

Active England Haldon Forest Park Report

Liz O'Brien and Jake Morris
Social and Economic Research Group
2009



Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Key findings	4
2. Haldon Forest Park: design and implementation	6
2.1 Activities aimed at target groups	6
3. Results: on site surveys and project monitoring	9
3.1 Haldon's changing visitor profile	9
3.2 Haldon's changing visit profile	14
3.3 Changes in target group behaviour at Haldon Forest Park	17
3.4 Data collected by site staff	20
4. Results: catchment profiling	23
4.1 Catchment area	23
4.2 Target groups	25
4.3 Targeting qualitative research	29
5. Results: project evaluation with users and non-users	30
5.1 Summary of results from users: women's mountain bike group	30
5.2 Summary of results from non-users: over 55s group	34
5.3 Summary of site representative's views	36
6. Discussion	40
References	40

1. Introduction

This report provides information about the design and delivery of the Active England funded project at Haldon Forest Park in Devon and the results of research conducted by Forest Research between 2005 and 2008 to monitor and evaluate the project. 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 and Haldon Forest Park in Devon was one of them receiving an Active England award of approximately £800,000 for a three year project. The other four woodland projects were at Bedgebury in Kent, Rosliston in the National Forest Derbyshire, Great Western Community Forest in Wiltshire and Greenwood Community Forest in Nottinghamshire. 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 and those aged 45 and over.

A range of methods were used to collect data as part of this research across the five projects and these included:

- 1) On-site surveys to profile visitors and types of visits (694 questionnaires were completed at Haldon Forest Park).
- 2) Spatial analysis to produce a catchment profile of the surrounding population of each site.
- 3) Qualitative research (with 17 people and 2 site staff at Haldon Forest Park) to explore the benefits and barriers to using green spaces for physical activity (targeting both users of the projects and non-users). Interviews with project staff explored the challenges and successes of the projects.

This section provides the introduction and key findings of the research. Section 2 provides information on the design and implementation of the project at Haldon. Section 3 describes the monitoring activities indicated by results from the site surveys undertaken in autumn 2005 (before the project started) and 2006/7 (when the project was running). This outlines the changing visitor profile and changing visit profile between the surveys and identifies changes in target group behaviour, and data collected by site staff. Section 4 compares the visitor profile provided by the site surveys and the profile of Haldon's catchment, provided by a spatial analysis of socio-demographic variables for an area around the site. Section 5 presents results of the qualitative research with project users (womens mountain bike group) and non-users (over 55s group). An analysis of their perceptions of the project, their health and physical exercise levels and any barriers to use are presented. This is complemented by an account of feedback from the site representatives about the progress of the project. The inclusion of non-users in the overall evaluation constitutes an important innovation of this research project.

This report can be read on its own or in conjunction with the other individual site reports¹. The main overarching report 'Active England: the Woodland Projects' brings together the key comparative findings across the five woodland projects and places the work in the context of current health concerns; it also outlines in more detail the methodology that was used across the five woodlands projects.

1.1 Key Findings

Impact on target groups: on site survey and site monitoring

- Visitors increased from approximately 80,000 in 2006/7² to 224,280 in 2007/8.
- There was a significant increase in family use of the site from 31% in 2005 to 61% in 2007. This suggests a significant rise in the number of under 16s using the site due to the new play equipment installed and new family walking and cycling trails.
- There were equal numbers of men and women visiting the site over the two years.
- There was a decline in the 45+ age group visiting the site between the two years.
- There was a significant increase in Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups between the two years, particularly white non British visitors from 1% in 2005 to 6% in 2007 ($p < 0.05$).
- There was a large decrease in the number of people reporting a lack of facilities on site as a barrier to using the site from 17% in 2005 to 2% in 2007.
- There was an increase in first time visitors from 10% in 2005 to 24% in 2007.
- There were significant increases in cycling, mountain biking and play activities.
- There was an increase in the average length of time spent at the site from 1.5 hours to 2.2 hours.
- There was a significant increase in people doing multiple activities from 48% to 61%.
- There was a large decrease in people reporting anti social behaviour (from 16% to 4%) as a barrier to accessing the site.
- In 2007 42% of respondents said the new facilities would make them more active.

Catchment profiling

- The spatial profiling of the catchment surrounding the site 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 the site compared with concentrations of those groups within the catchment.
- The profiling enabled the researchers to identify target groups that were not involved in the project and to bring them to the site to explore barriers to access.

¹ These can be found at: <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/activeengland>

² In the financial year April 2006 to March 2007.

- Comparing the catchment profile with the site surveys suggests that there is a slight under-representation of low income groups and no specific under-representation of BME groups.

Qualitative research with project users and non-users and site staff

- For the women mountain bikers (user group) key benefits of engagement in the project were experiencing a sense of adventure and fun from participating in this activity. The women also wanted to learn how to improve their mountain biking skills and enjoyed socialising in a women only group without pressure to compete with male riders.
- For the over 55s age group who were non-users of the project a key barrier was lack of awareness of the new facilities and opportunities at Haldon. Having green spaces near to where they lived meant that Haldon was not top of their priorities as a place to visit. For the women in the group safety was a concern for some of them particularly if they were on their own.
- Project staff felt there was a need to be able to be flexible in developing outreach work and activities with target groups. A key part of the outreach work was to give people confidence, and interest, to come back to the site on their own or with friends, or through another organised group.

2. Haldon Forest Park: design and implementation

Haldon Forest Park in Devon is managed by Forestry Commission England; it is approximately 1,416 hectares in size, situated on a hill and 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, 2007) and led to the creation of:

- an all ability play trail with traditional and natural play features
- a central hub with information and a ranger presence
- a butterfly trail
- a sensory trail at Mamhead (this is away from the central hub area at Haldon – i.e. the main car park area)
- a family cycle track
- cycle trail
- adventure cycle track
- a 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 and they developed a range of activities and events as part of the project at Haldon Forest Park through targeted outreach work.

In 2004 The Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World (CCANW, 2008) and the Forestry Commission (FC) formed a partnership and in 2006 a project space was created out of a converted FC building. This was launched at the same time as the Active England project at Haldon Forest. CCANW run a programme of exhibitions, artist projects and educational activities. It also organises live events and works with literature, music and dance. This adds another dimension to the site to attract different groups of people³. Go Ape⁴ was launched at Haldon in March 2008 and has attracted younger people to the site.

2.1 Activities aimed at target groups

The Active England programme focused on the following key target groups:

- women and girls

³ CCANW was not funded through the Active England project

⁴ Not funded through Active England project, Go Ape is a high wire forest adventure course with rope bridges and zip wires.

- 45+ yrs age group
- people on low incomes
- black and minority ethnic groups (BME)
- people with disabilities
- young people (under 16).

At Haldon these groups or sub-sections of these groups were targeted in some of the ways described below (Powles, 2007). These give an indication of the ways in which the Outreach ranger has drawn new audiences to Haldon; however it does not cover all the work undertaken as part of the project.

Low income and those at risk from social exclusion

Children from deprived areas in Torbay benefited from a partnership between FC and Torbay Council Youth Service through a mountain bike training scheme. Six sessions were organised with 20 children undertaking the scheme with bikes that had been provided by the police. Schools in Wonford (Exeter District) had funded trips to Haldon to include health walks, den building, forest games and education work. A teddy bear picnic was arranged for 25 'at risk' families from mid-Devon in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust. Two training days were held at Haldon to improve links with traveller communities and increase knowledge about land occupation and housing. Two of the traveller families used the forest classroom to hold birthday parties. Ranger led visits were also run for young carers in Devon through the Exminster League of Friends giving the carers an opportunity to interact and share experiences as well as have fun.

Women and girls

Two trips were funded for teenage mothers from Kingsteignton to visit Haldon with their children and undertake walks and have a picnic. Brownie groups visit the site and are guided by a site ranger. Night walks were arranged for local guide groups and two womens groups attached to churches in the Wonford and St Thomas's areas of Exeter. A womens mountain bike club was set up and meets once a week for a ride at Haldon, as mountain biking is often viewed as a predominantly male dominated sport a womens group can attract those who are interested in gaining experience without feeling the need to compete or keep up with male riders.

Disabled

Voluntary conservation activities are run weekly with a group of adults with learning disabilities with 'Parika Active for Life' organisation. Site rangers lead the group. A ranger led 'green gym' was set up for adults with depression to aid them back into work. The activity is now open to all. Benefits for the original group included the opportunity to socialise and work with others. As part of the project Wistlandpound which is part of FC's south west district and is situated in north Devon gained funding as part of the project. 'Discover Wistlandpound' is a partnership between Calvert Trust Exmoor, FC and

South West Lakes Trust. The key goal of the partnership is to provide disabled people with open access to the trails and visitor facilities on site. The South West Lakes Trust is a conservation and recreation charity and the Calvert Trust Exmoor provides outdoor challenging activities for 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. However data collection for the Active England Project has focused on the Haldon site and data from Wistlandpound has not been easily available.

45+ years of age

A range of mobility impaired pensioners from the Estuary League of Friends were given talks by the Haldon rangers and participated in three visits to the site for a drive tour through the forest to see different viewpoints followed by a short walk. Many of the pensioners had visited the site years previously but had not been recently due to mobility problems. The approach taken with this group is thought of as a suitable model for other mobility restricted groups. A group of ninety from the Exeter Second Forum was given a ranger talk and their walking group took part in a site walk. Four progressively harder walks were organised for a group of thirty from the University of the Third Age, an approach designed to encourage them to improve physical ability.

Under 16s and families

The adventure cycle trail and family cycle trail offers opportunities for beginners and those with more experience. The cycle franchise at Haldon provides opportunities for bike hire on site. There are also showers, and the bike hire outlet has a hose pipe for cleaning bikes; charged at £1. An imaginative children's play area has been developed for children, there is also a play trail with unusual and imaginative play pieces and opportunities are made available for den building and free play. These facilities mean that children and families can be active and play throughout the forest.

Others

A free ride area is available for those with technical mountain bike skills and the Haldon Freeriders, which is a membership group, has worked with FC to create suitable challenges for those who are interested. A new club facility is being developed on the site (Davies, 2008). A health walk leader and group from a nearby health living centre come to the site once a month to undertake a health walk. A range of events and other activities are held on site throughout the year.

3. Results: on site surveys and project monitoring

This section provides information on the changing visitor and visit profile at Haldon Forest Park between the surveys in autumn 2005 and 2007 and presents an analysis of changes in behaviour amongst those respondents from the Active England target groups. It is clear that some of the changes identified over the period of the two surveys can be attributed to the Active England Project and the infrastructure improvements and activities that have been put in place. However for other changes the causes are not necessarily clear and could be due to a range of issues not related to the Active England project. Further surveys over a period of a few years would be needed to explore some of these changes to potentially identify relevant long term trends.

3.1 Haldon's changing visitor profile

Representation of target groups

Target groups for Haldon followed those of the Active England Programme in general. Only people of 16 years and over were interviewed for the site surveys, however those under sixteen may be represented via the question about whether people visited with their family which would often included children.

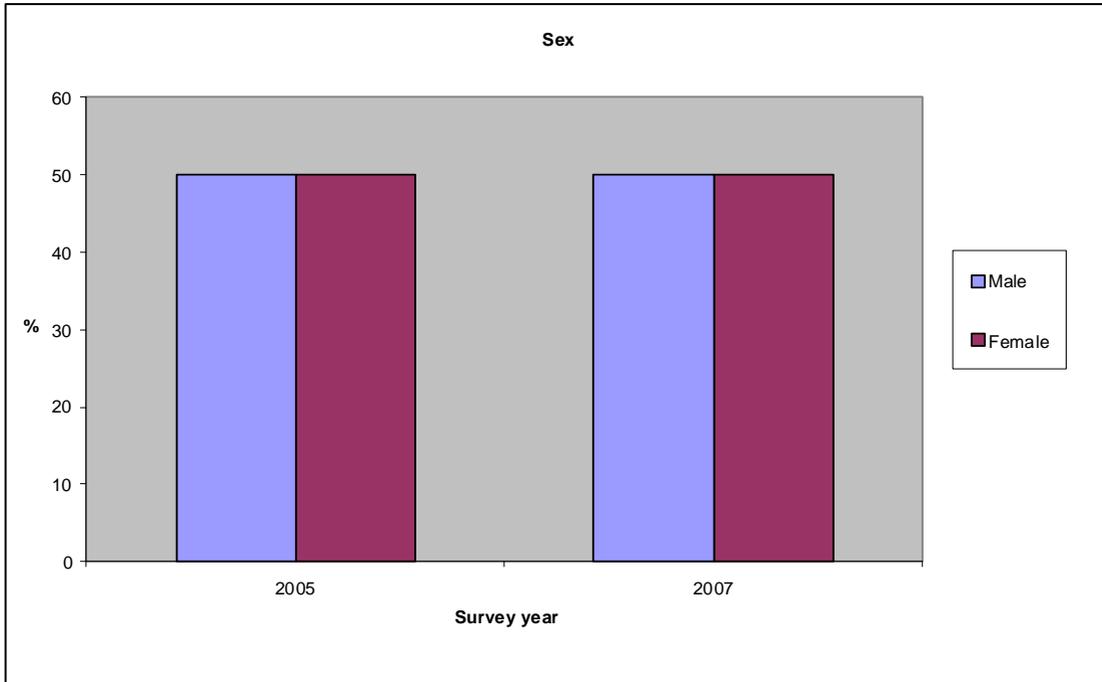
A total of 694 people were surveyed at Haldon during the study period, 319 in summer 2005 and 375 in summer 2006/2007⁵.

Women and girls

Figure 1 shows that there were equal numbers of men and women visiting the site over the two years.

⁵ 68 respondents were surveyed in 2006 and 307 in 2007. These two surveys have been joined together and are represented as 2007 data (occasionally it says 2006/7 on the graphs) as they happened after the project was up and running i.e. they are not baseline data.

Figure 1: Male and female visitors to Haldon



45+ yrs age group

There was a significant decline in the 45+ age group visiting the site between the two years (Table 1), conversely there was a marked increase in the 16-44 age group visiting Haldon between 2005 and 2007 from 37% to 58%, ($p < 0.001$). There has been a significant decrease from 24% to 13% in retired visitors between the two years ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 2).

This is confirmed by the question asking respondents who they came to the site with. Basically more families are visiting Haldon, an increase from 31% in 2005 to 61% in 2007. This is highly likely to be because of the new facilities such as the play area, family cycle trail, bike hire facility and walking trails.

Table 1: Age classes at Haldon over the two years
Age class * Year Crosstabulation

			Year		Total
			2005	2006/7	
Age class	16-24	Count	11	16	27
		% within Year	3.4%	4.3%	3.9%
	25-34	Count	42	79	121
		% within Year	13.2%	21.2%	17.5%
	35-44	Count	66	119	185
		% within Year	20.7%	32.0%	26.8%
	45-54	Count	64	76	140
		% within Year	20.1%	20.4%	20.3%
	55-64	Count	81	49	130
		% within Year	25.4%	13.2%	18.8%
	65-75	Count	41	27	68
		% within Year	12.9%	7.3%	9.8%
	75+	Count	14	6	20
		% within Year	4.4%	1.6%	2.9%
Total		Count	319	372	691
		% within Year	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

People on low incomes
Table 2: Income per household
45+ Age Group * What is your approximate annual income in household? Crosstabulation

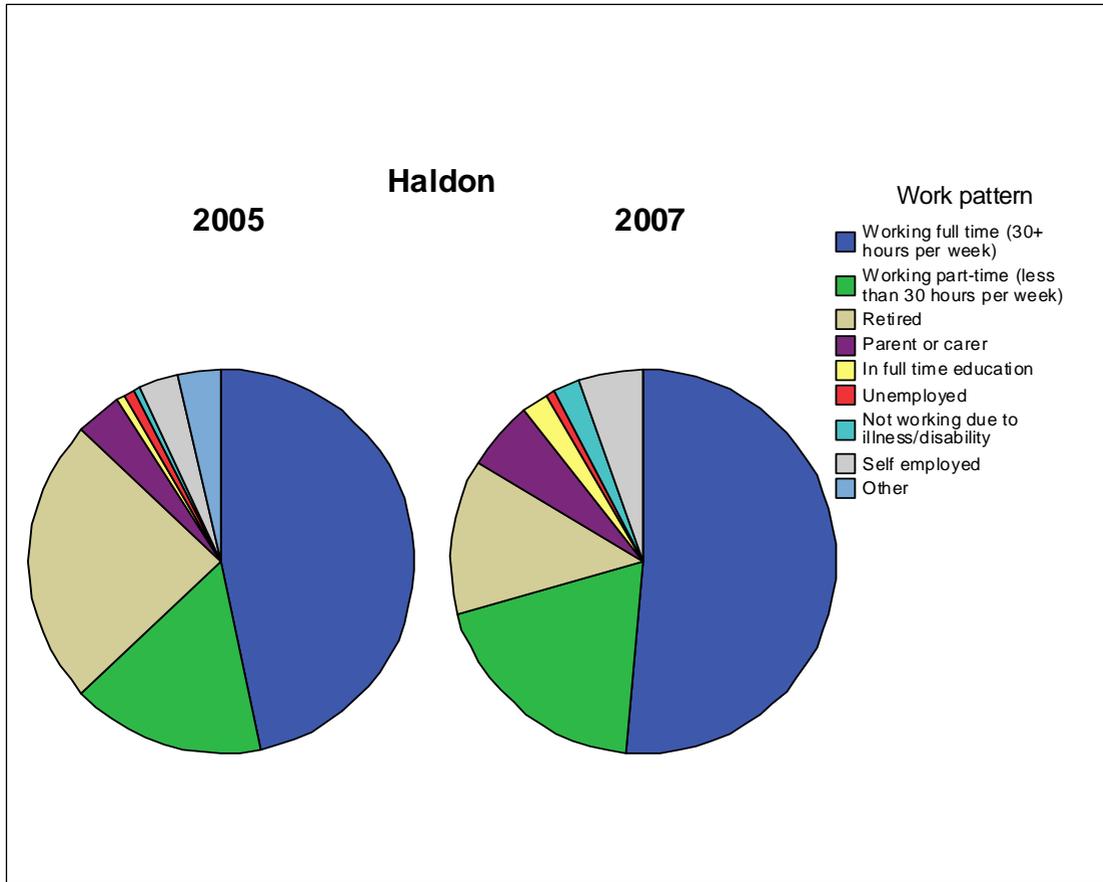
			What is your approximate annual income in household?					Total
			Under £10,000	£10,000 - £20,000	£21,000 - £30,000	£31,000 - £50,000	Over £50,000	
45+ Age Group	16-44	Count	13	65	96	91	35	300
		% within 45+ Age Group	4.3%	21.7%	32.0%	30.3%	11.7%	100.0%
	45+	Count	30	70	93	69	28	290
		% within 45+ Age Group	10.3%	24.1%	32.1%	23.8%	9.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	43	135	189	160	63	590
		% within 45+ Age Group	7.3%	22.9%	32.0%	27.1%	10.7%	100.0%

Table 2 shows there has been an increase over the two years of visitors with higher income levels. This may potentially be due to an increase in visitors in the 16-44 age range.

The above frequency distribution shows that the Haldon 16-44 age group earn significantly more than the 45+ group, ($p < 0.01$).

There was an increase in those working full time and part time visiting the site, as well as those in full time education, self employed and not working due to illness or disability (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Work patterns of visitors



Black and ethnic minority groups

In the 2005 survey 99% of respondents classed themselves as White British, this reduced to 94% in 2007. There has been a significant increase in respondents from other White backgrounds (i.e. not British) from 1% in 2005 to 6% in 2007, (p<0.05).

People with disabilities

Blue badge holders (this is a scheme which provides a range of parking benefits for disabled people with severe walking difficulties who travel either as drivers or as passengers) decreased from 6% to 3% during the course of the two surveys and registered disabled from 4% to 2%.

Young people (under 16)

In the 2005 and 2007 surveys respondents were asked if they had any children living in their household aged 16 years and under. In 2005 the results indicate that 25% had children this age in their household, while in 2007 this rose to 49%. We have not tracked directly under 16 year old usage at Haldon, however when people were asked who they

came to the site with it showed that family use of the site had significantly increased from 31% in 2005 to 61% in 2007 ($p < 0.001$).

Further information about visitors

Exercise levels

In 2005 respondents were doing 30 minutes of exercise a day on a mean of 4.9 days of the week which is very close to the recommended level of 30 minutes on at least five days a week. In the 2007 survey this fell to a mean of 3.5 days on which 30 minutes of exercise was undertaken. This means that the site is still attracting people who could benefit from increasing their activity levels.

Current fitness

Table 3 outlines slight increases or decreases in self reported fitness over the two years.

Table 3: Respondents' current level of perceived fitness

	2005	2007
Very unfit	2%	1%
Unfit	8%	7%
Neither fit nor unfit	34%	42%
Fit	51%	42%
Very fit	5%	8%

Long term illness

Respondents were asked whether they had a long term illness or health problem which limited their daily activities or the work they could do. In 2005 13% ($n=42$) stated this was the case and in 2007 only 8% ($n=30$) stated this. This shows a significant decline ($p < 0.05$) between the years. A potential explanation for this is that the 2007 survey shows more people in the 16-44 age group visiting Haldon and this age group may be less likely to suffer from long term illness.

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. In 2005 13% ($n=41$) stated that their doctor had recommended them to increase their physical activity, however this declined to 5% ($n=18$) in 2007. The explanation for this may be similar to that given above of a younger (potentially healthier) section of the population visiting the site.

Barriers to visiting Haldon

Although the respondents in the questionnaire were all at Haldon when they were interviewed and therefore had overcome any barriers they may have had in getting to the site, we asked whether there were barriers to using Haldon for more physical activity. These categories were pre-determined by the researchers based on previous studies outlining the potential range of barriers to accessing woodlands.

There was a large decrease in people reporting a lack of facilities at the site from 17% in 2005 to 2% in 2007. There was also a decrease in anti-social behaviour being seen as a barrier from 16% in 2005 to 4% in 2007. There was an increase in people classing the weather as a barrier from 14% in 2005 to 17% in 2007 (Figure 3).

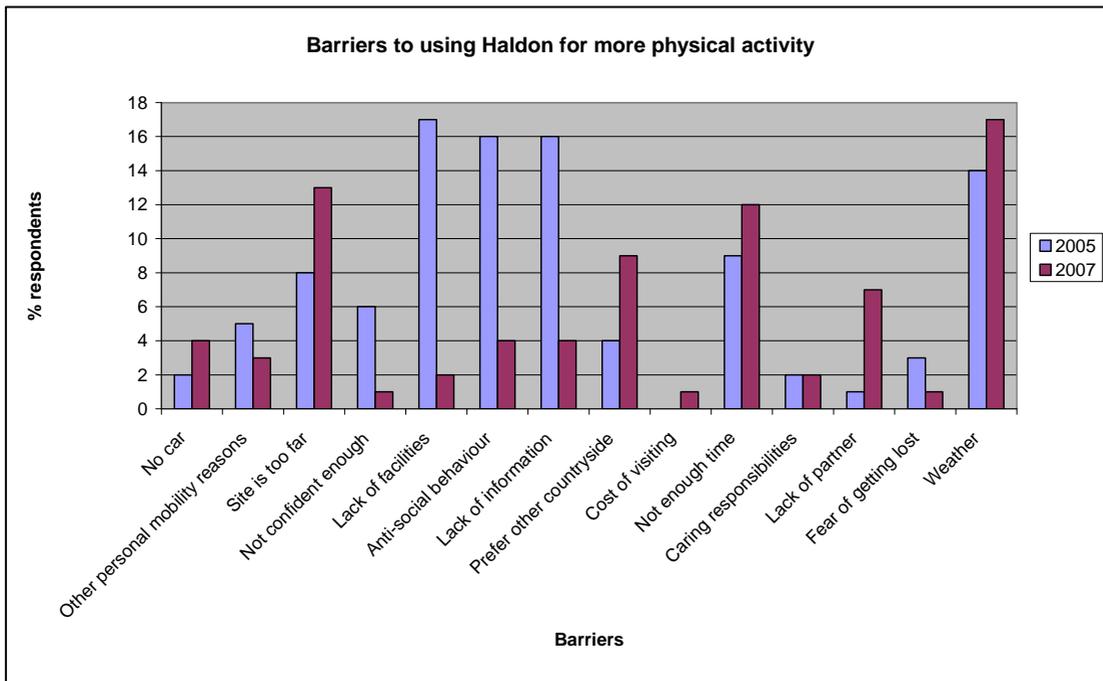


Figure 3: Barriers to using Haldon for more physical activity

3.2 Haldon’s changing visit profile

Haldon showed an increase in the proportion of first time visitors to the site from 10% in 2005 to 24% in 2007 ($p < 0.001$). This means that Haldon is attracting more first time visitors probably due to the extra facilities it now has available. In 2007 64% ($n=196$) of the visitors were aware of the new facilities at Haldon while 36% ($n=111$) were unaware. 42% ($n=130$) stated that the new facilities would make them more active.

How often do you visit Haldon?

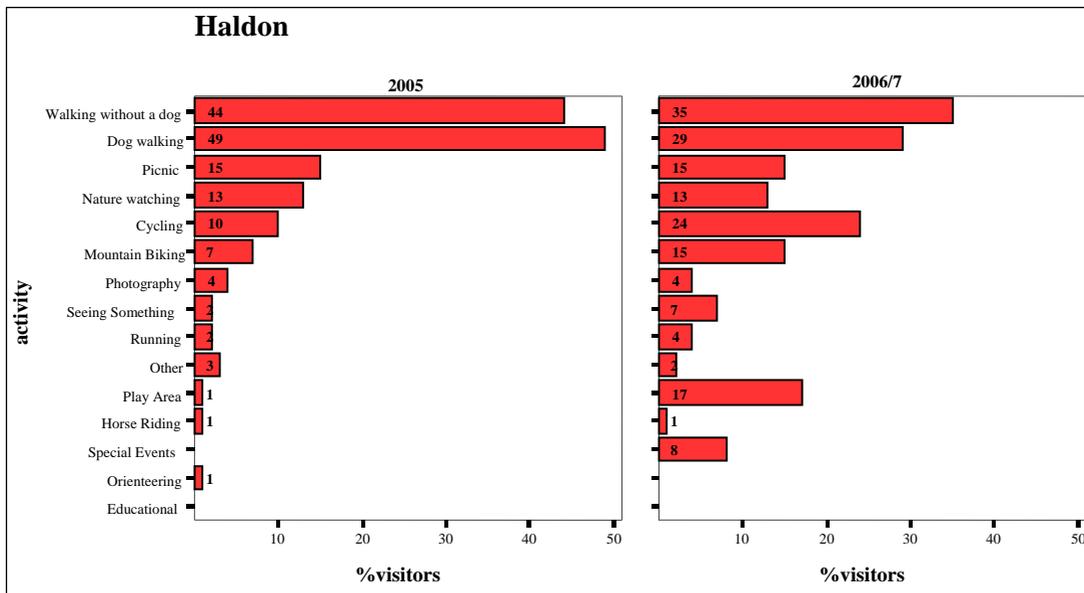
Visiting frequencies were significantly lower in 2007, ($p < 0.01$), probably due to the wet summer of 2007.

Table 4: Frequency of visiting Haldon Forest Park

		% within Year						Total	
		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
Year	2005	11%	8%	24%	24%	9%	15%	9%	100%
	2006/7	4%	2%	26%	28%	18%	15%	7%	100%

What do you usually do at Haldon?

There was a significant ($p < 0.01$) increase in people doing multiple activities at Haldon from 48% to 61%, again highlighting the increased opportunities provided by the new infrastructure on site.

Figure 4: Activities undertaken at Haldon


There was a significant increase in cycling at Haldon from 10% to 24% in 2007, ($p < 0.001$). There was also a significant increase in mountain biking from 7% to 15% ($p < 0.01$). There was a significantly large increase in those using the play area from 1% to 17%, ($p < 0.001$). This highlights the impact of the new facilities at Haldon.

How did you hear about Haldon?

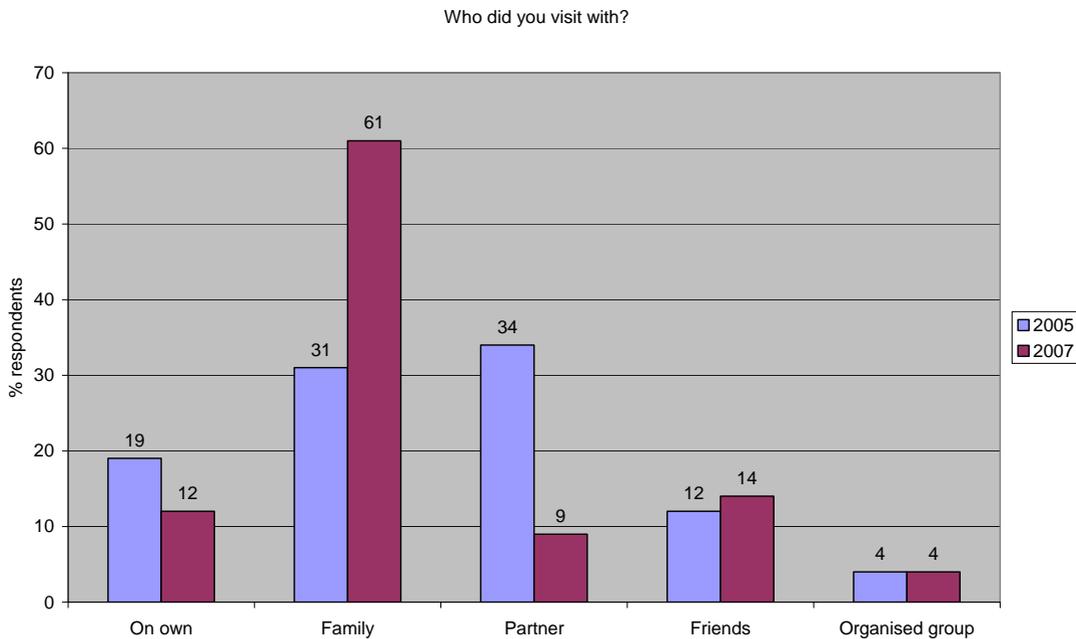
Visitors to Haldon identified a number of media that promoted an initial awareness of the forest. The top 5 media for 2005 and 2007 are given in Table 5. Word of mouth from friends or relations is particularly important in getting people to visit the site.

Table 5: How visitors heard about Haldon

2005		2007	
Friends/Relations	38%	Friends/Relations	53%
Road signs	22%	Road signs	15%
Local map	15%	Local map	4%
FC Website/leaflets	12%	FC Website/leaflets	16%
Tourist Centre	4%	Tourist Centre	5%

Who did you come to Haldon with?

Figure 5 shows that more families were visiting in 2007, and more people with friends, however visiting on one's own, or with a partner declined.

Figure 5: Visiting with others or alone


How did you get to Haldon?

Table 6 shows that the majority of visitors travelled to the site by car, few were walking or cycling to the site.

Table 6: Travel to the site
Q10 How did you get here today? * Year Crosstabulation

Count		Year		Total
		2005	2006	
Q10 How did you get here today?	Walk	11	5	16
	Car	301	339	640
	Bicycle	3	12	15
	Minibus or Coach	4	9	13
	Other	0	7	7
Total		319	372	691

How long does your visit last, on average?

Respondents were asked how long on average their visits lasted and options ranged from 15 minutes to over 5 hours. The average length of visit to Haldon increased from just less than 1.5 hours in 2005 to nearly 2.2 hours in 2007 suggesting that the improvements in infrastructure act as an incentive for people to stay longer at the site, giving people more things to do.

How far do you live from Haldon?

Respondents were asked how far away they lived from the site from less than 1 mile to over 20 miles. The average travel distance increased from 8.5 miles in 2005 to just over 11 miles in 2007.

3.3 Changes in target group behaviour at Haldon Forest Park

Due to the low numbers of diverse ethnic groups and disabled groups in the site surveys, the target groups discussed here include women, over 45s and those on low income. In this section we explore whether there were any changes in the types of activities, self-reported fitness levels, exercise levels and barriers to accessing the wood for these target groups.

Women

Changes in activities

In terms of activities for women dog walking decreased from 54% to 24% ($p < 0.001$), while cycling and the use of the play area increased significantly – 11% to 29% ($p < 0.001$) for cycling and 1% to 20% ($p < 0.001$) for the play area. Picnicking also increased from 13% to 22% ($p < 0.05$) and special events from 1% to 13% ($p < 0.001$).

Changes in exercise levels

There was no significant change in the women's self reported fitness levels, however there was a significant decrease in the numbers of women undertaking 30 minutes of exercise on at least five days a week from 72% to 34% ($p < 0.001$). It is difficult to understand the possible cause of this, apart from saying that in 2007 the site appeared to attract more people who exercised less. This can be viewed positively, as these people came to the site to carry out an activity and might be enthused to make repeat visits.

Changes in barriers

In terms of barriers to assessing Haldon for more physical activity there were a number of positive responses. For example there was a decrease in the number of women saying they did not feel confident to visit the site from 9% to 2% ($p < 0.01$), there was a significant reduction in women who felt the site lacked facilities from 20% in 2005 to 3% in 2007 ($p < 0.001$). There was also a significant decrease in women who thought anti-social behaviour was a barrier to use from 18% to 5% ($p < 0.001$). This may be associated with a number of issues such as having the ranger office near the car park on site and the increased numbers of visitors to the site making women feel more comfortable and less isolated. There was also a decrease in women thinking that lack of information was a barrier from 15% to 6% ($p < 0.01$). Haldon has produced a range of leaflets and has advertised in local papers to highlight the new opportunities and activities available on site.

However, in terms of barriers, there was an increase in women who preferred other countryside to Haldon (from 2% to 8% $p < 0.05$) and a significant increase in women who said lack of a partner was a barrier from 1% to 10% ($p < 0.001$). These factors seem less directly attributable to the Active England Project at Haldon and more general comments on women's partnership status and preference for countryside other than forest. However led on site activities and events at Haldon can potentially attract people who have no partner to get involved in different pursuits.

45+ age group

In terms of activities for this age group walking and dog walking decreased between the 2005 and 2007 surveys; for walking this was from 45% to 32% ($p < 0.05$) and for dog walking from 52% to 37% ($p < 0.01$). However those attending special events significantly increased from 0% to 5% ($p < 0.001$) and cycling increased (8% to 16% $p < 0.05$), mountain biking increased (1% to 7% $p < 0.01$), and the use of play areas from 1% to 7% ($p < 0.01$). These increases are due to the Active England Project at Haldon in which new cycling, mountain biking and play area/trails have been created with funding from the project.

There was no significant change in this age groups self reported fitness, however like the women above there was a significant decrease in the number doing 30 minutes of exercise on at least five days a week from 75% to 39% ($p < 0.001$).

In terms of barriers to accessing Haldon for more physical activity positive responses included a decrease in people not feeling confident enough from 7% to 1% ($p < 0.01$), and a significant decrease in those who felt there was a lack of facilities from 15% to 1% ($p < 0.001$). There was also a significant decrease in anti-social behaviour being seen as a barrier to site use from 17% to 3% ($p < 0.001$) and a decrease in lack of information from 14% to 3% ($p < 0.001$). However like the women's group there was an increase in those who said they preferred other countryside and a significant increase in lack of a partner being a barrier from 0% to 8% ($p < 0.001$).

Low income⁶

For this group walking as an activity decreased between the two surveys from 50% to 29% ($p < 0.01$), however there was a significant increase in use of the play area from 0% to 17% ($p < 0.001$) and increases in mountain biking (from 4% to 13% $p < 0.05$), and special events (0% to 6% $p < 0.05$).

There was no significant change in self reported fitness level for this group but there was a significant decrease in those exercising on five or more days of the week from 71% to 43% ($p < 0.001$).

As with the other two target groups above there was a decrease in people saying lack of facilities was a barrier (23% - 1% $p < 0.001$) as well as anti-social behaviour (13% to 2% ($p < 0.05$)) and lack of information (17% - 6% $p < 0.05$). There was an increase in people stating lack of a partner was a barrier (1% - 7% $p < 0.05$) and an increase in not having a car acting as a barrier (1% - 9% $p < 0.05$).

Event card results

To add to the data collected through the site surveys, Haldon Forest Park produced an event card to try and capture information from those who participated in events at the forest in 2007. The cards were self completed by respondents and posted in a box outside the ranger's office. A prize draw was used as an incentive to get people to complete the cards.

Eighty cards were completed in total. Only thirty-three respondents actually stated which event they had been on or which activity they were involved in. Potentially this could be because they did not know the name of the event they were participating in or they were not part of an event but filled in the card anyway. Eight people had been on a moose

⁶ Low income in this study is classed as households with an income of 20K or less.

walk, five on a guided walk, five on a family fun day and two on the logjam music festival. Six respondents were cycling, one was on a crab walk, one looking for nightjars, two were den building, one was dog and horse walking, one was on a family day out and another respondent was using the play trail.

51% of respondents were regular visitors to Haldon i.e. they visited at least six times per year. 49% were not regular visitors. This potentially suggests that the events at Haldon can attract non regular users. 79% of respondents lived locally to Haldon i.e. within a ten mile radius of the forest and 21% did not live locally.

83% (n=62) of respondents said that the new facilities and activities at Haldon would make them more active, only 11% (n=9) stated that they would not become more active and 4% did not know. 55% were women and 45% were men. 40% of respondents were 35-44 years of age, 16% were 65-74 years of age and 15% were 45-54 years of age. Interestingly no one was identified in the 16-24 year age category suggesting that while the events seemed to attract families these were mainly families with younger children rather than older teenagers. All except one person classed themselves as white, and the other respondent did not classify their ethnicity.

3.4 Data collect by site staff

As well as the data collected by Forest Research (FR), there was monitoring work that took place on site at Haldon by site staff.

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)⁷ were chosen by Haldon:

KP 1 Participants – this was assessed by using the data collected by FR from the on site surveys. KP 2 Throughput - three footfall counters and a vehicle counter were installed on site. Technical problems with the counters have led to the ranger team undertaking a manual count three times a day in the car park. KP 8 Volunteers – recorded by the rangers.

A methodology was developed on site during the project to calculate visitor numbers. Using the car park ticket sales and season ticket sales the number of visitors was estimated using an average occupancy per car and the frequency of visits by permit holders. Because the FR site survey indicated that the largest proportion of visitors were families an average occupancy of three people per car was chosen. This is slightly higher than the figure of 2.7 people per car often used by the FC to estimate visitor numbers per car.

⁷ 17 Key Performance Indicators were developed for the Active England Programme which projects could choose from when collecting data (see Appendix 1 of the 'Active England: The Woodland Projects' report for the list of KPIs).

Results from staff on site monitoring

Table 7 shows a dramatic increase in the numbers of visitors to Haldon; however the way in which these figures were collected differed as the methodology outlined above was used for 2007/8 but not in the earlier figures. Table 8 provides numbers of people or groups undertaking various activities from April 2006 to April 2007 outlined in the Haldon monitoring report (Powles, 2007). A similar results breakdown for 2007/8 is not yet available.

Table 7: Visitor numbers

Year	Total number of visitors to Haldon
2003	10,000 ⁸
2006/7	80,000
2007/8	224,280

Table 8: Numbers attending events and activities

Event or activity	April 2006-April 2007
Number of events	97
Number of ranger led events	21
Number of externally organised events	76
Number of group visits	346
Number of ranger led mainstream school visits	18
Number of self led mainstream school visits	26
Number of ranger led special school visits	15
Number of repeat visit groups	118
Number of self led special school visits	72
Number of ranger led club/organisation group visits	102
Number of self led club/organisation group visits	113
Car park season tickets sold	233
Number of visitors to CCANW	30,000 approximately from footfall counter
Number of CCANW events held in Haldon	52
Ranger led conservation and green gym tasks	52 led tasks involving 432 person days and approximately 50 people. These involved: 316 Men 66 Women 50 Under 16s 144 Over 45s 198 Disabled.

⁸ Davies, A. 2008. Mapping active travel among children (MATCH) progress report.

Next steps in data collection

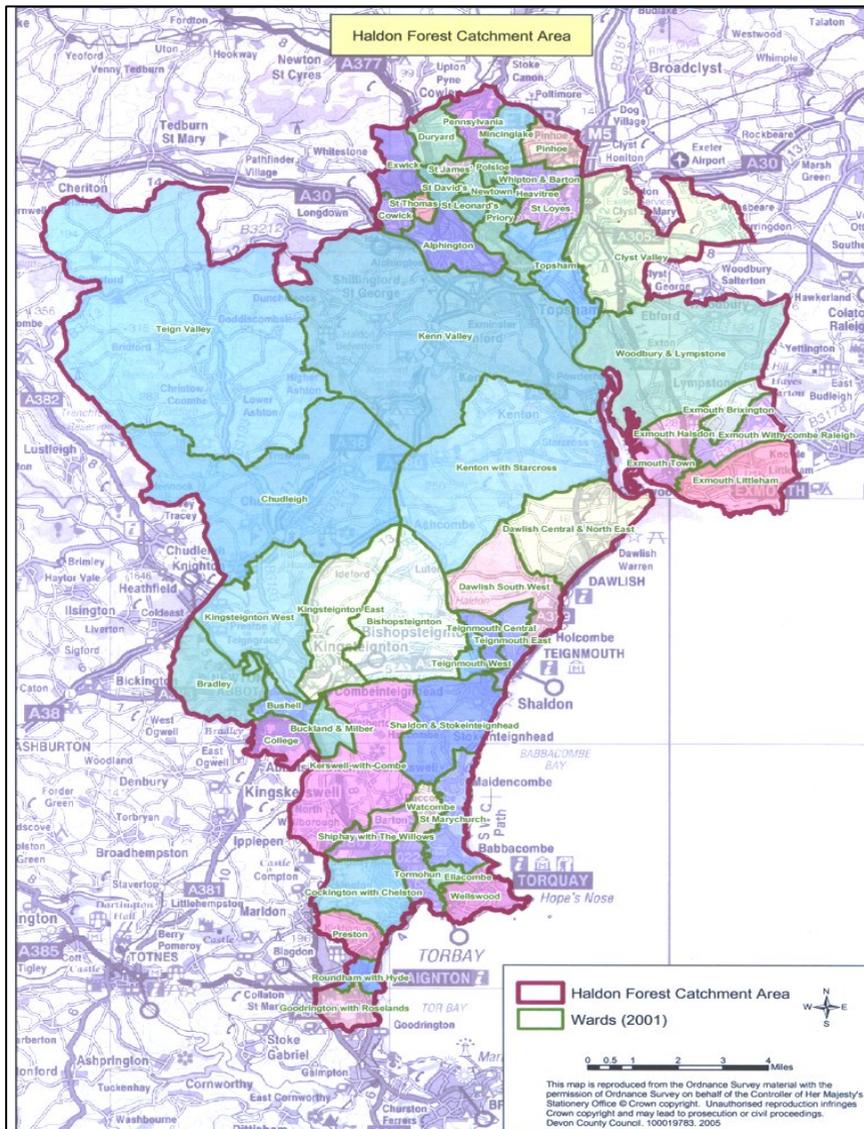
There is a realisation of the need to carry on collecting data on site. There is also a desire by the site manager for some case studies to be written up about the outreach work. However this needs to be built into the outreach ranger's workload and there has been limited time so far to step back and make observations of progress as the work has been focused on reaching target groups and on delivery of the project activities.

4. Results: catchment profiling

4.1 Catchment area

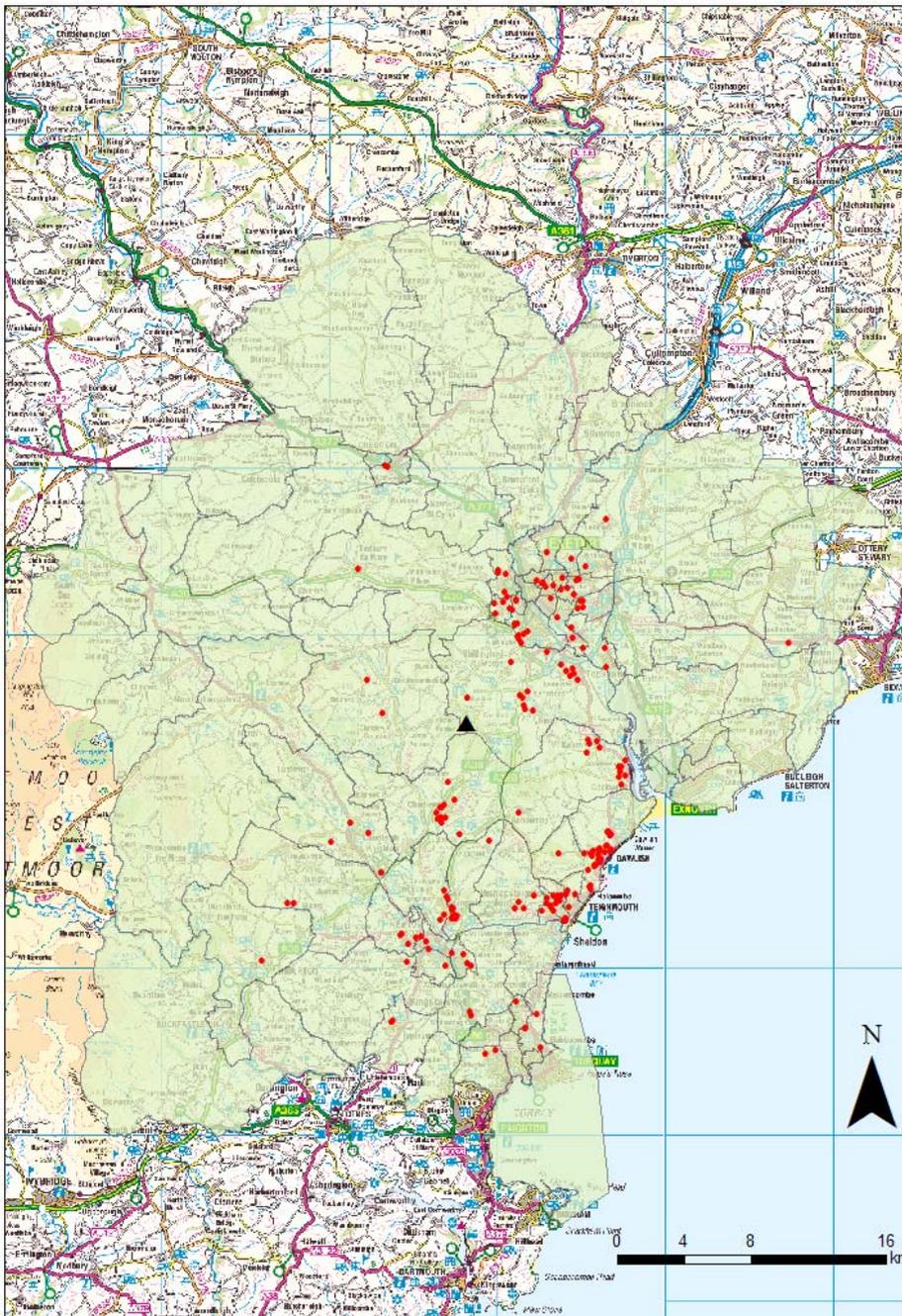
Forest Research’s evaluation of Haldon Forest Park involved the spatial profiling of the Haldon Forest Park catchment area using 2001 Census data. The catchment area was agreed between members of the project team and the researchers. A slightly different approach was taken to the catchment profile for Haldon Forest Park than for the other Active England Woodland Projects. Rather than using a 20 mile radius around the forest the project team and researchers developed the catchment map below using their knowledge of the area and the distance people may travel to access Haldon as opposed to other large woodlands (Map 1). Haldon is in the Kenn Valley Ward.

Map 1: Haldon Forest catchment area



In the summer/autumn 2005 survey postcode data was collected from respondents who completed questionnaires on site. These postcodes are shown on a map of the area to highlight where visitors were coming from before the main activities and infrastructure took place at Haldon Forest Park.

Map 2: Where visitors were coming from to Haldon Forest Park (each red dot denotes an individual person and the black triangle is Haldon).



At Haldon the main clusters of visitors from the survey in 2005 came from a range of wards in West, East and South Exeter, as well as Dawlish Central and North East, Teignmouth West/East/Central, Shaldon and Stokeinteignhead, Chudleigh, Knigsteignton East and Bishopsteignton (Map 2).

4.2 Target groups

Income and deprivation

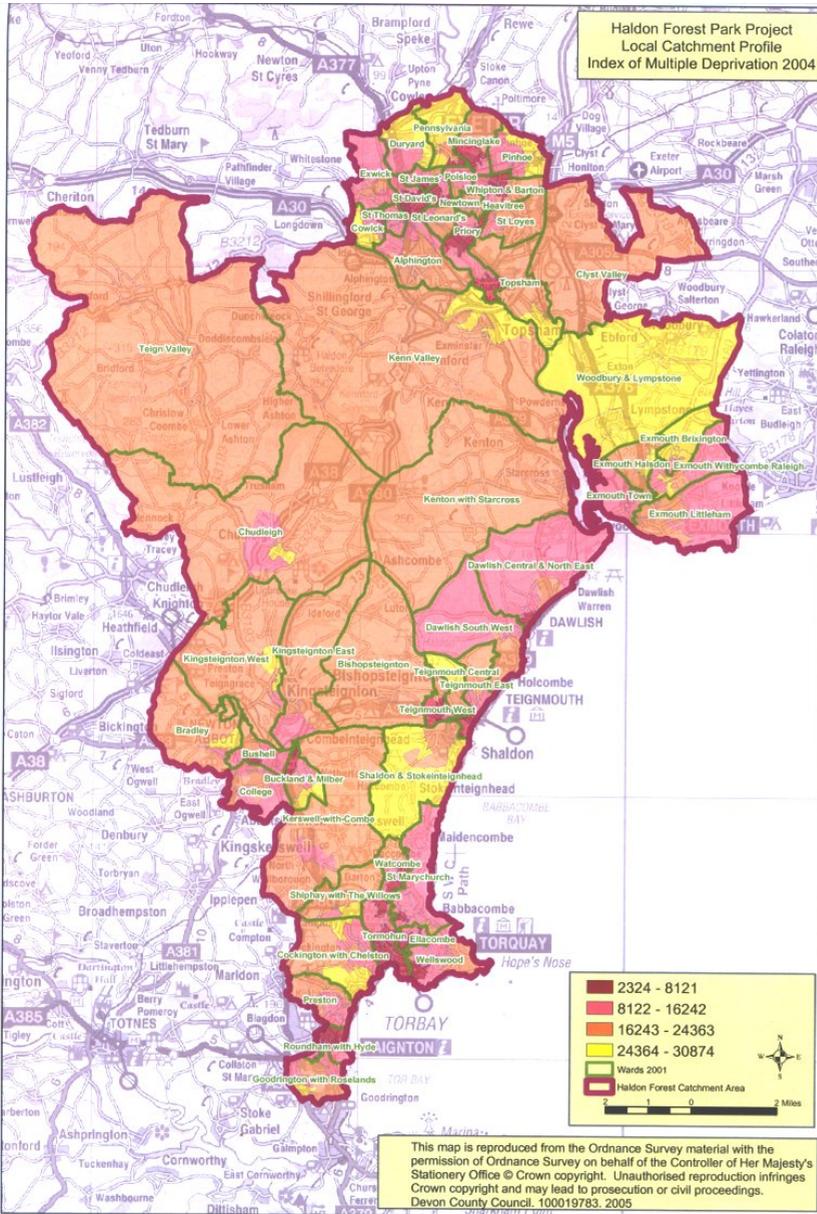
The clusters of people from Dawlish Central and North East are from wards with household incomes of the Devon average e.g. 22K-25.5K. Those in the wards away from the coast have higher household incomes, while Exeter's wards cover a spectrum of incomes. Visitors to Haldon Forest Park were coming from both affluent and poorer wards in the Exeter area. The data in Map 3 is provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now Dept of Communities and Local Government) at Super Output Area level (SOA). A SOA is a relatively small area and 3 or 4 of them will make up one ward. 35 SOAs (out of 220) in the catchment area appear in England's top 25% most deprived.

The lower income areas appear to be in some of the urban wards with the higher income areas in the commuter rural areas around Exeter and to the north of Torbay. The higher house prices follow the higher incomes in the rural commuter areas and the lower prices in some of the urban areas. The relatively high house prices currently dominate the income/house price ratio showing that, despite earning more income the rural commuter areas have the highest differences between income and house prices. This would indicate that anyone earning less than the average income in these areas will find affording to buy their own home much more difficult. There was an increase in people with higher incomes visiting Haldon in 2007 possibly because the site was attracting younger higher earning visitors. Therefore there a slight under-representation of low income groups at Haldon.

Black and minority ethnic groups

There are very low numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups in the Haldon catchment area, only in the north of Exeter do numbers reach levels of up to the national average (Map 4). The average figure for Devon (including Plymouth and Torbay) is 1.24%. For the Haldon catchment we have identified there is a 1.3% representation of BME groups. Only one person in the 2005 survey classed themselves as Asian, however there was a slight increase in the 2007 survey with 2 people of a mixed race background, 1 Caribbean and 3 people who classed themselves as from another Asian background. Therefore there does not seem to be a specific under-representation of BME groups at Haldon.

Map 3: Index of multiple deprivation for the catchment area

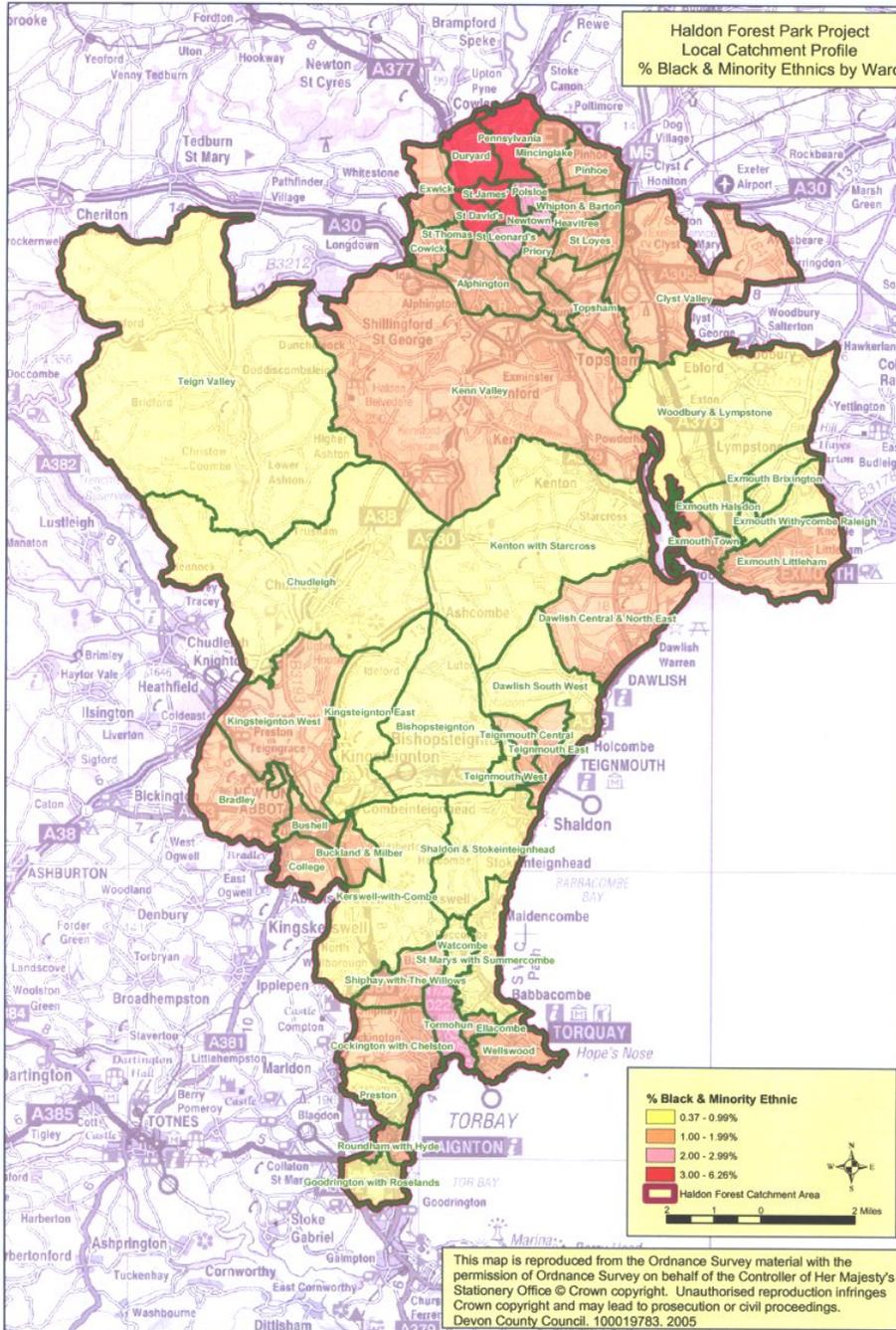


Health

The districts of Torbay, East Devon, Teignbridge and Exeter all have higher incidences of Coronary Heart Disease, Hypertension, and Diabetes than the national England and Wales average. However there are lower levels of mental ill health in these areas compared to the national average. There was a decrease in those who stated they had a long term limiting illness, in the surveys, from 13% in 2005 to 8% in 2007 and a decrease in the numbers of people visiting the site who stated that their doctor

recommended them to exercise more, this may be due to Haldon now attracting younger and potentially healthier visitors to the site.

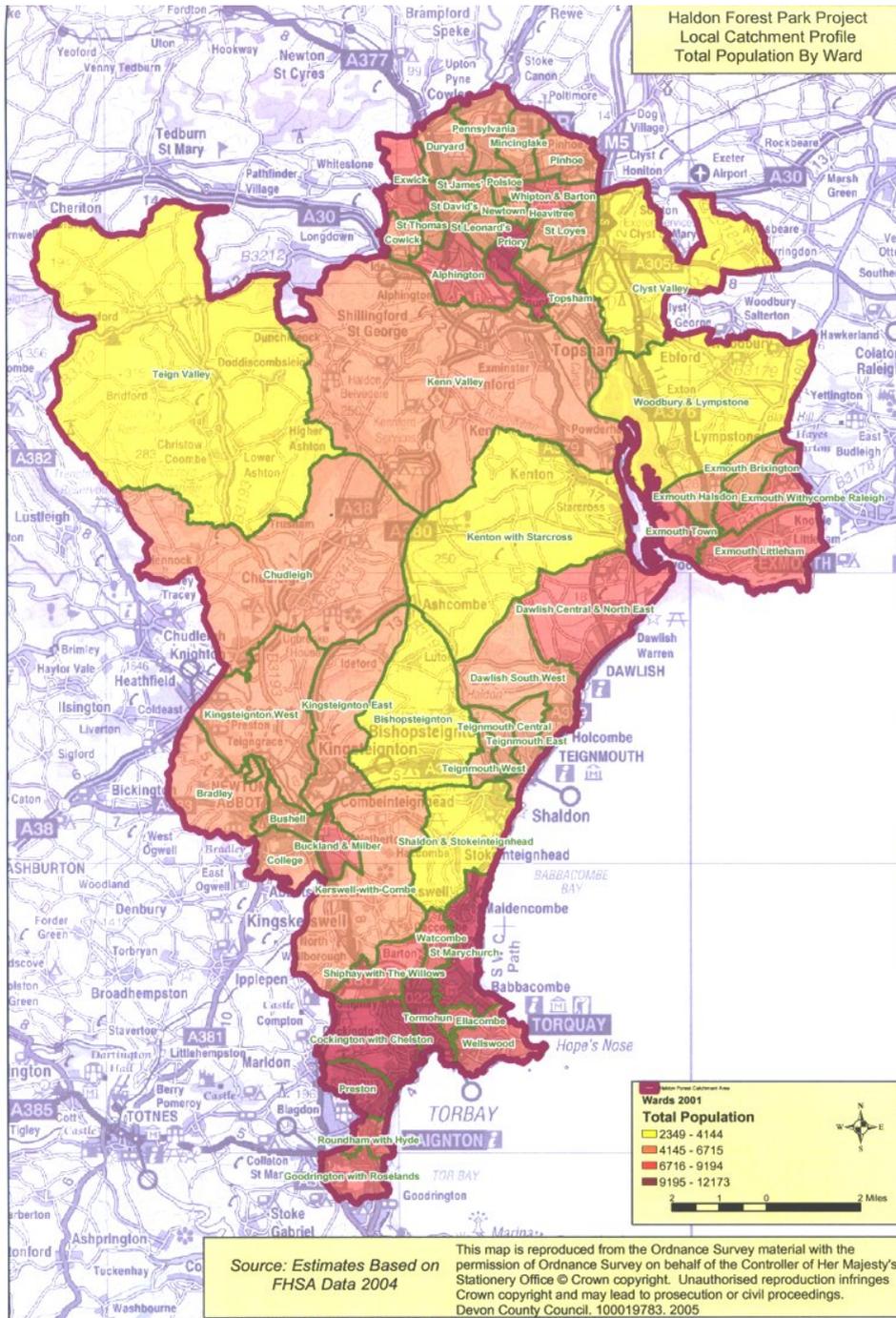
Map 4: Black and minority ethnic groups by ward



Population

Map 5 shows that the most populated areas are around the Torquay and Exeter area. There are slightly more women than men in the catchment area (48.7% and 51.3% respectively). The site surveys show that even numbers of men and women are visiting Haldon Forest Park and there is no specific female under-representation at the site.

Map 5: Population by ward



4.3 Targeting qualitative research

The catchment profile and spatial analysis was developed to explore the types of communities that lived around the site and to identify where visitors to the site (from the site survey) were coming from and whether they were travelling from areas that had high levels of people from the Active England target groups. We have used this data for the above analysis and also to identify potential areas for targeted qualitative work with both users and non-users of the project. In discussions with site staff working on the project, user and non-user groups were identified for the targeted qualitative phase of the research. For example the users group chosen was a womens mountain bike group, this group was chosen because women are an Active England target group and with the new mountain bike routes developed at Haldon it was an opportunity to gain people's views on how they used and enjoyed them. Through the analysis and again in discussion with project personnel it was decided to target an over 55s non-user group and bring them to the site to explore any barriers to accessing the site or participating in the project.

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

This section presents a summary of the qualitative research phase. Results from activities and focus groups with the selected target groups are presented focusing in particular on the outcomes and benefits derived by people involved in the Haldon Forest Park project (referred to as users) and on the barriers to people who had not been involved (referred to as non-users). In addition the results of interviews with members of staff are presented providing insights into project delivery. This section therefore presents a summary evaluation of the project at Haldon Forest Park that is informed by and both complimented and builds on the quantitative analysis in sections 3 and 4.

5.1 Summary of results from users: women mountain bike group

Introduction to the group

The researchers joined the women mountain bike group at Haldon in August 2007. The group meet on a weekly basis (Tuesdays) for an early evening mountain bike ride. The weather for the ride was dry, however earlier that day there had been quite a large amount of rain and therefore the conditions for mountain biking within the forest were wet and slippery. A trained female cycle instructor who is self employed runs the sessions. Before the womens group on the same day she also runs a childrens group. She was joined on the ride by her daughter (as a second instructor) and five women; one of the women was accompanied by her male partner. The ride lasted for about one and a half hours over some quite difficult terrain and a focus group discussion was held afterwards with tea and biscuits. One of the five women was a first timer to the group and the rest were regular attendees. Table 7 includes all those who attended the session. The group had been running since February 2007 and there are 23 women on the instructors list; it varies from week to week who attends. Four of the women were meeting the recommended target for exercise.

Table 7: Women mountain bikers

Working		Age		Income		Exercise for 30 minutes per day per week		Green space use	
Full time	3	16-24	1	Under 10K	2	1 day a week exercise	0	Everyday	0
Part time	1	25-34	1	10-20K	0	2 days a week	0	4-6 times a week	3
Retired	1- ill health	35-44	4	21-30K	2	3 days a week	1	1-3 times week	5
Parent/carer	1								
Self employed	2	45-54	2	50K	4	4 days a week	3		
						5 days a week	4		

Reasons women joined the bike rides

The woman who had not undertaken much mountain biking before and who was new to the group described her son as a downhill mountain biker and how she had met the instructor who had encouraged her to come along and try it out. Another woman saw a poster the instructor had put up, while another wanted to join because it was a womens group and she felt less intimidated by this than a mixed or male group. A young woman who had moved to the area searched the web to try and find out what physical activities were on offer in the area.

Benefits of the rides

The women enjoyed many aspects of their mountain bike rides at Haldon and the following provides a summary of the key things they spoke about in the focus group.

- Women targeted group – this seemed particularly important as mountain biking was seen as a predominately male sport, the women suggested this could be a barrier as they felt a mans group would be harder and the men would want to go faster than the women.
- Adventurous, exhilarating and fun – through the activity adrenaline levels rose, and new areas of the forest could be explored.
- Enjoying the physical activity – working hard meant the women focused on the present and everyday worries were set aside.
- Develops skills and abilities – learning new routes and how to ride the bikes well was important.
- Increases confidence – in ability to ride and cover difficult terrain.
- Fitness – stamina and agility is needed to complete some of the routes.
- Escapism – a chance to get away from it all.
- Learning new techniques – related to developing skills, watching others and being instructed by the leader.

The women also talked about the mental concentration needed and while this could be difficult it also meant that all the other worries that they might have were forgotten as

they cycled round the site. It was also a way of venting any frustrations from the day at work or home.

Some of the women cycled at Haldon on other days of the week, and they knew the tracks reasonably well. During the discussions the women talked about specific aspects of the tracks e.g. tight turns, small jumps/steps. This contributed to the camaraderie of the group as the women talked over the route they had been on and discussed the parts they had enjoyed and those they found difficult. The instructor contributed to the discussions by providing advice, for example she talked about a commitment point during the ride. This could be a difficult section or step, she advised the women to get off their bikes if they were not going to commit. It was clear that the instructor discusses routes with the women and she wanted to keep them happy and interested. The women also felt that they were well supported by the instructor. During the discussion the instructor did provide some personal background, how she had four children and trained as a cycling instructor and how the whole family was very keen on cycling, she stated *'what cycling has given us in incredible, absolutely incredible'*. Her daughter who attended the session competed internationally in downhill mountain biking and the whole family had cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats. This story provided inspiration to the rest of the group, emphasising that women could be highly proficient and experienced in the technical aspects of mountain biking.

What keeps people participating?

The word fun was used by the women as well as the opportunity to improve and learn and these seemed important motivating factors.

'Skills and confidence because I didn't have any before. So really that part of it is huge and also yeah the social side as well, being able to enjoy ourselves whilst we are learning and I don't think we can ask for more than that really. And the adrenaline rush!'

The women discussed the benefits of being a women only group, particularly in what could be viewed as a traditionally male activity such as mountain biking. They felt that they would have less confidence and be more intimidated if there were men in the group. They thought that men would probably push themselves to a greater degree and that speed would be more important to them. The women felt that they were doing more cycling because of the group and felt that even if the led rides stopped they would carry on cycling, one woman said *'the thought of not coming now is just unthinkable actually'*. However having support and advice from the instructor was important for the women and they felt that it was useful because the instructor was able to take them to places in the forest that they did not know about.

Attitudes to health and exercise

The women were generally active and did a variety of different things; one woman described how she enjoyed pushing herself to the limit and trying something new. The women wanted to maintain fitness and they enjoyed socialising with each other. Haldon Forest Park is on a hill and one woman described how when she joined the group she could not cycle up to the top of the hill, but now she could. She said *'I may be the last person up it, but I know that I can reach the top'*.

Attitudes to woodlands and green space

The women enjoyed the forest scenery, which was described by one person as beautiful, for another the *'scent of pine needles on a sunny day was wonderful'*. These therapeutic benefits enhanced their whole cycling experience. They generally felt safer when they cycled than when they walked or jogged (alone) and this is potentially because it could be easier to get away from trouble on a bicycle. The improvements to the site through the Active England Project were much appreciated.

'Really easy to get to, fantastic parking. Not that we all use the showers but I have used the showers, fantastic showers'.

'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'.

Even with increases in numbers of visitors the women still felt able to escape into the forest as they said most people kept to the main trails. Two women said that they use Haldon over 80% more than they used to, due to the improvements that have taken place through the project.

Barriers to participation in the rides

There did not appear to be any particular barriers for these women of getting involved. However mountain biking can be perceived as a predominately male activity and therefore this womens group is important as it provides an opportunity to people who might not otherwise get involved in this specific activity.

Suggested improvements

When discussing what might be improved more intermediate trails were something the women were keen to have, there were some concerns that the red and black trails were too *'scary'* and that something less challenging would be useful for those who lacked experience and confidence. Having a small play area (for mountain biking) was brought up by one woman and generally thought of as a good idea by the others, this would be a space to carry out some small jumps so that they could practice and improve technique. They were concerned that the difficult long/high mountain bike jumps at Haldon were

sometimes attempted by people who did not have the skills to do it. The women wanted more intermediate opportunities between the beginners and extreme levels.

5.2 Summary of results from non-users: over 55s group

Introduction to the group

In July 2008 the researchers were joined at Haldon by the Darby and Joan Club from Bovey Tracey who were all over 55 years of age. A Forestry Commission (FC) ranger gave the group a guided walk round part of the forest which included lots of stops to take in items of interest such as the size and species of some of the trees, geology, the Go Ape trail and to talk about volunteer work. Eight women and one man participated in the activity, lunch was then organised after the focus group. Five of the participants had been to Haldon before and four had not. Those who had visited before stated that this was not recently but many years ago when the participants had young children. All but one of the participants was retired; the group were reasonably active and primarily used green spaces near to where they lived (Table 8).

Table 8: Over 55s group

Working		Age		Income		Exercise for 30 minutes per day per week		Green space use	
Retired	8	55-64	1	Under 10K	4	1 day a week exercise	0	Everyday	1
Part time	1	65-75	8	10-20K	3	3 days a week	3	4-6 times a week	3
						31-50	1	4 days a week	1
				5 days a week	4			1-3 times a month	3
						4-6 times per year	1		

Attitudes to health and exercise

When asked what the health benefits were of physical activity the group suggested that it could help to keep weight down, that it was good for the heart and lungs and that it helped you to maintain supple and strong bones. One participant said she had osteoporosis and that keeping mobile was important or she would end up in a wheelchair. She described how this had happened to her mother; she said her mother had not kept mobile. The woman stated that she did not want that to happen to her and keeping active was crucial.

One participant also spoke about mental benefits saying '*you don't feel as sluggish*' after exercise and it '*gets the blood pumping*'. In terms of overall health the group talked about trying to eat healthily, not eating too many processed foods and eating fresh fruit

and vegetables. The social aspects of getting together to do activity was also raised *'if you sit in a group and have a laugh it's always very beneficial'*.

The group was asked what counted as physical activity and some immediate responses were dog walking and fifteen mile rambles. There was general agreement that house work did count as activity as well as going up and down the stairs, gardening and looking after grandchildren. However the group suggested that they did not really think of gardening and housework as physical activity, they said it was an everyday activity that they did not think much about. For one woman this was now a major part of her activity since her husband died.

'I used to get a lot of exercise when Mike was alive, we used to cycle, dance, and walk and unfortunately I lost him and that's all gone. So I have to rely on doing the gardening and the house work and just go out for the odd walk' (Female).

This was also an issue for some of the visitors interviewed in the site surveys i.e. lack of a partner to visit with, which emphasises the importance of group activities. Most of the group felt that they were currently active and Table 8 highlights that four were meeting the recommended level of physical activity. When asked what they enjoyed about physical activity one woman said she did not think about it and another agreed saying *'you just do it don't you?'*

Attitudes to woodlands and green space

The majority of respondents stated that they liked to get outside and that they were (for their ages) still fit and active people. They wanted to get outdoors at some point everyday and talked about the benefits of being in the fresh air.

When asked how they felt after their walk round Haldon the majority said *'good'*, one woman said *'you always feel good after exercise'*. The group talked about looking at nature. One woman participant made a distinction between walking in nature and walking round shops and said *'if you walk round somewhere like this you feel good, but if you spend all day walking round the shops you're completely wrecked'*.

In discussions about health and the use of green spaces one participant raised the issue of where you live being important. She said *'if you live in cities you don't get the open space like we do'*. The participants talked about having a lot of green space near to them as well as beaches and the coast, and moorland (Bovey Tracey is classed as a gateway to Dartmoor) as well as woodlands and parks. The group felt lucky to live where they did – *'its unbelievable really, I feel so lucky to live here'*. One woman outlined how her husband had been brought up in London and when they talked about their childhoods their descriptions were very different as she had been brought up in a small rural village. The group stated that they preferred being outdoors to being indoors. When asked about how often they used their nearby spaces one participant said not as much as she should but went on to state that she did not have the time. The group said that they

would feel comfortable visiting Haldon, in terms of personal safety, because it was open and you could see people about in the forest.

When talking more specifically about woodlands and trees one participant said '*a forest is big tall trees, it's what you think of as a forest...a woodland is rounder trees, broadleaves*'. The group realised that the trees at Haldon also had a business purpose (timber production among other things) and when asked whether that made a difference there was general agreement that it did not. One person thought the activities going on at Haldon were '*wonderful for youngsters*' and went on to say that she had not been aware of what was going on at the site. Bovey Tracey where most of the respondents lived is only 10 minutes drive from Haldon and yet the group did not realise all the activities and improvements that were taking place at the site.

This group was reasonably active for their age they were surprised by what was taking place at Haldon and had not heard about it before. They suggested that they would be telling their children and grandchildren about the opportunities at Haldon and some said they would visit again.

Barriers to participation in the project

The light evenings were described as good for getting outside, however winter was different and this provided less opportunity. This led on to a discussion about issues of safety in which the women described not going out on their own at night:

*'...you always say it won't happen to me but it happens to someone'.
You feel conscious of it because you read so much about it in the press which is exaggerated'* (Two women).

This seems to highlight the role of the media on people's perceptions of whether it is safe to go out at night or sometimes during the day, if alone. While people generally realise that the chance of anything happening to them is remote it is still there at the back of their minds.

Another woman agreed that when you lived alone going out for a walk was an issue, she wanted company. A couple of the women had dogs and this was a motivation for them to go for a walk but also helped them to feel more secure. Other barriers related to having time and for this group they had a range of green spaces and countryside they could access and therefore Haldon was not at the top of their list.

5.3 Summary of site representatives' views

Telephone interviews were undertaken with project staff. The interviews were an opportunity for the researchers to elicit feedback from the Haldon staff on the success of the project and any difficulties and challenges. This presents a self-evaluation of the

project by members of staff responsible for its delivery and enables the recording of insights and lessons learnt that might inform future project design and delivery.

A project manager and outreach ranger were employed through the project; the outreach ranger had been employed on site before hand carrying out recreation work. The project manager was in post for one year before leaving and an existing member of staff stepped in to fill the gap and guide the outreach ranger, this person stood in until a new site manager was employed for Haldon Forest Park.

Sport England representatives in the south west were supportive of the Haldon project at the beginning but since funding was secured and the project was up and running contact has been limited with Sport England to the annual reports sent by project team. Project staff felt that the target groups identified by Sport England were so broad that almost anyone could be included in the project. A decision was taken at the beginning of the project to focus on groups within a fifteen mile radius of Haldon; however this radius broadened as the project progressed. Staff felt that idea of outreach was seen as challenging for some existing FC personnel who were happier with the concept of improving the site so that it was accessible for all rather than targeting under-represented groups to specifically bring them to the site.

The outreach ranger has worked off site as well as on site for example through running an environment club once a week at a school which provided new opportunities to encourage families to visit Haldon. There are three rangers on the site including the outreach ranger and a fourth ranger is employed temporarily in the summer. These rangers can help with events and activities that are organised through the project. Key partnerships have been developed with the CCANW, Sure Start⁹ and the Exeter Mountain bike club.

Successes

Running the project on time and within budget has been an extremely important achievement. The numbers of visitors to the site have significantly increased and there have been good numbers attending various events and activities whether organised or self-led in the forest.

A wide range of excluded and under-represented groups have been invited to the site and have participated in activities through the outreach process and groups such as travellers, young mums and young carers have benefited from this.

There are now approximately 500 season ticket holders, these are the visitors who visit frequently enough to make it worth while buying a yearly ticket rather than paying the

⁹ Sure Start is government programme to deliver the best start in life for children.

car park fees per visit. Cycling and mountain biking on site have been very important in attracting groups. Bike hire on site was made available from the summer of 2007.

The imaginative and creative play facilities and potential for play within the wider forest has attracted more families with children to the site. The play pieces capture the imagination and encourage children to explore the wider forest and take managed risks.

A lot of local publicity has been undertaken through events publicity and press releases. A branding project was undertaken and the site was re-branded as Haldon Forest Park. Haldon was short listed for a national lottery award in 2007 and made it to the final five.

Challenges

Finding the time and opportunity to collect monitoring data throughout the project has been an important issue for site staff. This can be particularly difficult when project delivery and development of project work is so important and takes up all of the staff time available. Training for staff on monitoring and evaluation of projects such as this is important. Gaining stories and case studies from people who have participated and benefited was seen as important and very useful when hosting visits by Ministers or other high level visitors.

Getting all visiting groups to fill in a permissions¹⁰ form would help to gain a more accurate picture of who is using the site.

There is a need to be able to be flexible in developing outreach work and activities with target groups. Outreach is new to some within FC and not all personnel see the relevance to the organisation of this way of working. A key part of the outreach work is to give people confidence to, and interest to, come back to the site on their own or with friends or through some other organised group. Dealing with a large volume of requests can be difficult when more people become interested in the opportunities available. Outreach can also be challenging for local communities particularly if they are not used to sites such as Haldon. Also working off site as well as on site is challenging for outreach workers and they need training and support from FC.

There is a need for staff support when winning large funds, there is currently support within FC to bid for funding such as lottery funding, however it was felt that support was also needed for setting up and delivering this type of project and for developing its long term sustainability. For example when projects such as this change the profile of visitors and increase the number of visitors this has to be effectively managed.

¹⁰ The Forestry Commission operates a permissions system so that groups who want to bring people on to a site can gain permission and authorisation to undertake a fun run for example.

There can also be tensions for local communities and local users of the site to adapt to the increase in visitor numbers and the new facilities for what they may consider to be their site.

Future development

A concessions scheme similar to the one at Bedgebury Forest is in place and has been running for a year. Free parking permits have been provided to specific groups such as volunteers, travellers, the mountain bike club, and coaches and minibuses that are bringing people to the site who are part of the Active England target groups.

A new phase of the project is planned and Haldon have recently received £282K from Devon County Council and £98K from Devon Renaissance to build a new cycling trail and improve the existing play trail. A café for the site is part of this package and is currently being constructed, at present a mobile catering facility is available at weekends. If extra funding is secured a tramper¹¹ for use by the disabled is planned as well as more toilets and car parking space. Sport England has also provided funds for an off road cycling development co-ordinator for South west England who will be developing key sites (such as Haldon) across the region for rides at all levels of ability (Forestry Commission, 2008).

¹¹ A tramper is an all terrain electric buggy that can be used off road by those with mobility problems.

6. Discussion

The Active England Project at Haldon Forest Park has made a large and successful impact. Changes to infrastructure such as the creation of mountain bike routes and play areas/equipment for children have attracted much larger numbers of visitors to the site and this is clearly shown from this research. Now that there are more activities available on site people are visiting the site to carry out multiple activities, they are also staying longer on the site. The outreach work that has taken place has ensured that a diverse range of under-represented people have been engaged. The outreach work has been of great value to the project leading to 'facilitated' access for under-represented groups; however staff resources have been stretched by the success of the overall project.

The outreach ranger has become a permanent member of staff and Haldon Forest Park has a new site manager who is keen to engage more with monitoring and evaluating the work at the site. The qualitative research phase with the womens mountain bike group highlighted an important niche for women who may not want to join a mixed or mens mountain bike group. The over 55s group outlined that not everyone is aware of the improvements at Haldon. The activities and facilities provided at Haldon were highly valued by the user group and impressed the non-user group who said they would visit again and tell family and friends about the site. Users and non-users also valued the organised group activities which provided them with the motivation and confidence to participate, the chance to meet people and develop social networks.

The work at the Wistlandpound site focusing on the disabled target groups was not part of this research, but it will be important to gain an understanding of how disabled people have been engaged and what they have or have not enjoyed about the site and what they think about participating in physical activities.

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

References

- CCANW. 2008. Artistic educational aims and programmes.
<http://www.ccanw.co.uk/artistic-educational-aims.htm> accessed 30/9/08.
- Davies, A. 2008. Mapping active travel among children (MATCH). Progress Report.
- Forestry Commission. 2004. Healthy roots – forests for active living. Stage 2 bid to the South-west region of Sport England for the Active England Programme Grant Scheme.
- Forestry Commission. 2008. Slasher. Staff newspaper 418.
- Powles, T. 2007. Haldon Forest Park Monitoring Report April 2006- April 2007. Update to Sport England.

Sport England. 2007. Vote now in National Lottery Awards.

http://www.sportengland.org/news/press_releases/vote_now_in_national_lottery_awards.htm accessed 14/08/2008.

Sport England. 2009. Active England: Final Report. Report by Hall Aitken and Bearhunt for Sport England, London.

© Crown copyright