12% to 31% ($p < 0.001$).

Changes in self-reported fitness:

There was a significant increase in self-reported fitness levels amongst women at Kings Mill between the two survey years ($p < 0.05$).

Changes in exercise levels:

There was no significant change in the number of female respondents who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years (52% to 46%).

Changes in barriers:

There were significant changes in the proportion of female respondents citing the following reasons for not using Kings Mill for more physical activity:

- "lack of facilities" 10% to 41% ($p < 0.001$)
- "not enough time" 2% to 32% ($p < 0.001$)
- "weather" 32% to 57% ($p < 0.001$)

45+yrs

Changes in activities:

Amongst over 45s, 'other'* increased in popularity from 7%-32% ($p < 0.001$).

Changes in self-reported fitness:

There was no significant change in self-reported fitness levels amongst over 45s between the two survey years.

Changes in exercise levels:

There was no significant change in the number of over 45s respondents who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years (51% to 45%).

Changes in barriers:

There were significant increases in the proportion of over 45s respondents citing the following reasons for not using Kings Mill for more physical activity:

- "lack of facilities" 9% to 36% ($p < 0.001$)
- "not enough time" 1% to 19% ($p < 0.001$)
- "weather" 28% to 47% ($p < 0.01$)

People from low income households

Changes in activities:

Amongst this target group, 'other'* increased in popularity from 8% to 36% ($p < 0.001$).

Changes in self-reported fitness:

There was no significant change in self-reported fitness levels amongst respondents from low income households between the two survey years.

Changes in exercise levels:

There was no significant change in the number of respondents from low income households who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years (49% to 45%).

Changes in barriers:

There were significant increases in the proportion of respondents from low income households citing the following reasons for not using Kings Mill for more physical activity:

- "lack of facilities" 11% to 34% ($p < 0.001$)
- "not enough time" 2% to 20% ($p < 0.001$)

- "weather" 33% to 52% ($p < 0.01$)

* in the majority of cases "Other" activities referred to feeding the ducks or visiting the cafe.

4. Results: catchment profiling

Forest Research's evaluation of 'Park Life' involved the spatial 'profiling' of the catchment areas for each site. Catchment profiling involved the presentation of background socio-economic and demographic data relevant to the Active England target groups within a defined catchment area (an area within a 20 mile radius of each site). The primary purpose of the catchment profiling is to reveal the representation of the target groups within the surrounding population. The demographic make-up of the catchment population can then be compared with the visitor profile, as revealed by the on-site surveys, thereby providing a basis for evaluating the project's success in increasing target group participation in healthy activity. In addition, where comparisons between catchment of visitor profiles reveal under-representation amongst certain target groups, follow-up research can be targeted with 'non-users' in order to explore those factors that are preventing certain individuals and groups from using the sites. As such, catchment profiling plays a pivotal role in the effective targeting of the research, and is an integral component of the overall evaluation.

In this sub-section the results of the catchment profiling work both sites are presented and discussed.

4.1 Catchment areas (Bestwood & Kings Mill)

Maps 1a and 1b shows the location of Bestwood and Kings Mill in relation to major towns and transport links. Bestwood (Map 1a), represented by the pink blob, is located on the northern edge of Nottingham. Kings Mill (Map 1b) lies to the north of Nottingham, between Sutton in Ashfield (not marked) and Mansfield.

Map 1a: Location of Bestwood Country Park



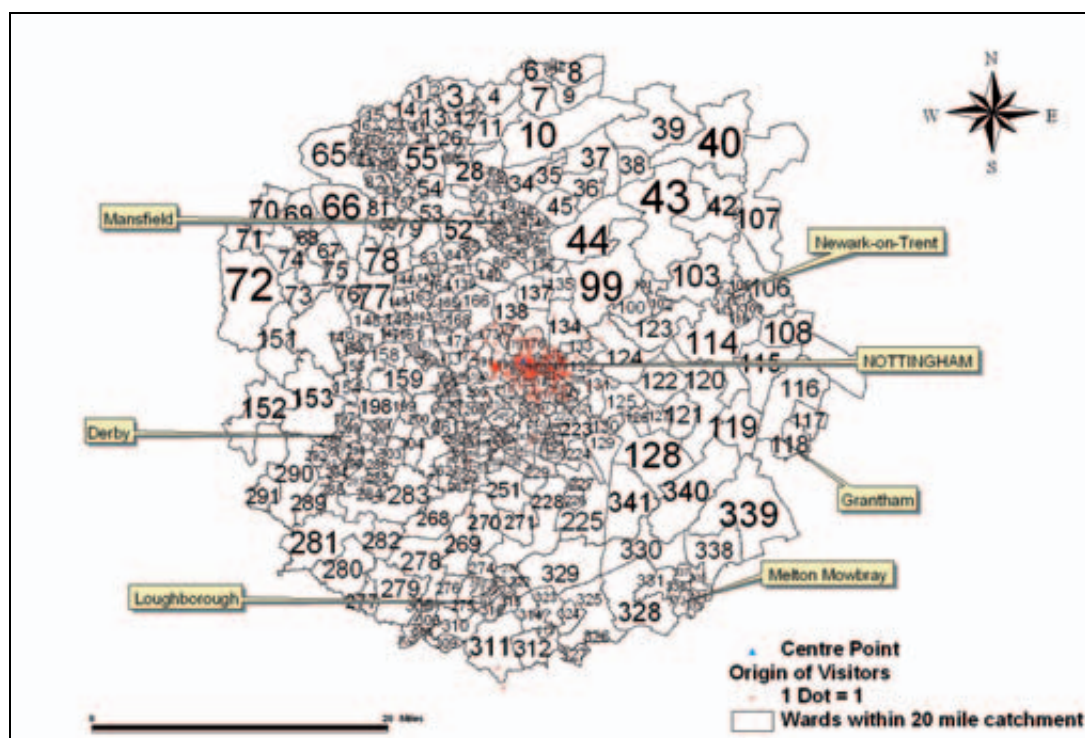
Map 1b: Location of Kings Mill Reservoir



Maps 2a and 2b show the catchment areas for Bestwood and Kings Mill, respectively, as defined by a 20 mile radius from each site's centre point, together with all the wards that fall within the catchment area. Each red dot on the map denotes the postcode provided by a respondent to the on-site surveys conducted in 2006. As such, Maps 2a and 2b present a basic spatial analysis of the two catchment areas, showing also the origin of visitors within each catchment.

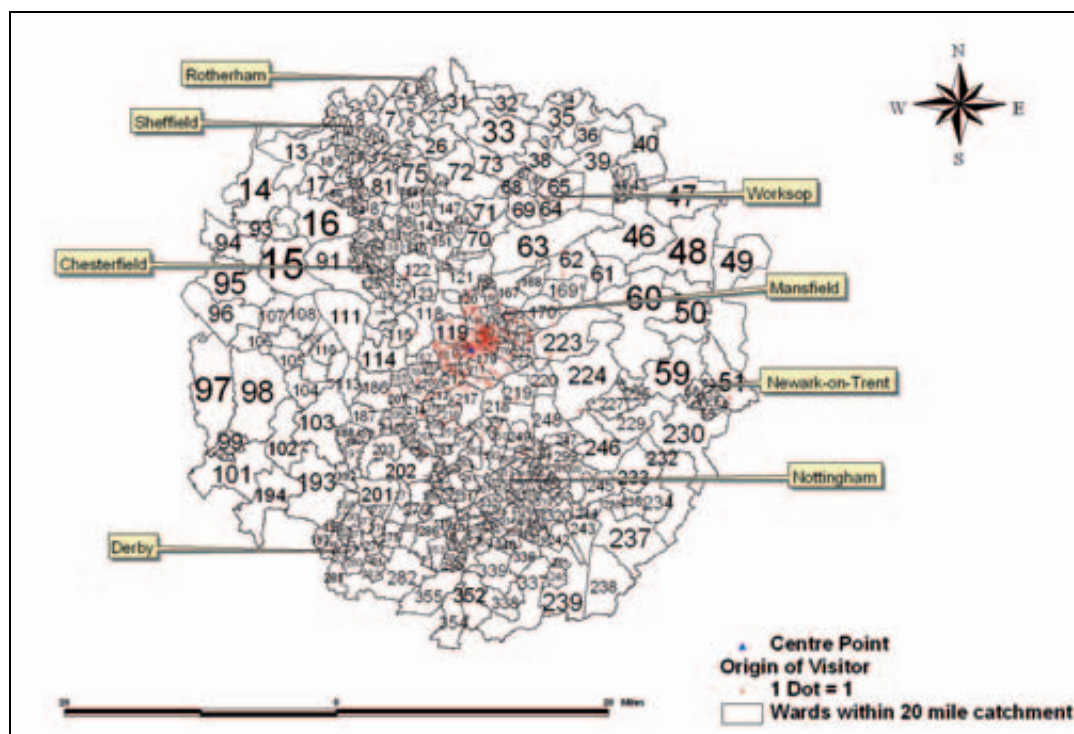
Map 2a reveals a significant clustering of visitors from wards immediately around Bestwood (from northern and central districts of Nottingham, particularly Bestwood Village, Hucknall, Eastwood, and Arnold), suggesting that Bestwood has a very localised user base.

Map 2a: Bestwood's catchment area and origin of visitors surveyed in 2006



Map 2b reveals a significant clustering of visitors around the centre of the catchment area, suggesting that Kings Mill brings in predominantly local visitors. The highest concentration of visitors are from wards in and around Sutton in Ashfield and Mansfield.

Map 2b: Kings Mill's catchment area and origin of visitors surveyed in 2006



4.2 Target groups (Bestwood & Kings Mill)

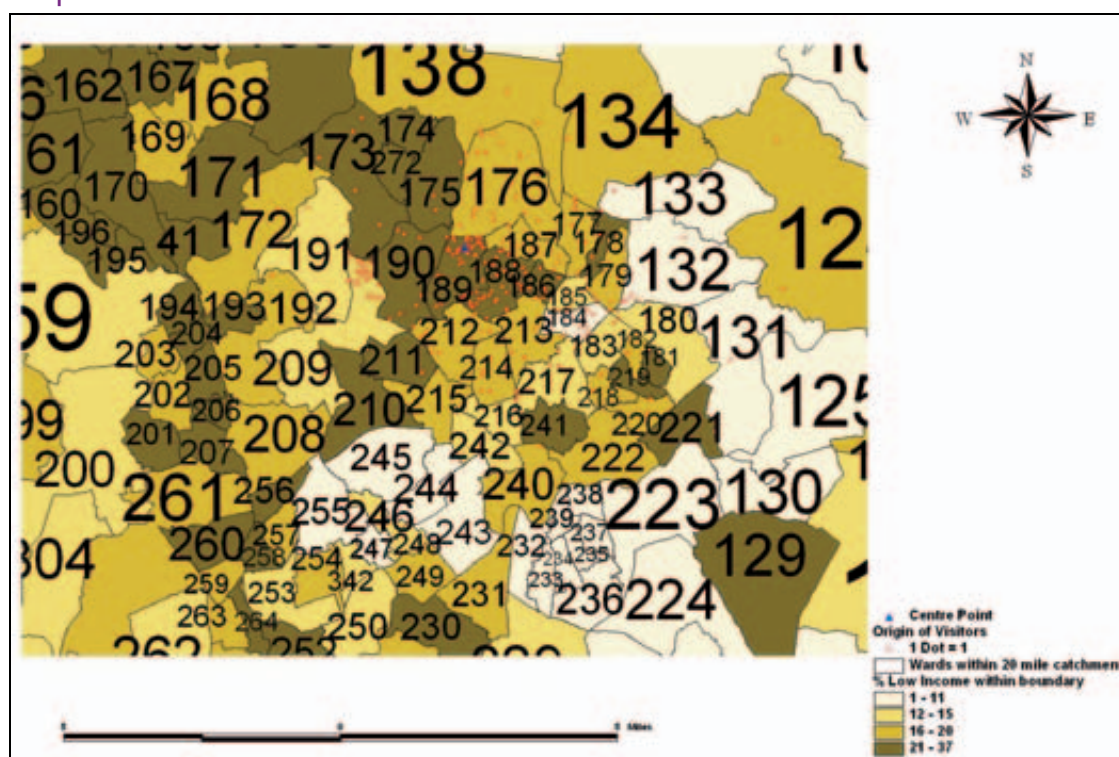
The maps below display statistical data from the 2001 Census relevant to the Active England target groups to show the spatial distribution of target group populations within the catchment areas. Maps and information relevant to the following groups are presented: people on low incomes, people with disabilities, women and girls, black and minority ethnic groups, 45+ yrs age group and young people (under 16). For each map, wards in the catchment area are colour coded in accordance with the ward categorisation system used in the Census for each indicator. The distribution range of the values for a given indicator is divided into quartiles (for example, Map 3 reflects the categorisation of wards in relation to the low income where 25% of English wards contain between 1% and 11% of families on low income). The maps also show the origin of the visitors surveyed in 2006 (as shown in Maps 2a and 2b). This enables a comparison between the spatial geography of target groups within the catchment and the geography of visitors, and reveals whether visitors to Bestwood and Kings Mill came from wards where there is a high or low representation of citizens falling within a given target group. As explained above, the demographic make-up of the catchment populations can be compared with the visitor profiles, as revealed by the on-site surveys, revealing whether each target group is adequately or under-represented amongst visitors to each of the sites.

Low income

Map 3a shows that the majority of visitors to Bestwood surveyed in 2006 came from wards where there is a relatively high concentration of families (21% to 37%) on low incomes. These include the wards of Daybrook, Bulwell, Bulwell Forest and Bestwood, and Bestwood Village, which are all close to the centre of the catchment area.

The on-site survey results show that, in 2006, people from households with low incomes (20K or less) accounted for 40% of visitors to Bestwood. In 2007, there was little change at 42%. As such, the representation of low income families in Bestwood's visitor profile is higher than in the site's catchment population. These results suggest that people from low income families are not under-represented at Bestwood.

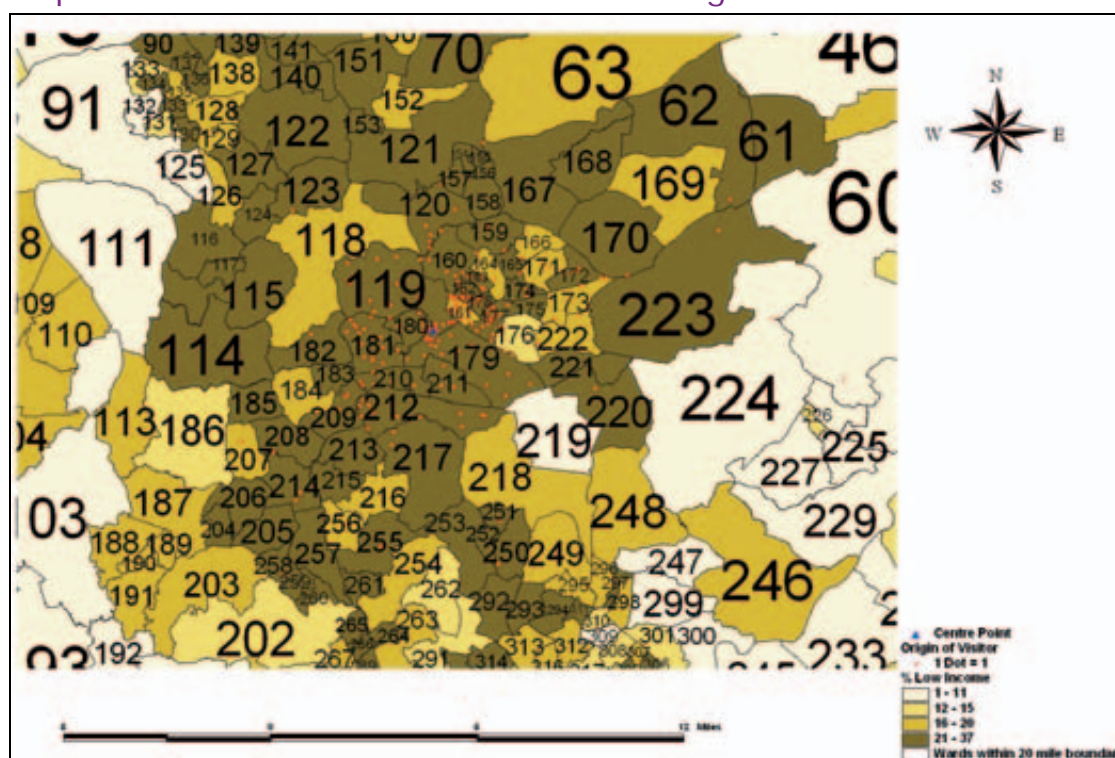
Map 3a: Low income distribution within Bestwood's catchment area



Map 3b shows that the majority of visitors to Kings Mill surveyed in 2006 came from wards where there is a relatively high concentration of families on low incomes (21% to 37%). These wards include, Sutton in Ashford Central, North, West, and East, Portland, Ladybrook, Cumberlands and Broomhill. These wards are all around the centre of the catchment area.

The on-site survey results show that, in 2006, people from households with low incomes (20K or less) accounted for 59% of visitors to Kings Mill. In 2007, there was little change at 60%. As such, the representation of low income families in Kings Mill's visitor profile is higher than in the site's catchment population. These results suggest that people from low income families are not under-represented at Kings Mill.

Map 3b: Low income distribution within Kings Mill's catchment area



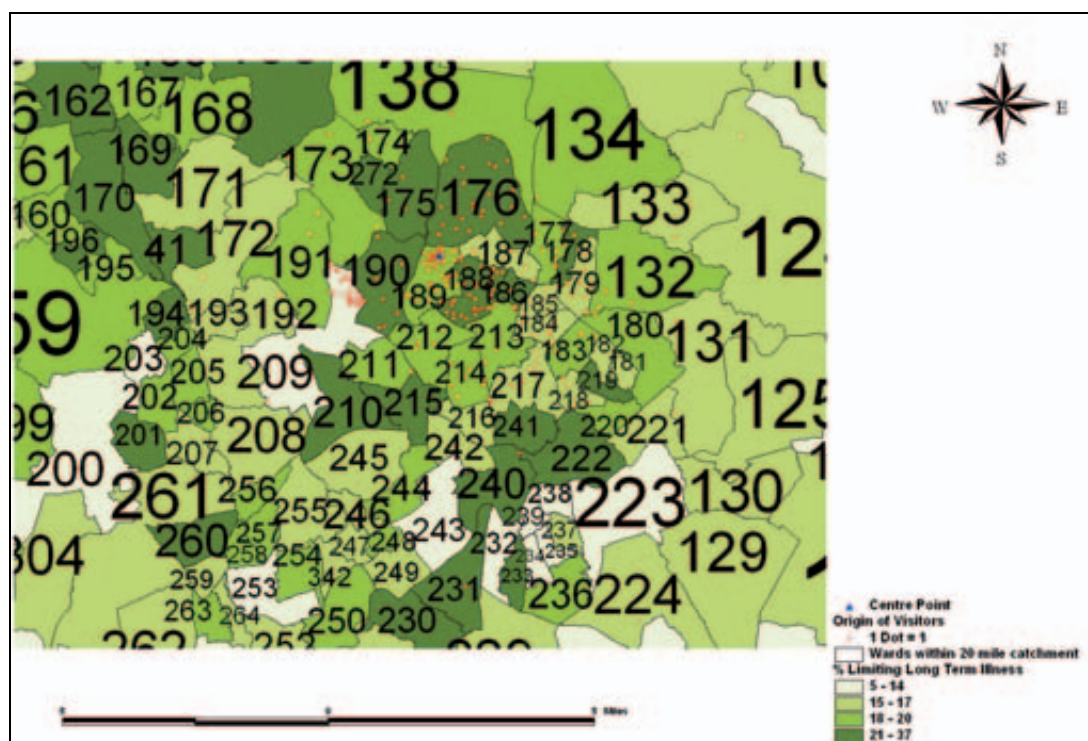
People with disabilities

Both catchment areas were profiled using the Census indicator 'Limiting long-term illness'. For both sites the results show that many visitors who were interviewed in 2006 came from wards where a relatively high percentage of people suffer from a limiting long-term illness. Around Bestwood the wards of Bestwood and Bestwood Village have a particularly high representation of people with limiting long-term illness and a significant number of visitors came from these wards (see Map 4a). Around Kings Mill the wards of Sutton in Ashford Central, Ladybrook and Broomhill have a particularly high occurrence

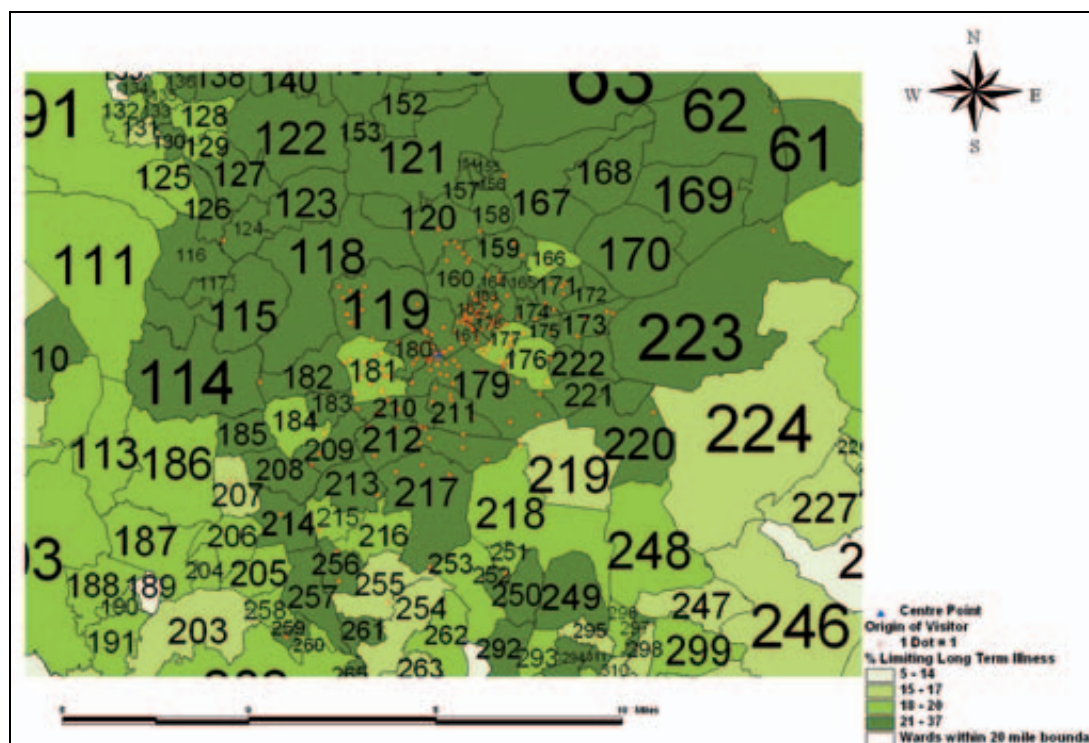
of people with limiting long-term illness and, similarly, a significant cluster of visitors came from these wards.

Respondents to the on-site surveys were asked whether they had a long term illness or health problem which limited their daily activities. At both sites, positive responses to this question remained static between 2006 and 2007, at around 8% for Bestwood, and 15% for Kings Mill. This is significantly lower than the representation of people with limiting long-term illness within the catchment (particularly in those wards immediately contiguous with the sites), suggesting that people with limiting long-term illness are under-represented at Bestwood and Kings Mill.

Map 4a: Distribution of 'Limiting and long-term illness within Bestwood catchment



Map 4b: Distribution of 'Limiting and long-term illness' within Kings Mill catchment



Women and girls

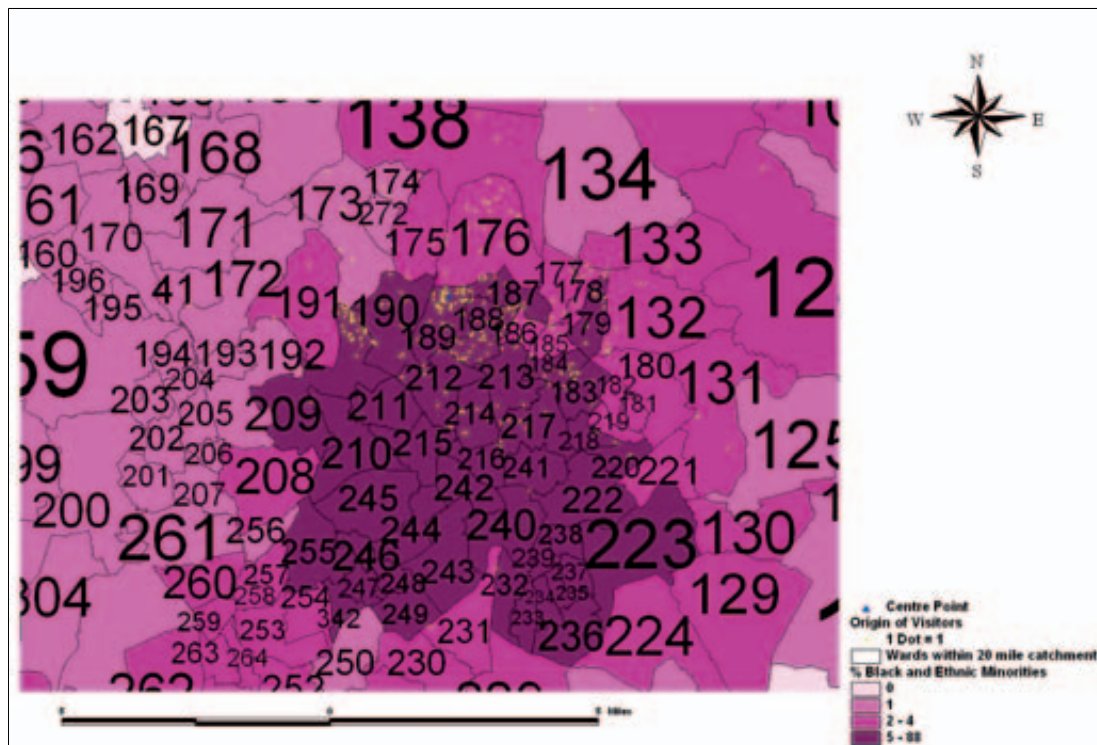
The results of the catchment profiling exercise reveal that there is little correlation between the origins of visitors interviewed during the 2006 survey and gender distribution within either of the catchments. The results of the on-site surveying indicate that a significant shift in the gender profile of visitors occurred between the two survey years. In 2006, men accounted for 59% of visitors to Bestwood and 53% of visitors to Kings Mill. In contrast, in 2007 there were more women than men coming to both sites, with women making up 59% of visitors to Bestwood and 54% of visitors to Kings Mill. These results suggest that women are well represented amongst users of both sites.

Black & minority ethnic groups

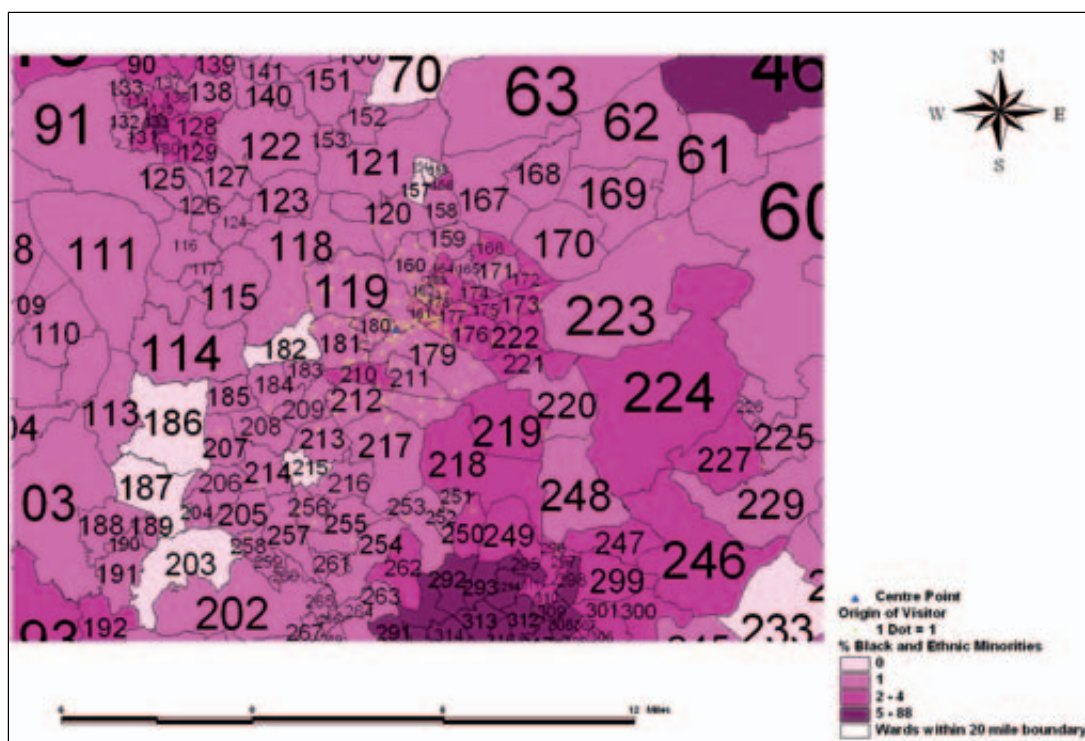
Maps 5a shows that there is a relatively high percentage of people from black and ethnic minority groups within wards in and around Nottingham. Many visitors to Bestwood came from wards in Nottingham that have a high representation of black and minority ethnic groups. These include, Nuthall East and Strelley, Bulwell Forest and Bestwood. Map 5b also show that there are a relatively high proportion of people from black and ethnic minority groups within wards in and around Nottingham. However, most of the visitors to Kings Mill interviewed during the 2006 survey are from wards with either a 1%, or a 2-4% representation of black and ethnic minority groups. Many

visitors came from wards in that have a relatively low representation of black and ethnic minorities, including Sutton in Ashfield Central, North, West and East.

Map 5a: Distribution of Black and Minority Ethnic groups within the Bestwood catchment



Map 5b: Distribution of Black and Minority Ethnic groups within the Kings Mill catchment

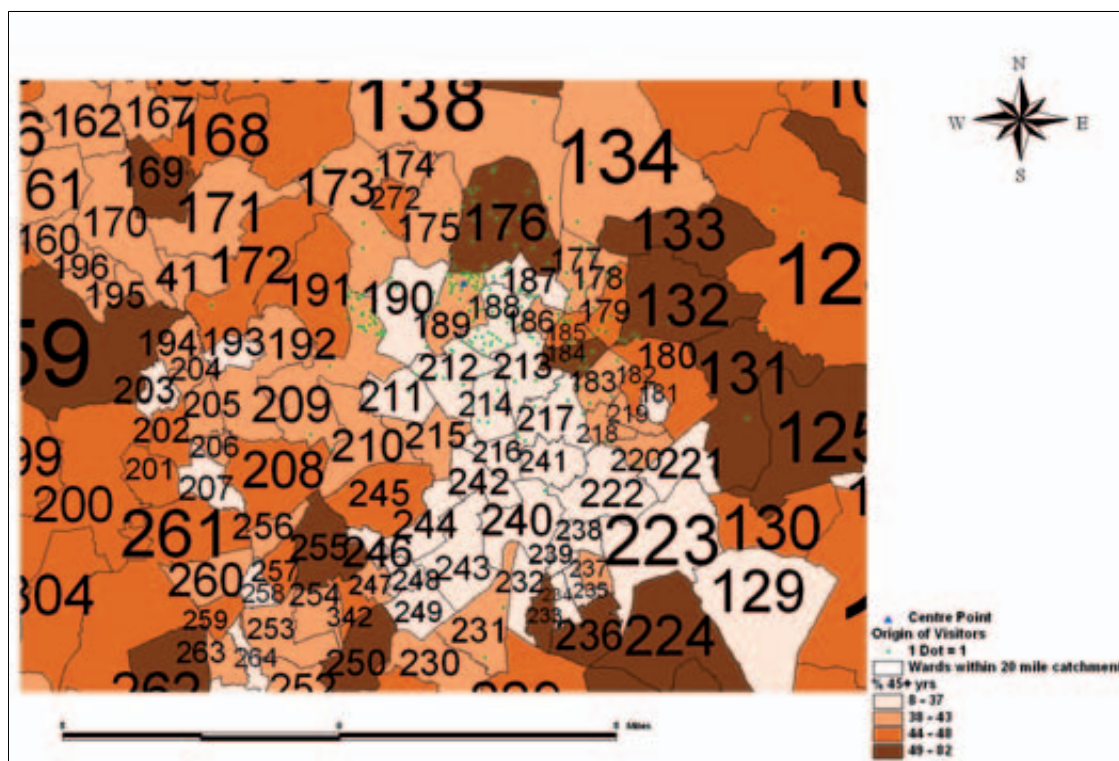


The results of the on-site surveying reveal that the vast majority of visitors to both sites are from the 'White British' ethnic category, accounting for 98% (2006) and 96% (2007) of visitors to Bestwood and 99% (2006) and 98% (2007) of visitors to Kings Mill. However, given that many visitors to Bestwood are from wards showing a 5% to 88% representation of citizens belonging to BMEs, comparisons between the visitor and catchment profiles suggest that these groups are under-represented at Bestwood. Though under-representation is less stark at Kings Mill, the very low representation of BME at this site suggest that more could be done to engage with this section of the community.

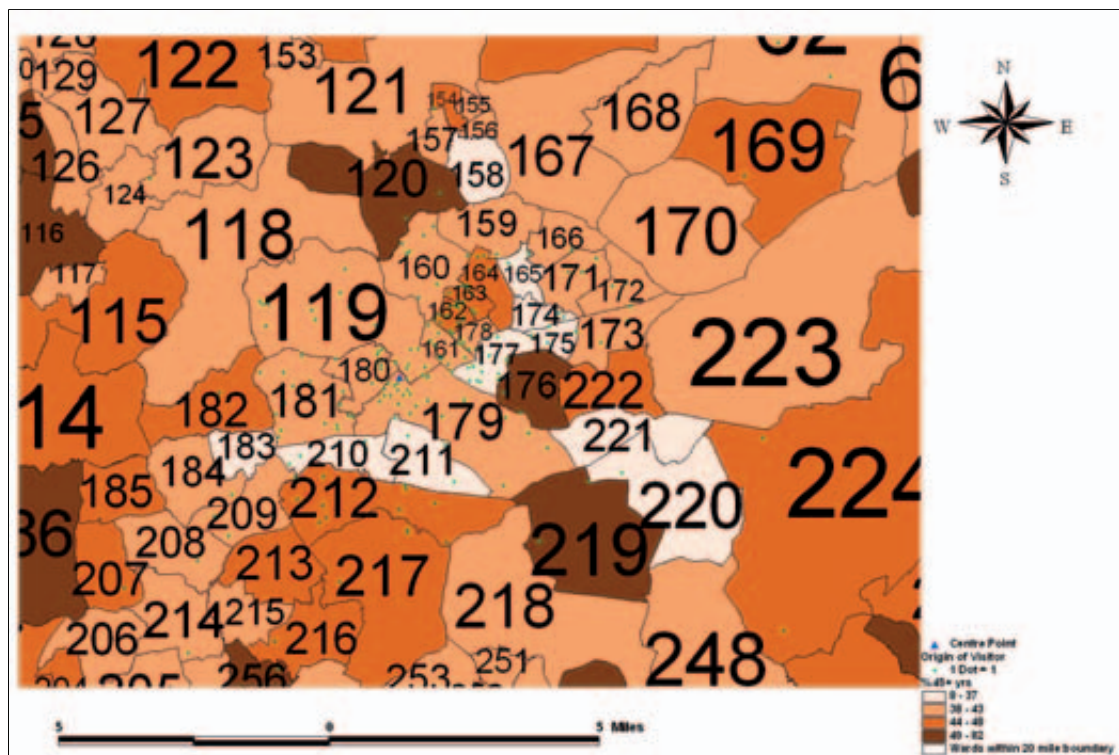
45+ years

Map 6a shows that two wards near to Bestwood (Bestwood Village and Woodthorpe) have a high concentration (49% to 82%) of people in the 45+ yrs age group. The map also shows that a significant number of respondents to the 2006 survey came from wards where the representation of 45+ yrs is lower (Bulwell Forest, where representation is 38% to 43% and Bonington and Bestwood where representation is 8% to 37%). Map 6b shows that most visitors to Kings Mill were from wards with either a 38% to 43%, or a 44% to 48% concentration of 45+ yrs.

Map 6a: Distribution of 45+ yrs in the Bestwood catchment



Map 6b: Distribution of 45+ yrs in the Kings Mill catchment

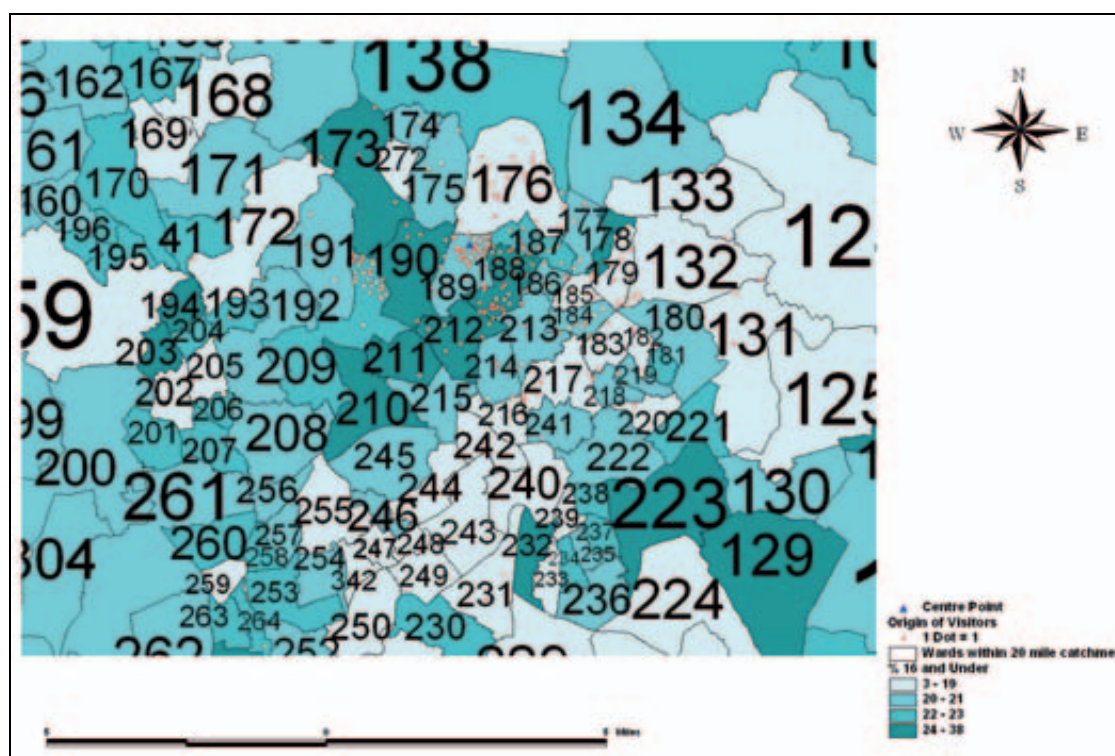


Between 2006 and 2007 there was very little change in the age profile of visitors averaged across Bestwood and Kings Mill. Visitors falling within the 16–44 yrs age group accounted for about 48% of all visitors in both survey years, while those from the 45+yrs age group accounted for about 52% of all visitors. However, there was significant variation between the two sites. For Bestwood, the 45+ yrs group only accounted for 42% of visitors in both 2006 and 2007, whilst at Kings Mill they accounted for 62% in both survey years. Interestingly, furthermore, the catchment profile reveals a relatively high concentration of this age group living in Bestwood village (49-82%), where a significant proportion of visitors reside. From this we conclude that the 45+yrs age group are not under-represented at either Bestwood or Kings Mill when compared with the wider catchment population, but that there is certainly potential to increase attendance amongst this target group at Bestwood, focusing on communities within Bestwood Village itself.

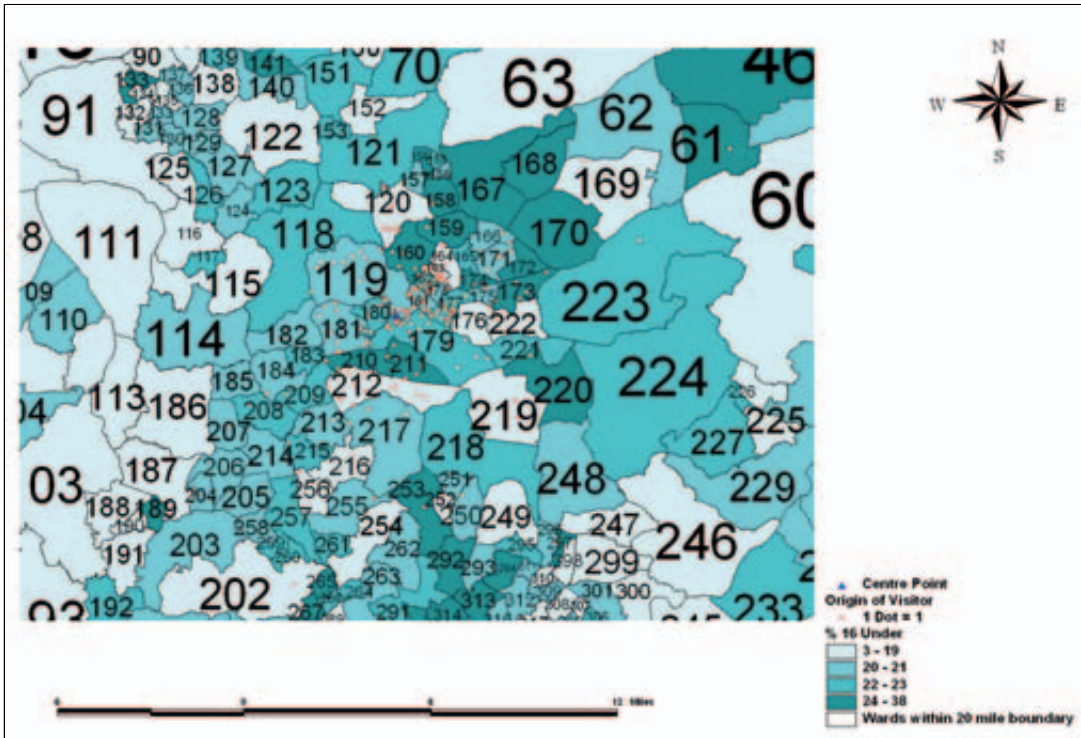
Young people (16 and under)

Map 7a shows a relatively high concentration of young people in the wards immediately contiguous with Bestwood. Given the spatial distribution of visitors, these are the most likely areas from which Bestwood will be able to draw in more young visitors. Map 7b shows similar results for Kings Mill.

Map 7a: Distribution of young people (16 yrs and under) in the Bestwood catchment



Map 7b: Distribution of young people (16 yrs and under) in the Kings Mill catchment



Because ‘under 16s’ were not interviewed in the 2006 survey, it is difficult to draw very robust conclusions about the participation of young people at either site. However, in both 2006 and 2007, adult respondents were asked if they had children living in their household aged 16 and under. There was no significant change in ‘family use’ between the survey years at either site. In 2006 the results indicate that 37% of visitors to Bestwood were from households with children under 16, while in 2007 this number rose slightly to 41%. In 2006 30% of visitors to Kings Mill were from households with children under 16, while in 2007 this number fell slightly to 29%. This is corroborated by responses to the question ‘Who did you come with?’, which showed little change in family use between the survey years. 33% of respondents at Bestwood said they had come with family in 2006, rising slightly to 37% in 2007, while the results for Kings Mill were 32% and 39% for 2006 and 2007 respectively.

In summary, based on the profiling of the catchment populations of Bestwood and Kings Mill, and based on comparisons between the catchment and visitor profiles, we can conclude that there is significant potential to increase participation amongst BME groups and people with limiting long-term illness at both sites.

4.3 Targeting qualitative research (Bestwood)

Comparisons between the catchment and visitor profiles reveal relatively low representation amongst people with limiting long-term illness, BME groups at both sites and, at Bestwood, 45+ yrs. These results were used to inform the qualitative research phase that would be implemented in order to provide explanations for low attendance levels and to explore factors that might be acting as barriers. For practical reasons of limited resources, it was decided to limit the qualitative phase to Bestwood.

A meeting was held in July 2007, attended by one researcher from Forest Research and staff members from Greenwood Community Forest involved in the 'Park Life' project to obtain agreement on the targeting of the on-going research effort, and to discuss appropriate groups and individuals to be recruited for the qualitative research phase. The research results to date were presented and discussed, along with the recommendation to focus on people with limiting long-term illness, BME groups, and 45+ yrs. However, because of limited resources, which would enable a total of two focus groups to be run at Bestwood, the decision was made to concentrate on the 45+ yrs group. This decision was shaped to a large extent by considerations of the ongoing delivery priorities at Greenwood.

In practical terms, a decision was made to run two focus groups (one 'user' and one 'non-user' group) with participants from the 45+ yrs target group.

5. Results: project evaluation with users and non-users

This section of the report presents a summary of the qualitative research phase. Results from activities and focus groups at Bestwood with the selected target group (45+ yrs) are presented, focusing in particular on the outcomes and benefits derived by people involved with the 'Park Life' project's initiatives (referred to here as 'users'), and on the barriers to participation for people who have not been involved (referred to here as 'non-users'). As such, this section presents a summary evaluation of the 'Park Life' project that is informed by and both complements and builds on the quantitative analysis presented in sections 3 and 4.

5.1 Summary of results from users

5.1.1 Over 50s walkers

Introduction to the group

A researcher from Forest Research joined a health walk on 16th July 2007 at Bestwood. The walk, which was led by a volunteer from a local walking club, was followed by a focus group discussion and lunch. Members of the group, many of whom were members of the same walking club, Arnold Amblers, had been selected from participants in a Walking Festival – a series of walking events held during the summer of 2007 at each of the sites within the ‘Park Life’ project. The festival was designed to raise awareness of local green spaces available for healthy exercise, and to provide information about the ‘Park Life’ project and guidance on how to improve health through exercise. As can be seen from the table below, the group was made up of nine people, all over 50 years old. All participants were retired. Most (7) were meeting the recommended amount of weekly exercise and the majority (7) visited local green spaces at least once a week.

Table 6: Over 50s walkers (‘users’)

Working status		Age		Income		Frequency of 30 minutes exercise		Green space use	
Retired	9	55 - 64	1	<10K	2	3 days a week	2	4-6 times a week	1
		65 - 74	6	10-20K	2			1-3 times a week	6
		75+	2	21-30K	1	5 or more days a week	7	1-3 times a month	1
								4-6 times a year	1

Attitudes to health and exercise

All participants were reasonably active, with seven out of a total of nine taking the recommended amount of weekly exercise. During the discussions, participants made reference to a broad range of activities that they thought counted as exercise. These ranged from those activities that formed part of the daily routine, such as gardening,

doing the housework, taking the dog for a walk, and walking to the shops, to specialised activities for which taking exercise was a primary motivation, such as using an exercise bike, swimming, line dancing, aerobics and Tai Chi.

Activities that form part of the daily routine were not necessarily classified as exercise, per se:

'Just got to get to the shops.'

'It's the thing I just do.'

'I walk because I just like to go out every day.'

For some participants, however, making the effort to be physically active through activities such as walking is a deliberate choice involving, for example, the conscious avoidance of alternative modes of transport:

'I have got a car but I don't use it.'

'So you make a deliberate effort to walk.'

'Yeah.'

Walking instead of either driving or using public transport was preferred by some participants because it provided the opportunity for social interaction:

'It's because you meet people as well.'

Motivations for participating in the health walks

Most participants were members of a local walking club, the Arnold Amblers. For them, healthy exercise was the primary motivation for joining the club and for regularly attending the organised walks. In this regard, joining a club and having a regular, scheduled activity was seen as a way of making sure they kept active and that they were taking exercise at a sufficient level of intensity to be good for their health:

'I find I do it because it's a commitment, where you have to go.'

'Yeah, where I'd normally do things round the village and the library, this is a commitment which actually gets you to do a specific walk, rather than just little bits here and bits there.'

Benefits of the health walks

There was general agreement amongst all participants that the activity of walking was good for their physical health. Participants explained their awareness of the physical health benefits through reference to a range of indicators that they use to measure the impact of their activities:

'Now you can walk up the stairs better.'

'Yeah. Your legs feel stronger.'

'I forget who it was, somebody told me the other week on the walk that her blood pressure had gone back to normal and she didn't have to take her tablets any more.'

'That's a good sign, isn't it?'

'It's like when you get home and you put your coat down and you think, oh, I enjoyed that.'

'You've had a good day, you say, yeah, I've had a good day.'

'And then you sleep better, don't you? You sleep that bit better.'

There was also general agreement that the activity of walking was good for their mental health. Here, there was less reference to specific signs of positive mental health impacts, rather participants talked about a general sense of well-being and an increased capacity for happiness and being able to cope:

'Yes, because you have this therapy. This is like therapy.'

'Yes, that's right, yeah.'

'And it does enable you to do other things as well.'

'Yeah, I look forward to going out walking.'

'I used to hate Mondays but I like Mondays now, that's out walk day.'

For some, the physical and mental benefits were strongly associated with exposure to particular qualities of the physical environment:

'You're out in the fresh air.'

'Yes, nice fresh air.'

'And see the wildlife, fauna and flora.'

'Yeah, that's right, all the wildlife you see, yes.'

For others, benefits were closely associated with the social dimension of taking part in organised, group activities:

'You meet different people.'

'different friends, who might be interested in reading and in whatever.'

Here, the discussions revealed a particularly strong positive relationship between the group's activities and the strong social bonds within the group. For some, the walking

group represents a kind of support network that engenders a sense of belonging and security:

'And you look after each other as well. If someone hasn't been out for a few weeks you'd think to enquire about them, wouldn't you?'

'We also have people in our group that's had experiences so if you're having trouble about something or other, benefits or whatever, they know where to go and somebody will tell you, so they do pass on a lot of helpful information and if you've got an elderly parent that's got Alzheimer's or something, oh well, you can get help here, you can take them to day care there, they're very helpful.'

Critically, there was strong evidence during the discussions that involvement in the health walks translated into a more active lifestyle generally and a positive change in attitudes towards healthy exercise:

Researcher: *'What I'm interested to know is, if that all stops will you stop?'*

'No.'

'No.'

'I'd still go out, yeah, still walk.'

'I'd still walk.'

'Maybe try and join something else though ...'

'Yes.'

Attitudes to woodlands and green space

Despite living locally, many participants had never been to Bestwood before coming to the event organised there as part of the Walking Festival:

'No, I had never been.'

'No, I ...'

'I hadn't been.'

'Had you?'

Despite a generally positive impression of the site, many said that they would feel threatened coming to a woodland on their own (here it is worth noting that 8 of the 9 participants were women):

'It's quite spooky in the dark and it gets dark early in winter.'

There was also specific reference made to anti-social behaviour at Bestwood, which for one participant, meant that the site had negative associations which acted as a barrier to her visiting:

'I'll tell you what it is. It's because it's open, there's a lot of entrance and exit points onto housing estates and you do get a lot of teenage thugs and people and quite often you get the travellers that park up on it. There has been lots of trouble in the park...'

Barriers to participation

Many participants cited lack of confidence as a significant barrier to using sites like Bestwood. Many made reference to feeling unsafe at the thought of walking alone at Bestwood:

'Well we wouldn't walk through there now up here on our own, would we, really?'
'No, it's a bit isolated.'

This general sense of feeling unsafe was expressed indirectly through references to the organised walks which were seen as a good and safe way of getting to know Bestwood:

'Because we didn't know the way around the park very well and with a guided walk we can come with someone and meet other people.'
'Yeah, but you can't walk on the Bestwood ... on your own. You don't feel safe. ...but you'd be in a group and that's all right.'

Specific reference was also made to the closed, wooded environment at Bestwood which, for some, exacerbated this sense of feeling unsafe and threatened:

'People who feel ... unsafe, yeah ... whereas if we walk by rivers or ... in the open space you feel a bit safer.'

Recommendations for Bestwood / 'Park Life'

All participants were keen to emphasise the value and importance of organised, group activities, which were seen as a key to their continued and regular participation in the health walks:

'It's important to have a group that that keeps you going.'

[General agreement]

'You're more motivated.'

'Yeah, you are, because you know when it is and there's always a cup of tea.'

[Laughter]

Individual members, particularly those who were less sure about their fitness levels, draw satisfaction from being part of a group that has developed a positive atmosphere of support and mutual respect that is manifest in the way the group organises itself to cater for different levels of ability and fitness. The discussions indicated that the group

itself has started to develop its own identity, based around a spirit of acceptance and co-operation:

'At the end of the day, they're not going to lose you. You can't go and get lost, really. Even if you're a bit late arriving there, it doesn't really matter. You're still there, you start off together and you, sometimes you see, if you think of the law of averages, you're not necessarily going to be the last one or the slowest. You see, I normally walk fairly fast, always did do. We used to walk 14, 15 [miles] when we were younger, we'd go out on walking holidays but you see now, of course, I can't do that, but you do catch up at the end of the day, you're not going to get lost.'

'Yes, but the point is if you're with an organised group somebody is in charge of you... so we start off together and about halfway those that still want to walk fast, they go off and the middle person brings the others in slower, you know, so that even so we've only done between three, four is about our most mileage.'

Despite a general sense of approval for Bestwood, some participants were critical of the lack of facilities on the site, particularly with regard to the lack of facilities for young people:

'Oh, no, let me just say about the cup of tea because that is one big drawback. 700 acres, a lot of difficulty getting here because of buses and then there is nowhere to get a cup of tea. And there aren't really water fountains anywhere either, so even if there were just cold water fountains it would be a help. But, moving on from that, you should make it more family orientated because it's the children that we're worried about getting obese and we should have picnic areas with barbecues and that sort of thing.'

'can I come on with some children's suggestions because I feel that this whole park is not geared up for children and families. It's OK for us people to do the walk and chat, we enjoy that, but there's only the play park which we didn't go as far as the play park up there. That was built by public contributions, it wasn't government funded, and there are all these horse trails. Now, there aren't many, many people that can afford horses nowadays and the horse riding is expensive, and the government seems to be going for cycle tracks and they want the school children to do cycle tests, which a lot of schools are putting in place. But there are no parks open in the area where there are specified cycle tracks, so some of these horse ways should be made into cycle tracks, which would be for children. There's, so that families can come and teenagers, and use the cycles properly. That should be number one.'

5.2 Summary of results from non-users

5.2.1 Over 45s

Introduction to the group

In April 2008 one researcher from Forest Research was joined at Bestwood by the nine women from the Sybil Levin Centre (run by Age Concern) who were all over 55 years of age (see table below). A ranger from Ashfield District Council led the group on a guided walk round part of the Country Park, involving frequent stops to provide information about features of interest and to answer questions. After the walk, the group retired to a nearby hotel, where lunch was provided and the discussions took place. All the participants were retired and most (8 respondents) take the recommended amount of weekly exercise. Most members were also regular (weekly or monthly) visitors to local green spaces (see table below).

Table 6: 45+ yrs (non-users)

Working status		Age*		Income*		Frequency of 30 minutes exercise		Green space use	
Retired	9	55 - 64	4	<10K	4	4 days a week	1	4-6 times a week	3
				10-20K	3			1-3 times a month	3
		75 +	4	21-30K	1	5 or more days a week	8	4-6 times a year	2
								1-3 times a year	1

*Total responses do not add up to 9 where questions were not answered by some respondents

Attitudes to health and exercise

The discussions revealed that most respondents are fairly active. Some go for a walk every day. All consider themselves as physically active, and they often make a conscious effort to introduce physical activity into their daily routines, through activities such as walking to the bus stop or the shops. The group was split between those who felt that they were doing the recommended amount of weekly exercise (5 x 30 minutes) and those who felt that they should be going more. The group felt that a wide range of physical activity types 'counted' (i.e. had a positive affect on health), from activities with an overtly 'sports' orientation, such as swimming, through to more mundane, everyday

tasks like housework and shopping. They agreed that it was important to take a holistic approach to health and discussed the importance of combining exercise with healthy diet. One participant mentioned that, for her, it was also important to keep an active mind, stating that this was her motivation for doing a crossword every day.

Participants were asked to discuss their motivations for keeping active. In particular, they were asked if they chose to be active for enjoyment, or through a sense of obligation to stay fit and healthy. All agreed that enjoyment and obligation were both key motivators, particularly during old age when keeping healthy is important:

'It's use it or lose it at our age!'

'I do it 'cos I enjoy it.'

The discussions then turned to the benefits of physical activity. For one participant, healthy exercise provided welcome relief from the symptoms of persistent illness:

'The doctor thinks I've got Fibromyalgia...and when I get in the morning I just can't move me arms or me legs... and I could think well I won't bother going to 'keep-fit', but once I'm here and by the time I come away I feel lovely... it's all left me.'

For another, exercise is a way of tackling ill-health:

'My cholesterol's sky high and my blood pressure's sky high and so I swim and I walk..'

In addition to the physical health benefits of exercise, the group also talked readily about the mental health benefits. When asked how they feel after exercise, many spoke of a welcome feeling of tiredness and satisfaction:

Researcher: *'How do you feel after exercise? How do you know it's done you good?'*

'Knick-knacked!'

'It's just nice that you feel able to relax...'

'You do just feel that when you sit down at night you're entitled to it..'

'You feel better in yourself...'

The whole group enjoyed the walk around Bestwood enormously and were keen to express how good they felt afterwards:

'I feel rejuvenated!'

Attitudes to woodlands and green space

Most members of the group stated that they live near to an area of green space (most live in or around the Bulwell area of Nottingham). All agreed that they enjoyed being outdoors, listing 'fresh air', 'being close to nature', 'seeing things' and 'meeting people' as the key attractions of being outdoors. One respondent said that she like the solitude of being outdoors:

'I like having some time on my own.'

The majority of the group expressed a liking for forests and woodlands and some regularly visit woodlands near to where they live (woodlands mentioned were Rufford and Sherwood). Activities in woodlands included having lunch, seeing an exhibition, photography, painting, looking at the wild flowers and bird watching. All were agreed that the chance to see wildlife (particularly birds) is a key attraction of a woodland environment, and many agreed that going into a woodland provides a welcome contrast to modern living:

'you need to go to them places [woodlands] because they've built up such a lot now, built on so you need to go... it's nice to get where there's no buildings.'

In response to questions about what makes a woodland environment good / bad for healthy exercise, there was general agreement that trees, woods and forests seem to inspire activities like walking. There were strong connection between this inspirational function and the clean environment associated with woodlands, with specific reference made to fresh air.

The group was asked to discuss any negative associations they had with woodlands. All respondents agreed that they wouldn't feel safe alone in a woodland. Here the source of danger or risk was clearly of a social nature, and had little to do with the physical environment of the forest or woodland:

'You don't put yourself in a vulnerable position, do you?'

One respondent referred to a time she got lost in a woodland, which she found 'very intimidating'.

However, there was general agreement that these fears are largely unfounded, and that fear of 'unsavoury characters' lurking in a woodland is fuelled more by media hype than it is by actual risk of attack.

'I can remember as a girl there were always dirty old men in the woods, so it hasn't changed much...'

Barriers to participation

The group was asked to discuss those factors that prevent them from using local green spaces like Bestwood for healthy exercise. Some said that bad weather was a factor:

'I try to get out unless it pours with rain...'

For one dog owner, however, bad weather was not an issue:

'You've got to go out whatever the weather's doing'

For many, living alone and not having a partner to venture out with was a significant barrier to more frequent use of green space:

'Being alone stops me going out – where do I go? Being on me own don't help.'

All agreed on the critical importance of being part of an organised group, both to provide company in which to enjoy visits to green spaces, but also to provide a structure in the form of scheduled activities.

Transport was also discussed as a significant issue, with respondents agreeing that it would be useful to have more information about bus routes and how to use the public transport network to access green spaces.

Related to the issue of transport, respondents were also of the opinion that there is little information available about local green spaces and what facilities are on offer. The researcher prompted this discussion by saying that survey-based analysis of the visitor profile had revealed that people in the over 45s age bracket were under-represented at Bestwood. When asked why they thought this was the case, one respondent replied:

'They wouldn't know it's there...'

All agreed that fear for one's personal safety is a general issue with access to green space, particularly amongst women and old people. Most expressed a reluctance to access local green spaces alone (all participants are women), and two respondents made specific reference to recent incidents of women being accosted in green spaces around the Bulwell area. Another respondent gave an account of repeat incidents of anti-social behaviour in the green space near to her house, which have discouraged her from walking her dog there:

'I live next to the footpath, which goes to the river and to the tram lines, but we've had that much problems that a lot of the neighbours on the avenue want to close it, because

there's these... they deal drugs down there and motorbikes go down there at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.. these people spoil it for everything... [general agreement]

There followed a general discussion about counter-measures to anti-social behaviour. There was general agreement about the importance of general management and up-keep of green spaces a way of discouraging anti-social behaviour and improving the safety of 'legitimate' users:

'They've started to clear it down there, cleared a lot of the trees and the shrubs along there, which is nice, y'know because it looks a lot better and it feels a lot safer.'

Evaluation of 'Park Life' / Bestwood

Because this group had not previously been involved with 'Park Life' project activities, discussions were limited to their overall impressions of Bestwood as a site for healthy exercise. The group had enjoyed their walk at Bestwood enormously and there was general agreement that more walks at Bestwood would be a nice thing to do.

The group was asked if they felt there was anything that could be improved on the site, to make it more suitable for healthy exercise and to encourage access. Some members of the group felt that the paths they had walked on were in need of a bit of maintenance, complaining that the paths were *'a bit muddy'*. Similarly, there were some general references to lack of management, with specific reference to areas which needed some new planting:

'There are some bits in this woodland that could do with some new trees, some bits that could do with a bit of maintenance on it...'

One respondent mentioned a trip to Canada where the parks she had visited all had beautifully maintained gravel paths.

However, other members of the group liked the fact that the site was not overly managed:

'Oh c'mon, it's a woodland!'

The group agreed that it was difficult to achieve the right level of maintenance and management and that it was difficult to please every visitor.

6. Discussion

The 'Park Life' project in Greenwood has enjoyed considerable success in facilitating participation amongst some target groups at Bestwood and Kings Mill (particularly amongst women and people from low income families).

Comparisons between the dynamic visitor profile and the profile of the two sites' potential catchment populations reveal that there are significant opportunities both to encourage and facilitate increased attendance and participation amongst over 45s (particularly at Bestwood) and people from BME groups.

Organised activities and events were highly valued by one group of users, who reported clear physical and mental health benefits, together with important social benefits of taking part in group activities. Users and non-users stressed the importance of organised, group activities, providing opportunities to build confidence, to meet new people and to develop and strengthen bonds of friendship and mutual support.

The research highlights the fundamental importance of 'facilitated' access for the 45+ yrs target group. This has a direct bearing on the staff resource issues raised informally by project staff, for whom the organisation and delivery of events proved to be an almost full-time occupation, leaving little time for community engagement work. Notwithstanding the enormous importance of volunteers and staff support from project partners, there is a clear need to build up an adequate staff resource to enable the efforts dedicated to delivery of events on-site to be matched with those required to actively target those sections of the community facing persistent barriers to participation.

Low levels of awareness of the project amongst visitors surveyed in 2007 leads to the conclusion that there is little overlap between those people attending the project events and organised activities and the regular, informal users of the two sites. This calls into question whether the largely events-based approach adopted by 'Park Life' has translated into the adoption of healthier, more active lifestyles amongst each site's user-base. It may be, however, that people who attended 'Park Life' events are choosing alternative locations to take exercise.

Further key recommendations and 'lessons learnt' are presented in the main evaluation report, drawing on research findings from across the five woodland projects.

References:

Greenwood Community Forest (2006) *Park Life annual report (2005/06)*

Greenwood Community Forest (2007) *Park Life annual report (2006/07)*

Greenwood Community Forest (2008a) *Park Life annual report (2007/08)*

Greenwood Community Forest (2008b) *Park Life Final Report*