New pathways for health and well-being in Scotland:

Research to understand and overcome barriers to accessing woodlands

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Executive Summary

Scotland maintains and nurtures an exceptional natural heritage and evidence shows that having access to woodlands and greenspace is beneficial for our mental and physical health and well-being. However, the evidence also suggests that the benefits are unevenly distributed and many groups of people, for whatever reason, are noticeably absent or failing to reap the rewards of their natural environment.

On behalf of the Scottish Executive, Forestry Commission Scotland is now aware of the need to promote wider public use of woodlands and forests and to be proactive in addressing any perceived and actual 'barriers' to access.

This research study, commissioned by Forestry Commission Scotland aimed to understand better the factors influencing people's access; to open up new pathways; and to identify new approaches to people's use of Scotland's woodlands and forests to benefit their health and well-being.

The findings of this study suggest that the promotion of woodland access goes beyond tree planting and the removal of physical and social barriers. It is about utilising woodlands and forests better; engaging with people in the context of their lifestyle and their local environment; and, with their collaboration, building a new culture of woodland use.

Effective engagement is not just a matter of resurrecting traditional woodland cultures. A new woodland culture means building on tradition and natural heritage, whilst taking on social and environmental change and the need to promote health and well-being for the whole nation, and not just a fortunate few. As the research outlined below shows, access to this woodland culture is required on many levels, in many different situations and for many different purposes.

The study undertook an initial review of the literature to examine the range of benefits, for health and well-being, of accessing woodlands and to explore and better understand the factors affecting access. In addition to that an action research approach, based on five case studies, enabled the researchers to explore both people's perception, expectation and understanding of access to and use of, local green spaces. It also brought together community groups and providers of green space initiatives, in order to experience an organized green space activity and to encourage future contact. Research also facilitated 'actions' such as networking and organized green space activity and encouraged 'future action' in terms of bringing together providers of green space initiatives and potentially 'new' users.

Four of the case studies focused on urban/peri-urban localities in central Scotland, Dundee and the Borders region and on 'under-represented' groups in these areas. The fifth case study, set in the Ardnamurchan Peninsula, raised awareness about factors influencing rural communities in the Highlands, such rural isolation and the loss of a traditional rural craft skill base.

Findings

The literature review revealed that a range of barriers affecting access have already been identified in surveys and other studies. These were:

- Lack of knowledge:
- Negative perceptions, fears and safety concerns:
- Lack of motivation:
- Lack of time:
- Physical accessibility:
- Lack of physical fitness:
- Feeling unwelcome:
- Lack of reasonable facilities:
- Conflicts of use:

Similar issues were identified in the case studies. When they were investigated in the context of the case studies they arose in a number of ways. Overall, however, the most important conclusion is that the barriers to access are less about the single issues discussed above and highlighted by current access surveys, and more to do with wider factors. The findings indicate that complexity, local contingencies and life-stage are equally if not more important in determining who will use a particular woodland and for what purpose. A young mother in the Motherwell group made this point for us when she said:

> it's a wider problem, it's no just about us and our young kids. …[and]….the problem doesnae just lie with us going out country walking and things like that..

When we investigated how our groups experienced their locality we found that they recognised the importance of being able to access their local outdoor environment and in particular for young mothers, because of its contribution to their own or their children's well-being. However, they had huge reservations about the conditions under which they would access areas such as woodland - in fact they would rather walk beside busy roads and take their outings in shopping centres. Similarly, many of our participants described feeling hemmed in or isolated by the bad weather, by anti-social disorder, by fear of personal attacks or, in rural areas, because of the traffic on narrow lanes.

We have noted that each of these groups have specific needs at specific times in their lives. We identified the need for a range of levels of access, from an accessible view of trees to an opportunity to work in the woods and to take an active part in their management. It was found that people's needs are different in different circumstances and they change according to life-stage. However, for 'hard to reach groups' we identified gaps between these specific needs and provision of woodland access arrangements to meet them.

We also found that access providers are struggling to balance all the needs of their jobs against a need to make headway in order to:

- Mainstream access
- Open up, or widen access for all
- Deal with conflicts of use
- Deal with public liability issues
- Get communities to 'take ownership'
- Maintain access after the project
- Make a case for the economic value of what they are doing
- Try to re-kindle new ways of using woodland in the community

Nonetheless, in struggling to cope with the complexity of what they are doing, providers are often aware that they have failed to engage with local needs and, in doing so, that they have left those people who are hard to reach out of their provision. For instance, schoolchildren and older people remain in the classroom or sitting in the day centre because the risk assessments are too complex to allow them to get out; mothers with young children are trapped in their homes because they have nowhere safe to

take their children; teenagers continue to wreck the local playgrounds and leave litter in the woods because no-one is willing to provide the social space that they need; young men are under-utilised and under-resourced to do work that they would enjoy in an outdoor environment because there are no training programmes to help them to develop the skills that they need to get employment and so on.

In summary, we have found that, although evidence suggests that geographical distance or proximity is important, it is not just the availability of local woodlands that determines who accesses them. The process of promoting and widening access requires a step beyond – or rather *a step before* – the removal of 'barriers'. What is required is an engagement with and reaching out to hard to reach groups in the context of their everyday lives. This is the opportunity gap that is so often left out in the provision of access.

Recommendations

In considering the implications for FC Scotland in its future strategy in addressing the barriers to access to woodlands and forests for health and well-being of all its users, we make the point that this involves a whole new way of working as well as a set of practical actions to address specific barriers.

We recommend the providers of access to woodlands and forests will be aware of the need to:

Engage Communities – we have discovered and provided evidence to suggest that just taking initiatives without community engagement does not work. Community engagement is about understanding the local context and building trust within the local community in order to create realistic projects and realistic expectations.

Build local capacity – building local capacity means addressing local problems and meeting needs (such as unemployment and lack of local skills) with the community, and other community providers, rather than superimposing solutions.

Link services –working in partnership with other service providers and linking services, through the pooling of resources enables project leaders to widen capacity, address multiple needs and increase access.

Provide mediation – outdoor social space requires a certain amount of social integration to address intolerance of other users and to address the 'them and us' mentality. This may require practical intervention and the development of mediation strategies and skills.

Develop codes of conduct – the need to address conflicts of interest and use, for example between cyclists and walkers or dog walkers and bird watchers, may require a negotiated 'code of conduct' to encourage respect for different access needs.

Contribute to a new cultural identity for a local woodland culture – in order to address under-representation in woodland access for health and well-being, we recommend that woodland managers think more widely than physical access, normally enjoyed by a narrow sector of the Scottish community undergoing traditional recreational activities. A new cultural identity promotes access on a range of levels – from a view from a window to working in the woods - and for a wider range of cultural traditions, including those enjoyed by minority groups.

Encourage changes in attitude to outdoor access – changes in attitude can arise when people identify with a new activity and when they envisage 'people like themselves' doing it. Peer group images and media campaigns can have a marked effect.

Leave a sustainable legacy – woodland access projects need to be planned with an appropriate 'exit strategy' such as the setting up of a community woodlands group in order to leave a sustainable legacy for the community.

Evaluate woodland projects to emphasise the importance of widening access – it is important to find appropriate ways of evaluating outcomes that have arisen as a result of improved and widened access. Qualitative health and well-being outcomes can be difficult to assess with economic models and unwittingly, when measured against target driven 'performance indicators', can overlook or stifle the reporting of creative, localised success.

Address the reluctance of some private landowners to provide access – the attitude of some private landowners is still affecting access to woodlands in many areas and, although a more responsible attitude to public access may be encouraged by grant aid, this may require negotiation and diplomatic mediation.

We also recommend a number of practical initiatives for access providers. These include the need to:

Support transferable projects – to be aware of the need to create or support 'transferable projects' such as 'Paths for All', 'Safe Routes to School' and the 'Green Gym'.

Provide relevant information on access – barriers to access associated with lack of knowledge and familiarity can be overcome by the provision of relevant access information suited to the needs of the user.

Provide balanced safety information – provide positive, balanced information to encourage people and give them confidence to use the space e.g. how to approach grazing animals.

Create spaces specifically for hard to reach groups – there are good reasons why some sectors of the community are under-represented in woodland access. Our research has indicated that their needs are not being met and spaces are not being created to address those needs.

Promote new woodland skills - work with local, and other, groups to build a new range of skills in managing local woodlands and to contribute to local employment and to build a new woodland culture.

Create linked access networks - Target access areas to link with existing woodlands and greenspaces and to provide safe access routes to local facilities (shops schools etc.) and local parks and playgrounds and out into the countryside.

Public Transport – is often lacking to provide access to the more remote woodland areas.

Volunteering –volunteering opportunities provide an excellent way in for local people who want to develop a new relationship with their local greenspace and woodlands. But volunteering is not for everyone. For young people the concept of 'volunteering' could be re-branded and re-directed towards specific outcomes in order to harness youthful enthusiasm and energy.

Contents

1. Introduction

Scotland maintains and nurtures an exceptional natural heritage and it is now widely recognised that having access to woodlands and greenspace is beneficial for our mental and physical health and well-being. But evidence also suggests that these benefits are unevenly distributed and many groups of people, for whatever reason, are noticeably absent or failing to reap the rewards of their natural environment.

On behalf of the Scottish Executive, Forestry Commission Scotland is now aware of the need to promote wider public use of woodlands and forests and to be proactive in addressing any perceived and actual barriers to access.

This research study, commissioned by Forestry Commission Scotland aimed to understand better the factors influencing people's access; to open up new pathways; and to identify new approaches to people's use of Scotland's woodlands and forests to benefit their health and well-being.

The overall aims of the research were:

- To better understand the barriers that might affect people accessing woodlands in Scotland for health and well-being;
- To identify, prioritise and promote potential opportunities to overcome these barriers

1.1 Background and Policy context

Within at least the last five years, improving population health in Scotland has been a major cross-government policy issue. The Scottish Forestry Strategy (2006) both states that: 'the Scottish Executive's top priority is to grow the economy in a sustainable way and to raise everyone's quality of life' and clearly outlines how forestry can help achieve this. The Strategy emphasises the public benefits to be gained from active use of and engagement with forests, woodlands and trees. Its key principles of sustainable development, social inclusion, integration with businesses and other land uses and forestry for and with the people, have explicit health, well-being and quality of life, desired outcomes. These forestry principles can be understood in the context of a range of other government policies: notably in areas of health improvement, community regeneration, land reform and sustainable development.

In 2002, the Public Health Institute for Scotland commissioned a report, 'Understanding the Health of Scotland's Population in an International Context' (Leon 2002). This report suggested that Scotland's health status was one of the worst in Europe. In 2003, the Scottish Executive's framework *Improving Health in Scotland – The Challenge*[1] acknowledged Scotland's poor health record, compared to the rest of Europe and this included: a gap between the health and economic expectations of different groups within Scottish society, greater levels of inactivity, the increased consumption of highly processed food and an increasing burden of poor mental health. By 2005 the *Health in Scotland (*2005)[2] report was able

[1] Improving Health in Scotland – The Challenge, Scottish Executive, 2003
(www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/03/16747/19929)

[2] The Chief Medical Officer's Report to Scottish Ministers on the health of the Nation, Scottish Executive, 2006
(www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/10/30145141/0)

to identify some progress towards Scottish population health improvement: for example a ban on smoking in public places and fewer people dying from cancer, heart disease and stroke, and in 2006 '*Delivering a Healthy Scotland: Meeting the Challenge*' (2006) a Scottish Executive health improvement annual report endorses this progress. The report goes on to assert that better health for everyone and a narrowing of the 'health inequalities gap' needs to be a cross government goal.

A health inequalities gap was also recognised by the Scottish Executive's Community regeneration statement '*Closing the Gap*' (2002) which emphasised the fact that, in Scotland, poverty and deprivation is more concentrated in particular urban and rural areas (and within localities) than the rest of the UK and recommended that there was an urgent need to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged and everyone else.

Outdoor access and physical activity is a key part of the policy to create a healthier nation and the Scottish Government is committed to promoting outdoor activities. The Land Reform Act (2003) came into effect in 2005 to legislate for responsible access to the vast majority of the Scottish countryside and now requires access providers such as Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission to promote access for all, to widen the range of people and levels of participation in the countryside and to address issues such as conflicts of use[3].

In a further government policy, the Scottish Sustainable Development Strategy 'Choosing our Future' (2005), brings together social inclusion and environmental equity in the statement that healthy communities need healthy places. It is therefore recognised that access to woodlands and greenspace is not simply an environmental issue and that sustainable communities are synonymous with healthy communities. An essential part of this recognition is the awareness that some communities are less fortunate by suffering unequal social and physical pressures on their local environments.

The overall challenge, in meeting the Forestry Commission Scotland's objective of improving the general health and well-being of the Scottish people through wider access to woodland, and to ensure that benefits are equitably distributed and sustainable, should be seen against this background and policy context. This is a challenge that is taken seriously in seeking to understand the barriers faced by people who are under-represented in, or absent from woodlands. The policy challenge, as we see it, is to understand the factors affecting people's access to woodlands from the context of their everyday life, to engage with their understanding and perceptions of woodlands access and to identify solutions based on actual needs.

1.2 The report

This report presents the results of the research study outlined above and carried out between October 2006 and July 2007. Section 2 reviews pertinent Scottish health and social inequalities policy and discusses the role of greenspace and woodlands in promoting health and well-being. The review also explores public attitudes and perceptions of people towards woodland, attitudes to outdoor and physical exercise and factors affecting access to woodland. The results of surveys giving typical reasons for not accessing greenspace and woodlands are reviewed and a number of solutions to improve access are identified. The review concludes by identifying gaps in knowledge about these issues and recommending strategies to address them.

The remaining part of the report is dedicated to the empirical research and Section 3 describes in greater detail our research approach and its rationale, how we gathered and analysed our evidence and why.

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[3] This includes mainstreaming greenspace access in planning policies and the setting up of Local Access Forums.

Section 4 presents the key research findings. We consider issues explored in the focus group discussions, including the reasons why people may not be accessing local woodland and green spaces. We then explore *how* study participants experience access and discuss issues raised by the providers. Finally we offer some solutions that were posed by both the target groups and the providers.

In Section 5 we summarise our key findings in the light of the existing evidence. The findings and proposed solutions raise a number of recommendations that may begin to address the need to make Scotland's woodland more accessible for health and well-being. These are discussed in the report's final section on how to make Scotland's woodland more accessible for health and well-being. The five case studies are detailed in Appendix 1.

Overall, this report presents findings from a Forestry Commission Scotland, commissioned, exploratory research project to begin to understand people's perceived barriers to accessing woodland and green space from within the context of their everyday lives. In this way it hopes to offer 'new pathways' that will open channels of communication between local authorities, public and volunteer agencies, local communities and Forestry Commission staff. It is argued that such channels are needed to develop and sustain responsible 'access for all', to inform policy and practice that is meaningful, and to promote a new woodland culture.

2. Literature review: accessing greenspace and woodlands

The following section of the report outlines current literature relating to the benefits, for health and well-being, of accessing greenspace and woodlands and factors identified as 'barriers' to access.

2.1 The role of greenspace and woodlands in promoting health and well-being

There is well documented evidence of the physical, psychological and social benefits that access to good quality greenspace and woodland can provide. In Scotland there are clear policy messages that good access to such areas is an important aspect of their strategy to encourage people to become more active. In a recent briefing paper, issued by Health Scotland's Physical Activity Health Alliance (PAHA, 2007), comprehensive evidence is supplied to support the view that woodlands provide the ideal setting to promote health and physical activity[4]. In recent Scottish Regeneration Statements (2002, 2006)[5] there is also recognition of the value of high quality urban and rural green environments in tackling social exclusion and in contributing to regeneration.

Current evidence (over 200 reports) and recent reviews have explored the links between nature and health (for example, Ulrich et al. 1991; Kaplan, 1995; Henwood, 2001; Tabbush and O'Brien, 2003; Pretty et. al. 2005; O'Brien et al. 2006). A recent report for the Countryside Recreation Network (Pretty et.al. 2005) explores the links between countryside and greenspace and their health benefits. The report provides compelling evidence to support the hypothesis that: 'the countryside is good for you'. Health benefits can arise from various levels of engagement - from the passive view from a window to more active involvement and engagement provided by physical participation. This report views 'health' in the very broadest sense, including the general sense of life satisfaction and happiness (now categorised as 'well-being'[6]), that is so important in maintaining good health and fighting off illness. It is also argued that we need to focus our efforts 'upsteam' i.e. to promote health and healthy environments rather than address the symptoms of illness (Pretty et al. 2005). Studies indicate that woodlands and forests have an important role to play in this wider health agenda (O'Brien and Tabbush, 2003). Connections between environments and communities can also have a role in enhancing regeneration (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Pretty et al. 2005). However, it appears that, until recently, planners have not been getting the message[7] about the potential of good quality greenspace in people's neighbourhoods to be beneficial to their health (Frumkin et.al. 2004; Lindheim and Syme, 1983).

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[4] See PAHA, 2007 Briefing paper 8. *Woodlands and Greenspace and the Promotion of Health and Physical Activity*. Downloadable at http://www.paha.org.uk/

[5] SE (2002) *Closing the gap: the Scottish regeneration statement*
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/06/14990/8014
SE (2006) People and place: regeneration policy statement
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/94244/0022669.pdf

[6] Well-being is a strong policy focus in relation to Scotland's sustainable development strategy SE (2005) '*Choosing our Future*' and also in England http://www.sd-research.org.uk/wellbeing/home.php

[7] For instance, in a 'Forestry for People' survey (conducted in 2006) 45% of the people asked said that they would undertake more activity in woodlands if there were woods near to where they lived and they felt safe doing so.

The range of benefits offered by greenspace and woodlands varies considerably, as do the ways of understanding them. They can be usefully grouped and understood as physical, psychological and social benefits to well-being (O'Brien et al, 2006). A number of these benefits are outlined below.

2.1.1 Benefits from outdoor physical activity

Outdoor physical activities such as walking, running and cycling are seen as a crucial means of addressing current UK government targets promoting physical activity as a means to better health i.e. 'at least 30 minutes a day of at least a moderate intensity activity at least 5 days of the week' (DoH 2004)[8]. Forestry Commission England and Forest Research recently produced a report on the positive health and well-being benefits of regular engagement with trees and woodlands (O'Brien 2005). In terms of physical activity the report lists a number of benefits, including the reduction of the risk of premature mortality, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, some types of cancer, obesity, type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis as well as promoting psychological well-being, improving and protecting brain function, helping to control weight gain, manage painful conditions and improve health related quality of life (O'Brien, 2005: 12). Clinical research supports the view that regular physical activity prevents obesity and specific diseases such as coronary heart disease, diabetes and osteoporosis (Fentem, 1994; Haapanen et al. 1997; Powell and Blair, 1994; Powell et al. 1987). Overall, increased physical activity is associated with lower mortality rates and decreased risks of colon cancer, non-insulin dependent diabetes and cardiovascular mortality (Wardle et al. 1999).

There is also good reason to believe that physical activity helps to promote mental health (Byrne and Byrne, 1993). For instance, there is a substantial body of evidence that regular physical activity is an effective treatment for people with mild or moderate depression (Mental Health Foundation 2005; MIND 2007 see below). In addition, the Disability Rights Commission report, *Equal Treatment: Closing the Gap* (2006)[9], suggests that people with mental health problems are much more likely to have major physical health problems- including obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, respiratory disease, diabetes, stroke and smoking-related cancers. A recent 2007 Mind report investigated the effectiveness of both green exercise[10] and the role of the environment for mental well-being with local Mind groups. The report maintains that people enjoy learning a skill and completing a manual task such as conservation activity as it is both fulfilling and challenging; there is a sense of achievement and improved self worth and value. [11]

2.1.2 Educational benefits

Forest Schools are now becoming a mainstream activity in England and interest is growing in Scotland through Woods for Learning and Forest Educational Initiative Scotland (see O'Brien and Murray, 2006).

Educational benefits can be experienced by all sectors of society, young and old, through learning about the relationship between a healthy environment and human health (Tabbush and O'Brien, 2003). This would include acquiring accredited skills e.g. 'Rural Skills' A Scottish Progression Award (see FCS 2005 Woods for Learning: Education Strategy[12]).

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[8] Department of Health (2004) *At least five a week: evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health*. DoH: London

[9] http://www.drc-gb.org/about_us/drc_wales/newsroom/news/equal_treatment_closing_the_g.aspx

[10] Green exercise – captures the idea of regular physical activity whilst at the same time being directly exposed to nature – volunteering in conservation work is an example. See Pretty et al (2005)

[11] Ecotherapy: TheGreen Agenda for Mental Health, MIND(2007) See: http://www.mind.org.uk/mindweek/report/

[12] FC Scotland (2005) *Woods for learning: Annual Report* (2005/6)

2.1.3 Benefits experienced by children

It is argued that interaction with open space and natural environment through play and learning is particularly beneficial for children. In research carried out by Ward, Thompson et al. (2004) and Bingley and Milligan (2004) it was found that positive childhood experiences of woodland access and play (climbing trees and building dens) did affect their physical and mental confidence and their ability to handle risks. Early experiences also affected their attitudes to outdoor environments, such as woodland, in later life. It is argued that free play aids mental development and physical co-ordination (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Kahn 1999; Kahn and Kellet, 2002; Bingley and Milligan, 2004). In a recent report for the Forestry Commission Tim Gill (2006) found that woodland sites, incorporating as they do a mixture of natural environment, opportunities for adventure (and even a little danger), make ideal places for children to play.

2.1.4 Therapeutic landscapes

Outdoor places, landscapes and environments have special significance for people over and above the opportunity for physical activity and social interaction. Kaplan and Kaplan (1989, 1995) and Kuo and Sullivan (2001) have investigated the 'restorative' benefits of nearby nature in relaxing and mentally re-charging people. The concept of 'therapeutic landscape' has also been used to describe places that have associations for people based on memories and explains the importance of memory in stimulating the senses and in re-connecting people to pleasant experiences (Canter and Canter, 1979; Freeman, 1984; Gesler, 1992; Williams, 1999). Some research suggests that victims of torture may rebuild their lives through working with nature. Linden and Grut (2002) describe the pioneering horticultural therapy work of the Natural Growth Project at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, where psychotherapy takes place in a natural setting on allotments and in a Remembrance Garden. Burns (1998) offers a cross-cultural critique of the restorative relationship between green and 'natural' spaces and humans. Other research points to the social benefits of being involved in communal gardening. For a review of the literature as well as practice in the UK, see Sempik et al, (2003) and for work with specific groups, see the work of the organisation 'Thrive'.[13]

2.1.5 Building 'social capital'

It has been reported that access to, and engagement with, greenspace and woodlands can also have an important role in building new connections within communities and enhancing the health of the community. This is described as 'social capital' (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Pretty et al. 2003; Pretty et al. 2005). A recent qualitative case study illustrates this. The study gained an understanding of how the residents of two housing estates in South London view and experience their local woodland and advocates working *with* communities and sustaining long-term commitment (O'Brien, 2006). A study commissioned by the Central Scotland Forest Trust explored the key social benefits and impacts of access to and use of local forests, and suggested that getting local people engaged with forests may provide, "a forum for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds for local communities to come together and learn about, enjoy and improve their environment."[14].

2.1.6 Arts in Health

The use of the arts to promote health and well-being at both individual and community level and within an outdoor setting, is beginning to be established in England, Scotland and Wales. The Scottish Arts

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[13]See: http://www.thrive.org.uk/ This organisation works with people with disabilities on a range of communal gardening projects *(last accessed 05/12/06)*

[14] See: http://www.csft.org.uk/about/publications/141_social-impact-study-documents - page 33 (accessed 06/07)

Council contends that the arts play an important role in strengthening communities and research shows that 86% of people in Scotland agree that arts and cultural activities help to bring people together.[15]

2.1.7 Economic benefits

All of the factors above (and many more) link greenspace and woodlands to health promotion and this in turn brings economic benefits. The literature outlining economic benefits is underdeveloped and investigations are ongoing, but key factors include calculations of the economic benefits to the NHS of health promotion i.e. focusing efforts 'upstream' of illness (Bird, 1999, 2004). For example, within England physical inactivity each year costs health services an estimated £8.2 billion[16]. A further £2.4 billion is spent annually on health care relating to individuals who are obese as a result of inactivity. This is broadly endorsed by a scoping study[17], commissioned by the Forestry Commission that examined the economic benefits of accessible green spaces for physical and mental health. Moreover this study argues that benefits to health care are likely to be sustained if attractive and accessible greenspace is close to where people live.[18]

Economic benefits can be evaluated according to levels of engagement that vary from the introduction of trees in the redesign of hospital environments (Ulrich et al. 1991) to the role of woodlands in urban regeneration i.e. the contribution of environmental work in reversing cycles of social deprivation. Also routes to work via accredited training (see Educational Benefits above)

The overall conclusion is that greenspace and woodlands have a significant role to play in promoting health and well-being. Nonetheless, although the benefits are clearly demonstrated, all the evidence suggests that the people enjoying these benefits are fairly unrepresentative of society overall i.e. healthy white male car owners aged between 35-54. So it appears that unless they are specifically targeted by projects to engage them, a substantial proportion of the population is not accessing the benefits outlined above (SNH, 2003; CA, 2005a and b; Pretty et al. 2005).

The remaining part of the review explores the literature available to explain the factors for this under-representation and to identify how access could be widened and improved.

2.2 Woodlands for public benefit: attitudes and perceptions of people towards different types of woodland

It might be relevant to ask, what is the particular value of woodlands for public benefit, health and well-being? Recent work by the Forestry Commission's Social and Economic Research Group on the social aspects of forestry, has informed a changing emphasis and strategy by the Forestry Commission towards public benefit forestry.[19]

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[15] See: http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/artsinscotland/artsandcommunities.aspx *(last accessed 05/12/06)*

[16] See Sport England, London Plan, (2004) p 28.   See: http://www.sportengland.org/london_plan_a4-2.pdf

[17] A recent study being carried out for Forestry Commission Scotland is aiming to capture evidence of **all** the benefits that communities are getting from activity in Scotland's forests and woodlands, including the health and well-being benefits of woodlands to Scottish people

[18] See: http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/FChealth10-2final.pdf/$FILE/FChealth10-2final.pdf

[19]See: http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/infd-5ubb8d

2.2.1 Attitudes and sensibilities

Social research, commissioned by the Forestry Commission, was carried out to address the need for a more detailed understanding of the attitudes, perceptions and requirements of different individuals and social groups concerning the recreational use of woodlands and forests (Burgess, 1995; Macnaghten et.al. 1998; O'Brien, 2004). The research found that for most people, trees and woodlands have a special significance and are a source of tranquillity and pleasure, although this tends to be associated predominantly with natural broadleaf and multi-species woods rather than commercial conifer plantations. This experience is mediated by specific local circumstances (both geographically and culturally). Evidence, based on qualitative and quantitative studies, concluded that the reasons why some people access woodlands – and why some people do not – needs to be understood in the context of their everyday interactions and cultural norms. Factors such as ownership and styles of management (who owns and manages the wood) also played an important part influencing people's perceptions of how they can access them and whether they feel safe doing so.

2.2.2 Diversity.

Different people have different needs in different circumstances. For example, young people often need a place to meet their friends or to engage in high impact sports whereas older people might seek an opportunity in woodland for a quiet stroll in a peaceful environment to observe wildlife or take their dog for a walk. Life stage can also have an impact particularly on what people want to do: so that, as teenager, a young woman may find it really exciting to 'hang out' with her friends in the woods, whereas some years later she may feel vulnerable in woods on her own with her children. Cultural factors also explain some of the different attitudes to woodland access. Many Asian people, for instance, are unaccustomed to companion animals and therefore nervous about encountering dogs. It is also worth noting that issues of cultural and social diversity are 'cross-cutting'. Research to determine the attitudes of ethnic minority groups towards woodland access (Edwards and Weldon, 2005) found that social diversity is sometimes marked more by inter-generational factors than by ethnicity. This is illustrated by the fact that many black teenagers share similar cross-cultural attitudes with white teenagers i.e. a desire for social interaction with their peers and access to exciting high impact activities.

2.2.3 Typology of woodlands.

A variety of qualitative studies have noted that most people respond better to the aesthetic qualities of natural mature woodland and find commercially planted forestry unattractive (Macnaghten et. al. 1998; O'Brien, 2004). But there appears to be very little detailed evidence about what features of woodland affect access, and a lack of understanding about how specific interactions and levels of engagement, could contribute to an ecologically sustainable lifestyle. This is partly because different people access different types of woodland for many different purposes and in many different contexts (See Ward Thompson et al. 2005).

In the next section we return to the context of physical exercise to explore factors that motivate people to access woodland.

2.3 Public participation in and attitudes to physical exercise and sport in Scotland

To begin with, an understanding about why people to take exercise and what stands in their way could help us to understand better the factors influencing people's motivation to use open spaces for this reason. Recent reports, commissioned by the Scottish Executive (SNH, 2003; SE 2006) examined the

attitudes of Scottish people to physical activity. The reports were based on surveys that gathered evidence about adult participation in, and attitudes to, physical activity in Scotland. Findings suggest that the majority of adults in Scotland (65%) are not exercising enough to improve or maintain their general fitness (experts suggests 30 minutes activity on most days). A significant minority (22%) never do any exercise (SE, 2006). The 2006 survey asked people about their involvement in physical activity and sport (including cycling, dancing, fishing, yoga and walking – more than 2 miles). It is noticeable, however, that questions about physical activity excluded such activities as gardening and housework[20]. Findings of this survey were interesting in that it listed a number of factors- such as lack of motivation, time, lack of transport and poor health or disability – that are also mentioned as reasons why people do not access and benefit from greenspace and woodlands. Furthermore, the profile of people who exercise regularly is similar to the profile of people who regularly benefit from outdoor recreation in greenspace and woodlands i.e. young fit men and people from higher income households. Interestingly, this report recommends that efforts to widen participation should be focused on making it easier for people to make exercise an integral part of their daily routine. However, a failure to include activities that fill the time for under-represented groups – such as housework and gardening – may have biased the findings. For instance many women are, or could be, physically active as part of their daily routine of walking children to school if they had safe and easily accessible routes. In summary therefore, research findings that relate to public attitudes to physical exercise must be understood in the context of other factors such as lifestyle and everyday work commitments.

2.4 Access to woodlands and forests in Scotland

Relatively little is known about how people access and engage with greenspace and woodlands. However, it is clear that tree lined streets and accessible open space near to where people live is one important factor in determining their ability to enjoy it. This can be a motivating factor for people to get out and be active (Takano et al. 2002; Ward Thompson et al. 2005). Studies have shown that the distance people are prepared to travel on foot is only a few hundred metres (Coles and Bussey, 2000; O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005) so, in order to enjoy and benefit from woodlands, they need to be located near to where people live.

2.4.1 Physical access to woodlands

An inventory of accessible woodland in the UK ('Space for People', 2004) has been produced recently by the Woodland Trust, in collaboration with the Forestry Commission. In this report *Woodland* is defined as: 'land with stands of trees with, or the potential to achieve, tree crown cover of more than 20 per cent.' and *Accessible woodland* is defined as: 'any site that is permissively accessible to the general public for recreational purposes'.

2.4.2 Woodland Access Standard

The aim of the Woodland Trust project was to identify woodland with public access across the UK and to establish a Woodland Access Standard (WASt). The WASt has been proposed as a policy tool and aspires to deliver: 'appropriately sized woods within both 500 metres and 4 kilometres of where people live' (Woodland Trust, 2004:16). The Woodland Trust 'Space for People' report does not address the issue that accessibility requires local assessment.

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[20] In the findings of the SE PAHA Briefing Note 8 it is noted that people are often physically active in less structured contexts.

2.4.3 Right of access in Scotland

People in Scotland have a long tradition of right of 'responsible access' to all woodland areas, unlike England and Wales. However, a right of responsible access did not necessarily mean that people have been made to feel welcome and neither does it mean that access facilities are always available. In 2003 the Land Reform (Scotland) Act gave a political commitment to a statutory code of practice. The potential for woodlands lying close to areas of population to contribute to well-being is now being boosted by new access legislation that has set in motion access agreements at local level, and facilitated by Local Access Forums. What is needed according to the Land Reform Act is for all local authorities to produce plans of 'core paths' to provide reasonable access in their areas. It is argued that woodland areas will play a key part in these networks, linking urban and rural areas because of their potential to provide safe and pleasant access with minimal environmental impact. It is expected that the plans will be completed before 2008.

2.4.4 Environmental Justice

Alongside growing awareness of its value for public amenity and well-being there is mounting pressure on the government, by developers, to build on countryside and green sites. The concept of 'environmental justice' has become an area for policy attention and priority in the UK. This emerging field of inquiry indicates that there are significant inequalities in this area. It has been taken up by the Scottish Executive in a major campaign to address the issue, in terms of equality of access to environmental resources throughout Scotland (see Greenspace Scotland and SNH, 2004). As the first Minister put this in 2002:

> 'Too often the environment is dismissed as the concern of those who are not confronted with bread and butter issues. But the reality is that the people who have the most urgent environmental concerns in Scotland are those who daily cope with the consequences of a poor quality of life and live in rotten environments close to industrial pollution, plagued by vehicle emissions, streets filled with litter and walls covered by graffiti…..' He then went on to say: 'I believe that the biggest challenge for the 21st century is to combine economic progress with social and environmental justice.'
>
> (The First Minister, 2002 quoted in SNH, 2004:3)

A recent study conducted by Fairburn et al. (2005) aimed to investigate the links between levels of social deprivation and proximity to factors affecting environmental quality. Their comprehensive report carried a message that detailed and case by case evidence was necessary. For greenspace it was found that both the least and the most deprived areas have high percentages of people living near to a local designated wildlife site. People living in the most deprived areas are less likely to be living near woodland – although there has been a recent tendency to plant more trees in the most deprived areas. This report says nothing about the relationship between types of woodland and access to them (e.g. are they privately owned, commercially used or derelict) other than to comment that the quality of public parks in socially deprived areas is generally poor.

In the light of these developments it might be fair to assume that the greatest potential for social outcomes based on access to woodlands would favour woods in and around areas closest to human populations. However, as the following section will show, geographical distance is not always directly related to accessibility because a range of other factors play a crucial part in people's ability and motivation to use their local woodlands.

2.4.5 Levels of access

The idea that we engage with our environment at different 'levels' may go some way to explaining why geographical distance is not the only factor determining access. In their extensive review of the heath

benefits of green exercise Pretty et al. (2005) refer to different levels of engagement with nature. At one level we can view nature, as through a window, at another level the presence of nature may be incidental to some other activity such as walking the dog and finally, we can be actively involved with nature through activities such as gardening, farming or forestry. This approach can be used to understand more about the factors that influence access to woodlands. The idea of levels of engagement is also a helpful way of talking about the range of ways that woodlands can be seen to promote health benefits (see PAHA, 2007).

The notion of levels of access is set out in Table 2.4.5 below to clarify the many ways in which access to woodland can be understood but, in promoting a wider notion of well-being, the schema goes beyond physical access.

Table 2.4.5 Levels of access to Woodland

Level of access	What can be accessed?
Level 0 *virtual access* At this level the subject is distant from an actual greenspace or woodland. He/she can only access a virtual or mental image, a TV programme, a picture or a memory.	As Morris and Urry point out in their analysis of access to the new National Forest: *'the range, or reach of forest affordances is not limited to the confines of forest areas'* but may also affect embodied experiences within other, unforested locations' (2006:31)[21].
Level 1 *a view* Access to a view requires proximity to greenspace or woodland but does not require one to be 'in' the landscape.	The changing scenery, contours of the landscape, weather patterns. Kuo and Sullivan (2001) and Taylor et al (2002) have confirmed what many of us instinctively know – that access to a view of the countryside from a window is a positive benefit.
Level 2 *being in* Access afforded by being in, or passing through, a greenspace/woodland environment	Being in, by walking or cycling through greenspace/woodlands, gives one access to a greater level of sensory amenity. These include sights and sounds and smells of the wildlife and the environment.
Level 3 *active engagement* Being actively and physically engaged in working with within greenspace or woodland	Active engagement, by digging, clearing or planting gives access to a two-way physical and mental interaction with the environment and can also effect changes in the environment.
Level 4 *ownership and/or management* Being in a position of responsibility. Able to determine the future management of the greenspace/woodland	Involvement in, and responsibility for, the management and maintenance and use of the area (including commercial uses).

It could also be argued that another, more global, level of access arises from the ability of everyone to access the environmental benefits of clean air and maintenance of biodiversity.

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[21] They use the example of schoolchildren who, after a day spent in their local woods, had later participated in a range of activities featuring woodland and connected with their experiences.

2.4.6 Where are the gaps in knowledge concerning accessibility?

It appears that although benefits are well known there is very little research into how to target resource management effectively and to distribute these benefits equitably to groups of people who are obviously under-represented and to individuals who need them most. Furthermore, the reports referred to above address the need to target funding in appropriate ways to promote physical access but they do not address social, psychological and cultural factors influencing people's use of woodlands and the barriers that prevent access. In the following section we explore those factors in more detail.

2.5 Factors affecting access to woodlands

It is well known that use of woodland for health and well-being is highly differentiated (Greenhalgh, L. and Worpole,1995; Fairburn et. al 2005) and that different people access and use woodlands for very different purposes (Macnaghten et al. 1998). It is also known, at least from visible and anecdotal evidence and from evidence of the current visitor surveys that the demographic profile of regular users is narrow.

Much of the knowledge about who accesses woodlands is based on qualitative data and anecdotal evidence because it is difficult to provide hard evidence from areas that have such permeable and multiple access points. However, areas of woodland share many of the same relationships with recreational users as the countryside in general. Research such as the Scottish Executive funded surveys on public attitudes to access to the countryside (SNH, 2003) suggests that the demographic profile of people visiting the countryside are mostly white, aged between 35-54 and from high income social groups (A,B and C1). The inevitable interpretation is to assume that people from other social and cultural groups are under-represented. The Countryside Agency's (2005) 'Diversity Review' found that people from ethnic minority groups and people from inner city areas are the least visible in rural areas. Elderly and disabled people are also under-represented in proportion to their percentage of the total population, as are women and teenagers between 12-19 years old.

In Scotland, a survey of 5 districts over one year (2004-2005), again found that the majority (59%) of visits to forests (out of 4 million in total) were made by fit white males from higher income groups[22]. Fewer than 1 in 20 visitors classed themselves as disabled and only 1 in 10 of the visitors reported themselves to be from an ethnic minority community. It is worth noting that the vast majority (86%) of these visits were made by car even though nearly half the visitors had travelled less than 6 miles. These interesting statistics are typical of the current demographic profile and modes of access found in visits to UK woodlands and forests.

2.5.1 Surveys: reasons given for not accessing woodlands

We have already discussed the complexity of physical access to woodlands and noted that there are a number of levels of engagement and experience. Similarly, the factors that affect, or act as barriers to access are not straightforward. Different individuals and groups have different reasons, partly based on physical ability and partly on attitudes, perceptions and motivation, to undertake any physical activity. Recent surveys, conducted by the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Executive (SNH, 2005; SE, 2006; Harrison et al. 1995; Faber and Mausell, 2003; OPENspace, 2003; Pretty et.al. 2005; O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005) may give some indication of the reasons. The focus of this literature review is on outdoor access to woodlands and greenspaces for health and well-being, but it is noted that similar reasons are given for not undertaking physical activity and exercise in any other context. The list below outlines some of the most commonly reported reasons and Figure 2.5.1 below

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[22] From the first 5 districts surveyed for FC Scotland's All Forest Survey (2004-2007)

shows the close relationship between reported reasons given for not participating in sport and exercise and those given for not accessing greenspace and woodland – the notable exception, in the case of woodlands, is the perceived risk factor.

- **Lack of knowledge**: Where lack of knowledge is given as a reason for non-participation this can range from knowledge about what is on offer, details of specific activities and walks, to a lack of knowledge about the terrain and the distance from one place to another.

- **Negative perceptions, fears and safety concerns**: A significant aspect of many people's perception of woodland is fear for their safety. This is usually associated with anti-social and criminal behaviour, although some people who are unused to rural environments are concerned about encounters with animals. Fear about safety, associated with tree cover, tends to increase in urban environments, particularly in areas that are unmanaged and vandalised.

- **Lack of motivation**: Lack of motivation is another broad category of reasons that could include anything from a disinclination to get off the sofa or the influence of inclement weather to concerns about getting lost. A range of motivational reasons reported by the (2006) Scottish Executive survey included 'I can't be bothered' , 'no-one to go with' and 'I'd feel out of place'. In reporting an evaluation of the West Midlands Woodlands and Health Project, O'Brien et al (2006) list a whole range of positive motives for taking exercise in the woods, including getting fit, friendship and social engagement and the role of a walk leader in providing motivation to get people started.

- **Lack of time**: Lack of time is offered as the reason preventing most people from all age groups from engaging in any form of physical exercise, including organised sporting activities and outdoor pursuits (SNH, 2003, SE, 2006). More detailed responses refer to childcare and other family responsibilities and work commitments. Coles and Bussey (2000) found that most people will travel only a short distance (500 metres) on foot. It is therefore important to understand these time limitations and develop activities that fit into people's lifestyles.

- **Physical accessibility**: Physical inaccessibility has been discussed in detail above. In the survey responses, it is an important factor related to time and imposes even more severe restrictions on people who are physically disabled or restricted in their access to transport. Many of the rural woodlands are inaccessible to people outside, or even within, the locality unless they travel by car. Physical inaccessibility is also a factor that related to the quality of the woodland (i.e. the type of trees and the density of the woods) that was not fully explored by the surveys).

- **Lack of physical fitness**: Lack of physical fitness was given as a reason for not getting out and taking exercise. This referred to a range of explanations, from 'unfit' and 'too old' to lack of support for physical disability. FC Scotland's health strategy *Woods for Health* (2007)[23] recognises this.

- **Feeling unwelcome**: Many people from urban areas (and some from rural areas) feel unwelcome in the countryside. When accessing private land they often fear being challenged by a hostile landowner or gamekeeper and have fears about trespassing. On Forestry Commission land that has in many cases been a commercial place divorced from ordinary people for the last 50 years, rangers are now having to work at dispelling the message that ordinary people are unwelcome (Tabbush and O'Brien, 2005:23).

- **Lack of reasonable facilities:** A Scottish Natural Heritage report (2003) found that the facilities most often required are toilets and signposted routes. However, the word facility is

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[23] See http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/WoodsforHealth.pdf/$FILE/WoodsforHealth.pdf

used differently by the Scottish Executive (2006) survey on attitudes to sport and physical activities where it is used to describe a lack of sports 'facilities' i.e. gym clubs within this category.

- **Conflicts of use:** In many cases people have been deterred from certain areas of the countryside because the impact of other users conflicts with their own uses. Activities involving vehicular access (by mountain bikes and 4 wheel drive vehicles) or high impact sports often conflict with the needs of people who enjoy quiet access (to observe nature for instance).

The factors listed above are the most commonly reported reasons for not getting out to enjoy physical activities and, as Table 2.5.1 illustrates, these appear to be fairly generic factors in most of the surveys examined.

Table 2.5.1 Typical reasons for not accessing and using greenspace and woodlands for physical activities

Reasons given	Associated with	Reported by (and others)
Too expensive	Amenities requiring admission, equipment or special clothing	(SE, 2006)
Lack of time – too busy	Exercise Use of greenspace Visiting Woodlands	(SNH, 2005); (SE,2006) Harrison et al 1995); (Faber Mausell, 2003); (OPENspace, 2003); (Pretty et.al., 2005) (O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005)
Lack of physical fitness – due to poor health, obesity, old age or physical disability	Exercise Use of greenspace Woodland	(SNH,2005); (SE,2006) (Pretty et.al., 2005)
Lack of reasonable facilities – such as car parks, toilets etc.	Exercise Use of greenspace Visiting woodland	(SNH,2005); (SE,2006) (O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005)
Lack of motivation[24] – little or no interest in the activity	Exercise Use of greenspace Visiting woodland	(SNH,2005); (SE,2006)
Too far away, or inaccessible by public transport	Exercise Countryside Visiting woodland	(SNH,2005); (SE,2006)
Lack of knowledge about the terrain – fear of getting lost, tired etc.	Countryside Visiting woodland	(OPENspace, 2003);(O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005)
Feeling unwelcome	Rural countryside Visiting rural woodlands	(OPENspace, 2003);(O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005)
Conflicts of use. For example between off-road vehicles and walkers	Use of greenspace Use of woodlands	(OPENspace, 2003);(O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005)
Negative perceptions about safety – fear for personal safety	Particularly woodlands	(Burgess, 1995);(FC, 2002 a,b); (OPENspace, 2003);(O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005)

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[24] Motivation is a complex category, sometimes influenced by deeply held attitudes and perceptions and cultural factors.

It is interesting to find that most of the things people say about their reasons for not doing physical exercise i.e. lack of time, poor health, lack of motivation and lack of relevant information (SE, 2006) were similar to the reasons they offered for not accessing greenspace and woodland for recreation (SNH, 2005). This could indicate either that people are predominantly accessing greenspace and woodlands for physical recreation or that questions were not asked about other reasons for access (wildlife interests, spiritual or aesthetic purposes). One or two factors, such as the cost of gym membership and poor weather, were associated particularly with specific activities. The significant difference, most often associated with woodlands, was the fear factor. This appears to be particularly apparent in the case of women and children (Lee, 2001; Burgess, 1995).

It is noted that it is important for further research to examine these common findings in more detail. For instance, reported lack of time and motivation to undertake any form of exercise covers a multitude of underlying factors about cultural norms and habits associated with leisure and recreational activities.

The reasons given above in large-scale surveys for not accessing greenspaces and woodlands for health and well-being are a key quantitative resource for access providers. It is clear however that the evidence lacks interpretation and qualitative detail and, as such, is a blunt tool in providing policy makers and practitioners with solutions to widen public access to woodlands for health and well-being. For instance, if they were explored in more depth, the responses could be seen in the context of a complex set of physical, social and cultural issues affecting people's overall spatial and social mobility.

2.5.2 Social and cultural factors affecting mobility

As we mentioned earlier, although evidence suggests that geographical distance or proximity is important, it is not just the availability of local woodlands that determines who accesses them. People in certain situations can be isolated, or 'excluded' by a range of physical, social and cultural factors that affect their mobility: these range from a lack of awareness about what outdoor spaces they can access, to lack of transport and safe access routes, from disability to cultural incompatibility. The following section focuses on these aspects of mobility.

Mobility related 'barriers' or social exclusion is connected with the idea of people being denied access to something specific they need or want (like access to a safe route to school or an open space for children to play). Although this somewhat overlooks the role that access plays in less specific ways such as social interaction and maintaining general well-being. Widened, or inclusive, access takes into account the obligation to increase social mobility, and to do so on the basis that there are distinctly under-represented and vulnerable groups whose specific access needs may be unmet. However, we do still need to understand the relative/contextual nature of inclusion/exclusion. For instance, in looking at why people seek access to woodlands for specific purposes we may find that there may be many for whom safe routes to school and children's play areas are of no significance, and who would not therefore consider themselves to be excluded from access to such activities.

In section 2.4 we outlined the various access issues associated with physical proximity to woodlands but spatial mobility for people close enough to walk or cycle can also be affected by busy roads, lack of footpaths and anti-social order issues. These factors effectively isolate people. For some parents a recommended range of 1000 metres for their children (aged 11-14) to travel to a local park is greater than they would consider safe. Furthermore, restrictions on mobility are not confined to urban areas. Smith and Baker (2001) found that children in rural areas are increasingly finding it difficult to move through their local areas when they are isolated by private land and a lack of safe footpaths and open spaces.

Access is also dependent on temporal mobility, or the degree to which people are able to control their own time schedules; for example in order to take a walk or go to the gym. Many factors, such as the availability of childcare or reliable and frequent public transport, can affect people's temporal mobility.

All of the above factors identified as barriers to access are important considerations for access providers and it is argued that they require detailed understanding in their local context for them to be addressed effectively.

2.6 Providing better access: ways of overcoming barriers

Currently, literature and research on ways of overcoming barriers and providing wider access, cover evaluations of a whole range of new projects in which solutions for widening participation are offered (e.g. Pretty et.al 2005; O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005; O'Brien, 2005). Recommendations about how this might be achieved could be grouped for different levels of policy and practice:

> ***For policy makers*** – policies, for instance health impact assessments, could be more integrated across environment, education, employment, transport and housing. For example, local regeneration projects involving Community Woodland managers working with Primary Care Trusts and Forest Education Initiatives are good examples of how education, health, transport and environmental policies can work to complement one another.

> ***For planners*** – particularly in forestry that spans the rural/urban divide there is a need to integrate rural countryside policies with Town and Country Planning policies, for instance by incorporating natural spaces into urban areas and by linking the two domains with 'green routes'. See for example work done on '*Trees in Towns*[25]'.

> **For Forest managers and staff** – a range of new solutions to overcoming barriers to access can be found in innovative work in various areas and provided by case studies such as those explored in '*Trees and woodlands: Nature's health service*' (O'Brien, 2005).

It is also important to think in terms of removing specific barriers. For instance, for the specific access problems reported in section 2.5 above, a range of suggested solutions arise from the literature and the evaluation of case studies (such as those mentioned in O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005; O'Brien, 2005):

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[25] The Trees in Towns report was not available at the time of reporting, but for case studies see:
http://www.myerscough.ac.uk/?page=arboriculture-TreesInTowns2

Table 2.6 Solutions to identified problems of access

Problem	Suggested Solutions
Lack of time – too busy	Greenspace can be designed as 'people corridors', as well as wildlife corridors, to act as a walking or cycling route connecting urban areas – within towns, between key destinations like schools or workplaces or between urban and rural areas. This allows for exercise to be built into everyday life.
Lack of fitness/poor health	Activities can be graded to allow for levels of fitness. Paths can be widened and surfaced to allow for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Activities often need to be presented as 'applicable' to a wider range of people using role models or peer groups to market them through initiatives such as Paths to Health.
Lack of facilities such as toilets, cafes, information centres and signposted routes.	'Hubs' or centres can provide essential services, bike hire and information such as route maps so that people can explore outwards. Facilities could be shared with other countryside managers. This would provide a focus point for people who visit an area infrequently.
Lack of motivation	Better market research to create activities with a specific purpose. Partnerships with other areas of practice (e.g. health and education) Creation of themed walks (e.g. heritage trails)
Physical accessibility	WIAT, Woodland Trust (and the WASt) campaigns to create more accessible sites close to where people live. FCE/National Centre for Physical Activity partnership – focusing on woodlands close to where people live.
Lack of knowledge	Commitment to provide rangers on more sites – assisted by volunteer wardens. Creating better and more appropriate signage
Feeling unwelcome	Outreach to communities and links through community leaders (particularly for BME groups) Welcome signs Taster days Led walks
Conflicts of use	FC reported to be working with groups to resolve conflicts and gain a better understanding of people's needs (e.g. dog walkers)
Negative perceptions, fears and safety concerns Issues such as: Litter/Fly tipping/burnt out cars Drug dealing Inappropriate sexual activity Anti-social behaviour (gangs)	Clean up operation Community management and oversight Site security Partnership with police Landscaping 'Secure by design' Education and familiarisation to dispel media myths based on misconceptions rather than reality.

There is now a very wide range of initiatives and projects where access provision has been targeted and specific needs have been addressed. Initiatives such as: Walking the Way to Health, Green Gyms;

Active Woods and Regeneration through Environmental Action are reported, for instance, by Pretty et.al 2005; O'Brien and Tabbush, 2005; O'Brien, 2005. Individual projects, throughout the UK, have arisen as a result of these initiatives and many of them have been evaluated in respect of their role in overcoming barriers and in providing for the needs of specific users. The following conditions have been identified as necessary for the project to succeed and for traditional barriers to be overcome (these considerations are listed roughly, but not exclusively, in order of priority):

- The most obvious consideration is the availability of public access woodland areas.
- The woodland areas must be physically accessible by transport/ other planned infrastructure such as a waymarked walking/cycling route.
- An 'engaged', consulted or specifically targeted group or community. Specific needs of that group or community will be recognised and addressed (for instance, the need for disabled access)?
- Potential partnerships are an important consideration where projects aim to address multiple objectives such as health, education, ethnic diversity and integrated transport.
- A source of revenue and funding is necessary.
- A clearly visible project leader and/or a dedicated project worker has been identified as a key element of any access project.
- Community 'buy in' and/or a supportive community management group should result in community ownership of a project or an initiative and, in the longer term, in a more sustainable project.
- Ongoing relationship building and 'capacity building' can take initiatives into new areas, help to secure additional funds and result in even wider access capacity (for instance with new groups of users and 'spin off' projects).
- Networking/publicity.
- Ongoing evaluation of a project might appear to be an unnecessary consideration for improving access but it has been found that initial consultation needs to be supplemented by ongoing evaluation and feedback so that issues (such as conflicts of use or unexpected barriers) can be addressed as they arise. Evaluation is also an important factor in providing evidence to funders that the initiative is meeting identified needs.
- Ongoing sustainability issues are not always considered at the outset. A project often succeeds only in the short term when there is a project worker and dedicated project funding.

All of the above factors influence the setting up of projects and the provision of access. These conditions have been identified as necessary starting points but they are still not necessarily sufficient to sustain a culture change within hard to reach groups. It should be noted that barriers can be experienced at any stage and that ongoing research and policy steering is needed to address the gap between the needs of under-represented users and provision. In the final section we outline what we consider to be the key knowledge gaps.

2.7 Conclusions: gaps in knowledge: further research: policy messages

The literature review shows that there is a substantial body of knowledge to provide evidence that access to greenspace and woodlands is beneficial for health and well-being and that the Forestry Commission and other access providers have made significant changes in their policies and practices in order to promote wider access. It is also clear from surveys and from case study evaluations that there is a need to address a range of physical, social and cultural factors that act as barriers to access. For the Scottish Executive it is a continuing challenge to make effective provision for hard to reach groups, particularly in areas where there is multiple social and environmental deprivation and where complex needs have not been fully investigated. In order to understand these factors better we have identified the types of knowledge that might be required in order to provide for these groups. For instance:

- We suggest that **more sophisticated intelligence gathering** and modes of engagement are needed. Surveys must be designed to give the required knowledge about diverse needs (for instance about the needs of minority ethnic groups and the needs of people identified as socially deprived). Quantitative surveys need to be accompanied by more in-depth qualitative research such as participant observation, focus groups and interviews.

- **More 'local knowledge' is needed**. It is important for large public service agencies to address issues at local level and for actions to be informed by diverse local needs.

- Equally, it is also important to develop **top-level policies that support this community-based mode of engagement** i.e. to promote opportunities and time for front-line staff (community rangers) to do outreach with local communities and to share experiences with other staff throughout the Forestry Commission at a similar level.

- **Research questions need to be informed by a more sophisticated understanding of health and well-being**. Part of the problem of finding viable and lasting solutions may be the way research questions are posed and the modes of engagement adopted by public service providers, including countryside and forest managers. There is, for instance, a tendency to focus on sickness rather than health. There is also a tendency to focus attention on physical activity targets that overlook the social aspects of well-being.

- **Physical activity targets and promotional health campaigns need to be re-defined to fit in with people's lifestyles** (e.g. taking the kids to school, working on the allotment, cycling to work etc.)

- In order to engage health professionals **new economic models are needed that can demonstrate the cost effectiveness of physical activity and health promotion** compared with standard medical treatment

- **Strong policy messages are needed to support the role of greenspace and woodlands in community regeneration** and to develop evaluation frameworks that value this contribution to health and well-being alongside other commercial outputs for forestry

In the remaining part of the report we outline the rationale for and the findings of an empirical research project that was carried out in order to address some of the issues identified above.

3. Action Research: Case Study Approach

3.1 The research approach: our rationale

As we mentioned in the introduction, the research process was designed to address the following overall aims:

- To better understand the barriers that might affect people accessing woodlands in Scotland for health and well-being;
- To identify, prioritise and promote potential opportunities to overcome these barriers.

A qualitative, action research approach was selected because, as Section 2 points out, there is much that we already know, but there are noticeable gaps in understanding the complexity of access issues. Surveys suggest that greenspaces and woodlands in particular are not enjoyed by everyone. Certain groups are under-represented: younger people, older persons, black and minority ethnic groups, women and those with disabilities. In Scotland there are existing green space/woodland project initiatives that aim to widen participation and these include 'Woods in and around Town' (WIAT), 'Trees, Woodlands in Greenspaces'(TWIG), 'Greenlink' and Community Woodland Groups[26]. To capture a wide range of perspectives the research aimed to target a number of under-represented user groups, and these existing initiatives were a good starting point.

To understand people's *perceived barriers* to accessing woodland and green space, it was also critical to consider such access in the context of everyday life. Where a person lives and their interaction with a local community, may impact on their understanding and perception of access to and use of, local woods and green spaces, such as green routes and parks. For instance, there may be community safety issues including a mixture of fact and myth about local incidents, or about the 'sorts of people' to be found in these spaces. Such reputations and perceptions of particular places, may have a powerful impact on access and use.

We wished to work *with* research participants, allowing them to guide the research process and ensuring that they received tangible results from participation. Too often research is done *to* participants leaving them feeling exploited and wondering if anything has changed as a result of their input, there is the danger of 'consultation fatigue' and opportunities to create new networks, potentially new ways of working, may be lost.

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[26] 'Woods in and around Town' (WIAT) see: http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-5w2nfz

'Trees, Woodlands in Greenspaces' (TWIG) see: http://www.dundeetwig.com/main.htm

'Greenlink' see: http://www.northlan.gov.uk/leisure+and+tourism/sports+activities/cycling/walk+and+cycle+route+-+the+green+link.html

In order to explore and better understand the 'barriers' to access and use of woodlands and green spaces, we thus wished to:

- Work with under-represented groups;
- Use existing green space initiatives as these aim to widen participation;
- Explore access to and use of green spaces and woodlands from the context of people's everyday lives;
- Ensure that research activity worked *with* research participants and created new and tangible opportunities – we would give as well as take.

This was our rationale for using an action research, case study approach.

3.2 Action Research

Action research (see for example Hart and Bond 1995, Reason and Bradbury, 2001)[27] is a practical research approach that allows for cycles of action, reflection, raising of questions, thinking through experiences encountered and planning of new and further actions. An action research, case study approach enabled the researchers to explore both people's perception, expectation and understanding of access to and use of, local green spaces, and to bring together community groups and providers of green space initiatives in order to experience an organized green space activity and to encourage future contact. Research activity thus opened up 'talk' about access to and use of local green spaces. The 'talk' included topic led interviews with providers[28] and focus group discussions with targeted community groups (see below). Research also facilitated 'action': networking and organized green space activity and encouraged 'future action' in terms of bringing together providers of green space initiatives and potentially 'new' users.

3.2.1 Why choose a case study approach?

In the first place we wanted to carry out our investigation in the context of existing Scottish policy initiatives/projects that are addressing the two concerns above, e.g. WIAT, TWIG, Community Woodland. It was felt to be important to work within a context of 'joined up thinking' and thus to extend or open up opportunities for engaging with different sectors of the population. Case studies also offer an opportunity to interview providers and to evaluate the effectiveness of these projects/initiatives in overcoming barriers to access.

A plethora of literature considers the physical and to some extent, the psycho-social benefits of getting people outside and active in green spaces. Much of this uses an 'evidence based' approach to justify the good that comes from regular access to and use of, green spaces including woods. Moreover, the evidence base points to inequalities of access with those living in disadvantaged areas, who are more likely to suffer social deprivation and to be living in polluted and degraded environments.

This led us to the realisation that, in studying hard to reach groups, we needed to work from *their* perspective, rather than to superimpose an existing framework of understanding on them. For instance, working in wide partnerships that include public sector agencies, local authorities and experienced

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[27] Hart E, Bond M (1995): Action Research for Health and Social Care: A Guide to Practice. Open University Press, Buckingham. Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). Inquiry and Participation in Search of a World Worthy of Human Aspiration. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. London: Sage Publications.

[28] Topic led and in-depth interviews were conducted with: Forestry Commission managers and rangers; local authority workers; green space project leaders and community volunteers; community and health workers.

health professionals, Forestry Commission Scotland suggests that one way that the forestry sector can contribute to the Scottish nation's health, is by promoting and providing accessible opportunities for activity and leisure in woods and green spaces. Thus access to green space becomes a prescription for health – take the people to the woods/green spaces - and they will be fit and well. We argue that there is a vital stage before this – take the woods/green spaces to the people; start from the context of their everyday life, their perception of need, health or otherwise and consider how a 'culture of green space' addresses such need. This means accessing everyday lives. And looking for evidence that arises from that, rather than continuing to develop a pre-existing 'evidence base'.

Finally, case studies allow multiple perspectives from different individuals, different settings etc. but also from the *same* individuals taking part in *different* activities. This is one of the strengths of our methodology –just relying on interview/survey work means overlooking taken for granted everyday action/interaction that is not thought through, deliberated upon and may even contradict that shared in interview/FG/survey work. It is useful for providers to be aware of this.

3.3 Case Studies

Targeted community groups, the core of each case study, were identified both to explore under represented groups and because they were in close proximity to an existing green space initiative. Four of the case studies focused on urban/peri-urban localities and 'under-represented' groups, as the literature suggests that this is where the greatest need lies and indeed these are the areas that appear to be targeted by green space initiatives. Our fifth case study, set in the Ardnamurchan Peninsula raises awareness about rural isolation and a sense of losing a traditional rural craft skill base. Table 3.3 below gives details:

Within each case study, it was important to gain both a policy understanding of the existing initiative or project that we were working with and a 'sense' of the place and the people where the initiative was set up. Our research activity for each case study thus included:

- Interviewing both project workers and relevant policy/public agency providers;
- With the project workers, including project volunteers, exploring the physical geography of the project site (e.g. woodland, off road cycleway/footpath) by accompanying them during conservation work and site visits);
- Conducting a focus group discussion with a community group, targeted to gain access to under-represented users of greenspaces/woodlands (e.g. women with pre-school age children, older people);
- With the project workers', including project volunteers', expert input, organizing a greenspace/woodland activity within the project site for the focus group participants;
- Encouraging ongoing interaction between the project workers and the targeted community group;
- Carrying out some non participant observation of the project site including observing who uses the site and speaking with passers by to find out their perception/understanding/use of the site.

Table 3.3 Case Studies[29]

Case study	Greenspace Project	Community Group	Woodland/Greenspace Activity
Access issues for parents with pre-school children in Motherwell Glasgow in the context of an urban green footpath/cycleway and outreach work.	Greenlink	Mother & Toddler Group	Guided buggy walk
Access issues for young men seeking paid work in the context of Langlee woodlands in Galashiels and through activities organised by Borders Community Woodland officers.	WIAT/Borders Community Woodland	Young men seeking paid work	Building and installing bird/bat boxes in local woodland
Access and mobility issues for older people in the context of woodland managed by the FC in and around Drumchapel.	WIAT/FE community woodland	Older persons attending Day Care Centre	Guided 'Health walk'
Access, safety and other social issues for young people in the context of Dundee's recent regeneration and access strategies in and around Dundee.	TWIG	Ardler Centre, Youth Group	Cycling/stunting activities in local woodlands
Access issues for people living in a remote rural community in the context of the Sunart Oakwoods initiative.	Sunart Oakwoods initiative	Mixed local residents	No directly associated activity (researchers took part in a local 'health walk')

3.4 Limitations

We note the limitations of this study. In the first place the research was not designed to be 'representative' of all the people who are under-represented in accessing woodlands and forests. This is a qualitative method and, as such, aims to include a targeted range of research subjects rather than a broad representative sample. In the second place we did not, in detail, address two significant aspects of under-representation: these are the concerns of disabled people and the concerns and issues associated with minority ethnic groups. We do recognise that these groups represent an important, even crucial, aspect of exclusion. However, access issues associated with disability are being covered in a parallel research project. Our findings suggest that diversity is a broad issue and, we maintain, merits wider investigation than one case study[30]. It is an important for consideration for Forestry Commission Scotland to be proactive in attending to the needs of disabled people and in promoting access for people from all backgrounds and ethnic origins (under the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Amendment Act). Nonetheless, in the findings section we do refer to several issues relating to disability and diversity across the case studies.

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[29] See Appendix 1 for full details of the case studies

[30] When we formulated our research strategy we wished to make the point that cultural diversity is now a broad issue (covering economic migrants, asylum seekers and many other minority ethnic groups) each with their own specific needs.

4. Findings: factors affecting access to woodlands

In this chapter we outline key findings of our case study research, including focus group discussions with a range of people identified as under-represented in countryside and woodland access and interviews with access providers[31].

In Part 4.1 we begin by considering issues explored in the focus group discussions, including the reasons why people may not be accessing local woodland and green spaces. We then focus on the 'taster' activities that were set up to follow these discussions. We do this to explore *how* study participants experienced access to such spaces. In Part 4.2 we discuss issues raised by the providers and in Part 4.3 we present the access needs identified by our target groups and the providers. Finally we offer some solutions that were posed by both the target groups and the providers. These findings indicate the complexity of people's attitudes and behaviours in this area and the extensive use of quotations illustrates the richness of expression.

4.1 Factors affecting access for users

4.1.1 Access to woodlands and greenspace in everyday life:

From within the discussion groups, we began by investigating the context within which people experienced access to local outdoor environments:

How people experienced their locality

Our target groups were selected so that from within the context of participants' locality we could investigate a variety of issues associated with under-representation. Two of the localities were rural and three were in urban areas. In each case there were wooded areas close by. Participants described very different experiences of their local environment.

For some people their locality was simply the place where they were rooted and where their family and friends lived:

It's just where I grew up, all my mates live here, my family.

(young men Galashiels)

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[31] Interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and the focus groups transcribed; field notes were made following woodland/green space activities and also following site visits.

One person, who was less firmly rooted, compared his current locality favourably against a more environmentally and socially deprived area.

> …in Glasgow there was no woods at all, you couldn't do anything. All you could do was go outside and play with abandoned cars, stuff like that. There was a wee park, one swing for about 4000 folk!
>
> (young men Galashiels).

Older participants also discussed how they can and do enjoy *'remote access'* to their environment. Trees can be viewed through a house or flat window or through the window of a bus.

In the rural areas there was a keen appreciation of the local environment, particularly in beautiful, if remote, areas of the Scottish Highlands. Indeed some of the participants had moved into this area from industrial English towns in order to 'enjoy the scenery and wildlife' and have access to pleasurable walking on a regular basis.

But in some urban and suburban areas of Scotland the experience could be very different. Participants expressed fears and vulnerability associated with being out and about in their local environment, particularly when they were alone or with young children. For the mothers in our Motherwell case study, the threat was from other people - strangers ('smack heads', 'junkies') and people who might molest them or their children. It did not feel safe in their immediate environment and they were reluctant to venture further to a local greenspace unless the area was patrolled:

> Then you could take your wee'uns a walk cos you don't know what's going to happen to you….Molesters and all that, paedos and the lot..
>
> (mothers Motherwell)

These women would walk beside a busy road rather than risk encountering a stranger when they were alone or with their children. On the other hand, a mother with young children in a rural, less populated, area perceived the threat to personal safety to be not from strangers but from fast moving traffic on the narrow country lanes.

Older people from another urban area, Drumchapel, were more pragmatic about the danger from other people in their locality and, although they often needed assistance, in general they were not fearful about being out and about in their residential area. However, when questioned further, it seems that they have become accustomed to managing their behaviour according to their changing circumstances and to their cultural expectations of 'others':

> 'when I walk, it's 10, 9 o'clock in the morning, no riff raff around then'.
>
> (older persons Drumchapel)

When people were asked where they felt 'at home', many people in urban areas had narrow horizons i.e. their locality can be constrained by physical and social barriers (busy roads, perceived and real threats to personal safety). It is highly significant that for many people in the urban areas their outdoor locality, particularly places that are secluded or away from residential areas, is not a safe place to be alone. Location was defined by known places and known people and 'others' are often a source of suspicion. Cultural and social factors also play a part in this. For instance, in Dundee, teenagers have their own 'territory' and in Galashiels the young men gave accounts of 'others' (particularly migrant workers) who had invaded their locality and 'taken their jobs':

> 'see in Gala, all the Portuguese guys coming across, like taking all our jobs'.
>
> (young men Galashiels).

Although social isolation is less of an issue in sparsely populated rural areas, geographical isolation is a significant factor: lack of transport, lack of non-linear off road paths and busy roads can narrow people's range of access. Geographical isolation is felt particularly by young people in rural areas. Whereas older

and retired people might welcome the seclusion and the peace and quiet, younger people were not necessarily looking for a quiet life. They feel cut off from opportunities to socialise, as one seventeen year old explained: '*I can't go anywhere unless my parents take me.*'

During the discussion about local places, comparisons were often made between how it is now and how it was perceived to be in the past. This was particularly apparent in urban areas that now feel unsafe. A woman in her late 40s, whose daughter is a young mother, remembers her experience of Motherwell as being quite different – because there wasn't as much 'badness' about. This perception that things had changed for the worse in recent times was shared by other members of the group:

> *It was just like she was saying… back then there wasnae the badness as there is now. And like this wee swing park here, I could spend a full day in that wee swing park….…..get up in the morning, go to a big field at the back of this park….used to go away for hours, go away in the morning and no come back till tea-time at night. They didn't blink and eye, and you werenae scared either, just used to go with my brother and sister and pals and no bother at all.*

(mothers Motherwell)

They had memories of playing out of doors and in green areas where they could make 'dens', and this from a young age and unaccompanied by adults:

> *I mean I'm no that old, I'm only 26, I can remember going down the back roads and that and making cubby houses out of trolleys and bits of wood, play without fear of getting molested …*

(mothers Motherwell)

The young men in the border regions described a gradual shift in emphasis in outdoor activity as they grew up and their mates discovered alternative form of recreation:

> *Aye. Like when I was younger like every single day I'd play football, there'd be like 20 odd folk, go to the same place to play football, but it started getting, they started taking drugs and all that, they just drifted away……Like all my mates and all they're all into drugs and that, and gang fighting and that, there's no point there.*

(young men Galashiels)

For older people, whose lifestage now affects their mobility, memories of their outdoor environment featured more active times:

> *When I came here at first we took the children for walks in the bluebell woods*

(older persons Drumchapel)

Motivation for getting out?

Motivation for getting out into the fresh air and away from the house, was expressed in a number of ways. There was much discussion about the need to escape the narrow confines of four walls, particularly but not exclusively for the people who were elderly, unemployed or housebound with pre-school children:

> *I hate being stuck in the house, I cannae stand being stuck in the house. I'm no used to it, I've always been outside since I was wee. I've always been outside mucking about*

(young men Galashiels)

> *To be honest with you, see with your kids, see if you can get them out for a couple of hours they sleep like that (snaps fingers) if they stop in the house you cannae get them to sleep*

(mothers Motherwell)

See if it's a nice day and we're getting out to feed the ducks, swans…
Mod: So that's, how far is that from where you live to go down and feed the ducks…?
10 minutes, Usually if I walk down the road frae here I'll…

<div align="right">(mothers Motherwell)</div>

Lifestage was a factor mentioned by the young men, who felt that, at this stage in their lives there was nothing on offer for them:

Aye, used to go out camping a lot with my father, I think that's why I'm an outdoors person.
I used to go camping and that … with all my mates, probably get drunk and that.

<div align="right">(young men Galashiels)</div>

For older people their motivation to get out is most often hampered by increasing health and mobility problems.

I've got to have somebody with me, can't go myself. It's only recently, I was able to go to B&Q and everything, and I feel frustrated that I can't get out .

<div align="right">(older persons Drumchapel)</div>

The inclement Scottish weather was an important factor in reducing many people's motivation to get out and about. For women with younger children there is a concern that they will 'catch cold' although, as the following quote illustrates, winter is a time when many people feel depressed and isolated:

The rain, and if it's frosty. (somebody coughing) cold, and you're getting a cold. And no matter how you…… wrap them up you're still going to get the cold so you just give them bad health. Even though it's really cold you're taking them out to give them some fresh air but they're still catching cold constantly, and you're only walking round the scheme and you cannae go to anything like. (inaudible) exactly, it's icy down there, and you know it's no being patrolled and you wouldnae go by yourself with 2 wee 'uns.

<div align="right">(mothers Motherwell)</div>

Mod: What about you Debbie, how is it for <u>you</u> when you've been out?
It's better for me cos in the winter I get depressed. Cos you cannae get out cos the weather is rubbish
The only time I get out the door with my wee boy in weather like this is when I come here on a Monday and a Friday, cos it's somewhere for me to come with the kid and it's only 2 hours but I have to come cos I can't get him out any other way unless I've got money

<div align="right">(mothers Motherwell)</div>

In rural areas bad weather can also be a factor in isolating parents with young children and older people:

It's very much weather dependant I have to say. If it's a sunny week and we're outside [with the children] every day I don't think twice about it, but if it's raining for months it can sometimes feel just a little bit claustrophobic.
as Gail says if it's raining there's nothing to do, it's not like you can just walk to the shops or walk to the cinema, you know you can't go out because it's raining

<div align="right">(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)</div>

However, it was noticeable that for others in rural areas the weather is not a de-motivating factor because:

Once you're up you forget about it, if you want to go somewhere you put a jacket on and go. This is the thing. You don't worry about the weather.

I knew a man told me one time, 'there's no bad weather in Scotland, there's only wrong clothes'
(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan*)*

Physical activity

In our discussions with the various groups it is noteworthy that the value of physical activity as a reason for getting out and as a health benefit, was very rarely raised, although it was recognised, by older people that too much inactivity is to be avoided:

I find that to sit on your backside, it's not good for you (murmurs of assent) you need a little bit of exercise, keep yourself going.
(older persons, Drumchapel)

Older people also felt that there had been an overall decline in *everyday* physical activity because young people spend much more time in front of the TV or playing video games. In their youth there had been more outdoor play and much less car use:

Yes, it's a pity the young ones now, they're all play stations, I think life has changed so much
(older persons, Drumchapel)

However, mothers with young children lead an active life and, when they have little money and no opportunity to use public transport, they walk everywhere. For many of the young men walking was also an everyday physical necessity in order to get about and one young man spoke of cycling some distance to enjoy being by a loch. There were also many references to the need to get outside and take some form of outdoor physical activity with the children, or alone in order to get away from things, to 'let off steam' or to release tension:

I go walking with the dogs, because I work with people all day yes I tend to do that on my own because it's my way of [releasing tension] because tourists have driven me mad all day. So me and my 2 dogs take off into the hills and scream at the heather or whatever and come back down chilled.
(*isolated rural community Ardnamurchan*)

Mod: So K what do you enjoy about cycling?
Just different places you can go, I don't know, getting away from things I suppose. Some time to yourself.
(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)

Perceptions of woodland

When asked about their preferences for different types of woodlands i.e. open mature mixed woodland, forestry plantation, coppiced woodland etc., and based on photos, it was clear that different groups of people like different things according to circumstances/lifestage/cultural factors.

The majority opted for well cared for and safe spaces – with seats; some liked beautiful and remote places (bluebells/autumn colours). Older people referred to a need for good paths and signposts and for the mothers with young children the issue of personal safety was the over-riding factor.

> *We're just going to say the same thing about every photo, just the same every photo, aye, like brilliant, but no way, you're not going to hang about, what are you going to do if you get 2 guys are walking towards you and you've got a wee'un in a double buggy, what are you going to do?*
>
> (mothers Motherwell)

4.1.2 Questions relating to access

In the following section we pose a number of rhetorical questions that highlight not only identified barriers to accessing woodlands for health and well-being, but also an underlying reluctance to see this as relevant to them in the context of their lives.

Is it relevant?

A critical access issue highlights the need to engage with people even before they step into woodland or green space. For some a treescape, thought about, accessed and used as a social space just may not seem relevant to their lives. For at least one of our target groups, there was some initial reluctance to get enthusiastic about green spaces. They suggested that they had 'more to worry about than trees'. In particular:

Swing park, Motherwell

> *'[People from other countries] getting all the houses right left and centre,, I'm sat in a stinking 2 bedroom house with 3 wee'uns, my repairs are nae getting done, I've got smashed windows, smashed 3 year in April. . . …..the other people, whatever you call them, they're getting the best houses of the lot….they can get everything. That's causing grief now cos it's them and us and it's no fair on people that's been there all their days.*
>
> (mothers Motherwell)

These women faced daily challenges, even getting the children out of doors and finding suitable facilities could be difficult:

. . . it's not had swings in it for as long as I can remember, it's an utter disgrace, I couldnae tell you the last time that park was even worth taking a kid to, and I've been staying[32] here all my life.
(speaking of a local playground)

Many were coping with limited resources and a sense that they had to 'fight to get their rights'; this perhaps puts into context their perception that woodland walks are low on their list of priorities.

Why go there?

The question: *why go there?* specifically in relation to woodlands, links back to people's motivations for getting out of the house, walking the dog, entertaining the children, meeting up with friends or getting involved in volunteering work. But it also needs to be considered in relation to preferences: why choose wooded areas? and what features of woodland do people seek out? Woodlands have particular resonances associated with wildness and seclusion that many of our discussants were simultaneously drawn to and threatened by. For instance, when a young mother was shown different pictures of wooded areas and asked to comment on whether she could see herself going there, she expressed her ambivalence in the following way:

Well it would depend, I could see if we had a group of us, then I would say my wee'un would love that cos he would run wild through all the bushes. Right so if I said there were 4 of us I would say that looks brilliant to me cos there's nae cars running about and the wee'uns can run totally wild, and roll about on the grass and roll about in the bushes and love that, but… if I was walking through there myself… no safe…..
(mothers Motherwell)

Why go there – what's the point? was a common attitude found in discussion with young teenagers. It was a challenge for us to find reasons but, when offered a choice in the range of activities they would most like to experience in woodlands, they invariably opted for those that were high impact and adventurous (such as 'Go Ape') rather than walking which was seen as 'boring'. For mothers with young children an initial reluctance to getting enthusiastic about visiting local greenspace and trees should be understood in the context of their daily challenges; even getting the children out of doors and finding suitable facilities could be difficult:

Is it safe?

As the quotes above illustrate, many of our case study participants were acutely aware of, and sensitive to, the issue of personal safety. Evidence of litter, vandalism and anti-social behaviour, such as burnt trees and rowdy groups of people indicate that no-one is looking after the place and it is not safe to go there.

see walking down that Greenlink it's no really safe for women I don't think.
No.
Mod: Okay, why isn't it safe for women?
Cos it's all (inaudible) walking down yourself.
Aye.
Mod: It's not safe 'cos it's trees?
No. There can be smack-heads or anything down there.
It's no safe cos there's (inaudible). . .
They all go down there and sit and drink. . .
Smack-heads, junkies.
Mod: Okay. Not safe on your own, that's really interesting.

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[32] Staying = living, dwelling

I wouldnae walk down anywhere that didnae have a main road beside it by myself.

<div align="right">(mothers, Motherwell)</div>

Whilst in *urban areas,* there's a sense of vulnerability in green spaces, and wariness of others, the remote rural focus group suggested that there is more freedom, particularly for children in *rural communities*, although it is noteworthy that their confidence was based on their perception that their local area is a safe place and free from stranger danger because it is so remote and 'cut off' at times:

Mod: Do you feel you can let the children go out to play?
On the village green - that's one of the reasons we moved here, from Edinburgh. It's quite different. It's just so good not to have those worries.
It's so good. The children go out to play and there's no adult supervision because you are not worrying about whose loitering around the corner that could whisk that child away....I do hope it stays like that - children can go out to play - 6,7, 8 year olds. Hopefully it stays like that.
As long as they don't put a bridge instead of the ferry.

<div align="right">(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)</div>

However, such 'freedom' is nevertheless tempered by more mundane, but we suggest, more hazardous threats to safety such as lack of pavements and fast traffic.

Mod: Do you walk along the road?
I find that a nightmare with the children. Walking with a pushchair and the little one on his bike. People drive quite fast. There's no pavement there. Its only a few yards but even that is difficult – you just take your life in your hands. People go so fast.

<div align="right">(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)</div>

For teenagers (aged 11-15), their perception of local woodlands is less about their negative perceptions about strangers and more about fear of the unknown: i.e. fear of unusual sounds, of unknown 'wild animals'. The attraction of wooded areas to provide seclusion away from adults needed to be balanced by a desire to be safe. The park and the woods are not good places when it is dark. So they meet within their local streets, near the shopping precinct with the illuminated and busy 'carry-out' venues. They want to be free from adults, yet they need to know that they are near to responsible adults.

Myths and stories can also have a marked effect on how people perceive a place and its accessibility. Places, particularly woodlands, often have a bad reputation. They might be deemed unsafe because an attack, or even a murder or a suicide, happened many years ago.

Sunart forest walk

Am I permitted to go there, will I be welcome?

Whilst within Scotland there is now legislation[33] that endorses open, responsible access to most land, our findings suggest that having a 'right' does not necessarily make access any easier for people who feel that they are unwelcome on private land. Even in rural areas, where there was acceptance of some access restrictions (for example during the deer stalking season), participants spoke about private landowners using 'outlawed' physical barriers such as locked gates and blocked car parks which create emotional barriers and make them feel uncomfortable about walking on their land.

Its knowing where you can go without upsetting anybody.

<div align="right">(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)</div>

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[33] Scottish Outdoor Access – Disability DDA, RRA, see: http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/default.asp

It is clear that people do not always have the confidence to walk off-road and in woodland without explicit permission and good directions.

> *from the point of view of walking if you go into the Forestry Commission you know you can get a good walk, simply because the tracks are there. All right it might be the same walk through tall trees, but every so often there'll be a break and you'll see different landscape in front of you.*
> *Yeah, they're normally signposted quite well, if you see that signing you know it's safe, it might not be the most stimulating and adventurous walk you've been on but you can generally park, there's a picnic bench, there's a pretty decent track…*
>
> <div align="right">(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)</div>

Will I be able to get there and to cope with the terrain?

Woodland areas were located in close proximity to each of the case study areas but this did not necessarily make them physically accessible for participants. Getting there and coping with the terrain were issues that seemed particularly important for mothers with pushchairs and for older people whose mobility is limited by their health. Transport is a significant access issue for people with limited mobility. For older people their locality is defined by their physical mobility (or by the availability of cars and transport[34]). Flexible community transport is therefore very important. For mothers with pushchairs, physical fitness is less of an issue but access to a local country park, requiring a bus journey, can be difficult:

> *Can I ask what's it like getting on the buses with little kids…?*
> *Nightmare*
> *Nightmare?*
> *Aye there's nae room for buggies….There's only certain buses that we can get them on, and I've noticed the type of buggy that I've got, a 3 wheeler right, it's got inflatable tyres, and I noticed that…. it's like they've got bits where the seats fold up, they've still got seat there and there's a ledge for to climb up on it, you can't get the buggy over the ledge, you've got to lift the buggy up, and take it into the space…there's a [particular service] and there's one buggy only and he's no letting anybody else on. What if all of us wanted to come here, you're waiting on 4 buses to let you on at all? You're only allowed one buggy on a bus, in one time.*
>
> <div align="right">(mothers Motherwell)</div>

These young mothers also spoke of cost of transport as another major factor limiting their ability to travel, for instance, to a local country park.

The quality of the terrain is an important concern for older people who are limited by their physical mobility:

> *Oh I wouldn't go to the woods alone, no definitely not.*
> *Mod: Not even during the day?*
> *No I wouldn't.*
> *Mod: In case you fall you mean?*
> *Well that's a big problem, I mean, broken bones, osteoporosis, arthritis, I mean I'm well over 80 years of age, if I fall I'm there for life.*
> *Mod: But if you're with a group…?*
> *Oh with a group it's different, aye.*
>
> <div align="right">(older persons Drumchapel)</div>

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[34] Most of the older people in Drumchapel do not drive (generally low car ownership)

The quality of the footpaths or tracks in wooded and country areas is a concern for anyone who has difficulty walking and also for those who are pushing wheelchairs and buggies.

We tend to walk now more on tracks rather than going off road so to speak. But that's simply down to age I think.

(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)

Before I had children I used to do quite a lot of hill walking and we find we spend more time on the beaches now than anything. I do a little bit of walking but you're definitely restricted in terms of how far you can go and what sort of terrain you can get onto.
It's quite frustrating because there are so many fabulous places we'd like to walk but we know we'll just have to bide our time till we've not got one in a buggy and one in a backpack

(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)

Will my access needs conflict with other users?

Shared access can be a significant barrier for people who are not used to sharing space with others and to respecting other people's needs. Dogs can be a nuisance - as can cyclists, horse riders, groups of young people and motorised vehicles:

That's the trouble with these people, you're walking along, they come along on their bikes very quietly.

(older persons, Drumchapel)

Teenagers in Dundee felt that there was very little tolerance of their activities because they like to gather in large groups and tend to enjoy 'drinking sessions' but they are constantly moved on by the local community policeman. The young men echoed this sentiment; in their case they suggested that they could share and use the same woodland providing there is some tolerance:

When we used to go up there we'd gone along the paths then we'd cut up somewhere and sit somewhere quite hidden and that. Just so that no-one would come and bother us. We'd see folk walking their dogs and that and they'd see us walking up with big crates of beer and stuff…Just walk past and say hiya….There was a couple of folk that'd be 'mind and clean up after you' kind of thing. I ken they were all making sure the woods stayed clean.

(young men Galashiels)

The importance of mutual respect, or an informally agreed code of conduct, was also discussed by the isolated rural community in relation to multiple uses of the same track:

we've got a new track that's a multi purpose track in the village that's for walkers cyclists and horse riders and that's quite well used. Everybody seems to get on, it's not that there's hundreds of us, it's just a matter of politeness, we can step off the track easier, or K can pull his bike off the track easier than somebody on a horse, because if you go off the track the horse is going to go straight down in a bog.

(isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)

Why should I get involved?

Many people had strong views about how their local woodland should be managed to make it tidier, safer and more accessible and, as we discuss further in section 4.4 below from the providers' point of view, getting some community members involved in clearing and cleaning greenspace initiatives is a vital part of capacity building and sustainable maintenance. However, across the focus groups and particularly in urban areas, there was some dissent about such involvement. For example, within the mother and toddler group there was resistance to volunteer clearing and conservation work:

> *Can I say I wouldnae do it. And you know why I wouldnae do it? Cos see 2 weeks after I'd go down that same walk and it would all be lying again…*
>
> (mother Motherwell)

Many were caring for several small children as single parents, with limited resources and a sense that they had to 'fight to get their rights'. They talked about 'others' having responsibility for maintenance, particularly as they are seen as 'council workers' getting paid to do the job. This perhaps puts into context their perception of the need for 'others' to take responsibility. Yet these women had formed a mother and toddler group, without funding or support. They met twice weekly and managed with very little equipment.

For the young people getting involved was not so much about responsibilities as rights. They spoke of being voiceless, not having rights; nobody would listen to *them*. 'Those in authority' have the last say, so it seems as if the young people have no well developed sense of responsibility or respect for their environment because it does not give them what they would like (e.g. attractive shelters; a 'disco park'). Their community youth worker (who participated in the discussions) suggested that in general, young people express negativity and cynicism about being able to 'make a difference'.

The young men in the Galashiels group hoped that getting involved in woodland work through volunteering could provide them with a potential route to skills for paid and interesting work – particularly in a rural locality where local jobs tend to be low skilled and low waged. As one participant – who was bored with working in the local convenience shop and wanting something interesting and challenging - said: '*it's hard to get anything – you hang onto what you get.'.* Some members of this group had pursued skilled volunteering, such as learning how to build and clear woodland paths, construct benches and fences and were eager to acquire accredited skills such as chain sawing. However they also recognised that getting involved did not guarantee a route into paid work so they were cautious about prolonged voluntary work.

In rural areas there were similar concerns, amongst the young people, about their future employment prospects. It is a sad fact that young people will normally have to leave the area in order to find work. But the question 'why should I get involved?' was also a question about 'rural necessity'. In a small and widely dispersed local community with limited services the ability to function as a community relies on voluntary effort as the discussion below illustrates:

> *Mod: A lot of people apparently are on committees, you mentioned these committees, is that how you keep things moving along, do you do voluntary work?*
> *yeah, that's how a lot of things are done, by voluntary… a lot of community things anyway are voluntary. It's good to get together and sign on who wants to do x y and z.*
> *Mod: Are there enough people to keep those sort of initiatives going on a voluntary basis?*
> *for now yes I think so, but it's like all committees, you've got a committee of say 10, you've got a core of 4 that do all the work, the other 6 turn up and give their 10 p's worth and then disappear for a month or whatever.*
> *Mod: Do you ever wish there was somebody paid to do these jobs that you're all volunteers for?*
> *no, it wouldn't be the same then*
> *no it's got to be somebody with the interest rather than commercial…monetary control*
> *Mod: is there a sense the community is in control?*
> *I think there is*
> *Mod: What about getting money, is that a bit of a headache?*
> *we do fundraising events, we do barbecues or duck races, I should have brought my ducks with me tonight. We do all sorts of fun things like that to raise money. Tombolas or bingo, whist nights.*
>
> (isolated rural community Ardnamurchan)

4.1.3 Experiencing access

As discussed in the methodology section the 'action research', case study approach enabled us to go beyond people's perception, expectation and understanding of access to and use of local green spaces. The added dimension of the research process was to bring together community groups and providers of green space initiatives, in order to take part in an organised green space activity and to encourage future contact. We thus had opportunity to observe how the groups experienced access and how this related to the focus group discussion. In this section we have selected four examples to illustrate these experiences and to highlight a number of issues that arose from our group activities.

Connecting the providers with potential users

During the activities with our participants we were often aware that we were stepping into the gap between the *provision* of greenspace amenities and the *reality* of the needs and expectations of the group. For instance, during our initial discussion the Motherwell mothers had spoken of faceless 'council workers', 'men in cagouls' being paid to clean up neighbourhood green paths and of a disinclination to get involved. Yet during the planned buggy walk they engaged warmly with the Greenlink Officers, Michala and Susan and face to face interaction was extremely positive. The Greenlink Officers listened to the concerns of the group, some of which were illustrated during the walk: for example open edges of paths leading steeply down to the river, proving magnetic to toddling children. In their written evaluation Susan and Michala proposed a solution:

> . . . we are going to investigate the options of hedge planting along the edges of the path leading down to the river as this will make it safer and provide valuable conservation experience for our group of conservation volunteers.
>
> (Evaluation written by Susan and Michala, Greenlink)

The Greenlink Officers also invited the group to a number of planned community events and suggested that they could support the group in other outdoor activities: a group picnic, more Greenlink walks and also offered support with sourcing funding for equipment and outings. The women may still feel that they have 'more to worry about than trees', but at this level of grass roots community engagement, the Greenlink Officers were able to engage with their concerns and take on board their 'tacit knowledge' (e.g. worries about personal safety and risks for their children from steep river embankments).

Resting on a guided walk, Drumchapel.

Coping with inaccessible terrain

The need to provide for a range of physical mobility issues is well understood by council officials, countryside rangers and community workers. Indeed, as we noted earlier, this is a key aspect of the Disability Discrimination Act. But, the reality of limited mobility is often a lot more complex than planners anticipate. The researchers' woodland activity with the older participants in Drumchapel, 'opened their eyes' to mobility and terrain issues as illustrated by the following field notes.

We went out for a walk in the woods with eight people from the Focal Point Centre on a glorious day in April (we had been put off the first time by bad weather). Our walk had been chosen by Winnie, who is an experienced health walk leader. She planned to take us to Garscadden Woods (the bluebell woods) but after we

had been asked to consider that one member of the group was in a wheelchair, we realised that a steep, uneven path into Garscadden woods made this inaccessible for our group. Fortunately Winnie knew of an alternative woodland walk that would accommodate wheelchair access. During the walk at least four helpers (including the researchers) assisted people by providing an arm to rest on or by pushing the wheelchair. Overhanging branches were hazardous for those with poor visibility. Progress through the woods was very slow, with frequent stops and we were relieved to find a group of well-placed logs that provided an opportunity for the group to sit – or perch – on.

In retrospect, and in discussion with the day centre manager, we realised that in planning a simple one hour 'health walk' we had overlooked a number of mobility issues, such as the special requirements of wheelchair users and the need to make provision for our participants to take the weight off their feet for a while. We were also acutely aware of the need for public agencies to address their responsibility for 'public liability' and health and safety. However, our group survived the outing intact and they really enjoyed the adventure. The centre manager told us that this had been a learning experience for her too. She was adamant that the difficult process of getting a group mobilised for a walk should not be a reason to take the easy option – which would be to leave people sitting safely in the day centre all day!

Experiencing social isolation

Our interviews with access providers illustrate that there is an understanding of the potential that woodland and green spaces have to provide social benefits for communities:

> *The Greenlink is about the people it serves. The officers talked of a variety of people enjoying the Greenlink; from cyclists to dog walkers; from joggers to walkers; from parents with buggies taking a stroll to people heading to the centre of Motherwell , to places of work, to shop, to deal with everyday activities.*
>
> (Notes following an interview with Greenlink Officers)

However access providers also suggest that people are becoming 'disconnected' from their environment and isolated from social contact with others in outdoor spaces. As our findings illustrate, respondents gave universal reasons for such isolation: a more sedentary lifestyle; a fear of being attacked, of children being abducted, molested, particularly in woodlands and green spaces; a car culture creating busy roads that in rural areas, is compounded by scarcity of affordable public transport and lack of foot paths. There was also discussion about localized social and cultural factors such as local gangs, the 'reputation' of an area and incomers.

Making bat boxes, Langlee

Within our Galashiels case study and in relation to young male job seekers, we both encountered the starkness of such social isolation and the potential that green space has to offer in terms of bringing people together and building social relationships. The young Galashiels men, struggling to find meaningful work, gave us a clear account of what it is like to lack confidence and hope for future prospects and how this could lead to a retreat into alcohol and drugs or an isolated life in front of the TV and video games. Facilitated by Anna and Craig from the Borders Forest Trust, our woodland activity consisted of using kits to build bird and bat boxes and install these in Langlee woods. We were instructed in the art of building these kits using wood, nails, drill, hammer and a folding ladder to install them in appropriate places in the woods.

We were able to experience at first hand how getting together to make something can help build relationships. Although the group had been difficult to engage during the initial discussion group, some of the team had woodwork skills and clearly enjoyed doing something with their hands. They helped one another – and us - whilst engaged in the task. This meant that there could be 'talk without eye contact' – disengaged talk; making and installing something can bring about a real sense of achievement. Whilst there was 'indifferent talk' about returning to the site to visit the boxes, at least two participants said they would return; participants chose trees on which to install the boxes, they appreciated this. One participant was harder to reach and did not get very involved. He told us that this was "not my thing" – he likes on-line interactive games. Working out of doors, often in teams and problem solving, fosters creativity, builds self-esteem, nurtures team building skills and increases self confidence

Similarly, the teenagers we worked with in Dundee were described, by outdoor access providers and outreach workers, as having quite narrow horizons in relation both to their locality and their general outlook. We spoke to them about their need for outdoor 'social space' to meet up with their friends and how their modes of behaviour (drinking, rowdiness and vandalism) often resulted in them being 'moved

Fixing bat boxes, Langlee

on' by the local police. It was a challenge for their image to don cycle helmets and to accompany us on a ride through the woods but, when they mastered the trick of cycling downhill through trees, they lost their attitude problem and genuinely enjoyed the experience. Their community outreach worker told us that she is hoping that, by reconnecting these teenagers to their local environment and widening their horizons with activities such as this, they will understand more about their relationship with the wider environment.

Experiencing Scottish weather

The Scottish weather was a significant factor that influenced our woodland activities. We had to cancel one walk planned with the group of older people in Drumchapel, and we subsequently had our fingers crossed that the weather would not affect other events. Some of the discussion group participants had already suggested that inclement and unpredictable weather was a reason why they were unable to get outside for a walk. Mothers with young children were more inclined to be affected by bad weather. In Motherwell the group were afraid that their children would 'catch cold'. But others, including some of the participants from Ardnamurchan (where it rains more often than not) said that they were unaffected by bad weather because: '*there's no bad weather in Scotland there's only wrong clothes*'.

Fortunately the sun was shining on the day we returned to Drumchapel for our walk and the group was well prepared with hats and sun block. We all enjoyed the good weather and the trees provided welcome shade from the sun. However, on the occasion of our activity in Motherwell, the mother and toddler group was less well prepared for the March weather and, although the children discovered that it was great fun to splash in puddles and get rather dirty, their clothes did not survive intact! A comparison could be made with the situation in Acharacle primary school where, for all the children from nursery school upwards, outdoor activity is a regular part of the school curriculum. The school now provides

suitable waterproof outerwear and they encourage children to come well prepared to be outdoors in any weather. Their philosophy is that, given a sensible approach and proper clothing, weather should not be allowed to keep children from accessing their local woodland. This is part of the wider considerations about risk and safety. It is worth considering whether a change in attitude to the inevitable vagaries of the weather could be encouraged more widely.

4. 2 Issues raised by access providers/policy makers

The access providers included countryside and forest rangers, transport providers, district managers and health and community workers. During our interviews and interactions with these access providers we asked them to tell us about what they were trying to achieve, the problems they had encountered in meeting their targets and what they were doing to overcome barriers to access for under-represented groups. As we illustrate below, some of the issues raised by the providers mirror those discussed by the users. We will note, however, that the aspirations of the providers did not always match the perceptions and experience of the users. The results of these discussions are grouped under the following themes:

4.2.1 'Mainstreaming' greenspace access into all policy areas

For many greenspace and woodland access providers the key to success in widening participation and access is the inclusion of access to greenspace and woodlands as a key part of the community planning structure. This would entail, as in the case of the Dundee TWIG[35], linking access to greenspace and woodland into health, housing and regeneration policies. An essential aspect is 'joined up thinking' and partnership with other access providers within an organisation (local council) or between different agencies. However, this is challenging. In the case of tree maintenance and countryside access we heard that within a Local Authority different departments often had a 'bunker mentality', in that because they have different objectives they fail to work together to achieve joint outcomes. Where provision arises from both public and private enterprises this can be even more difficult. For example, SMARTways[36] is an integrated transport information point provided by North Lanarkshire Council that promotes alternative and healthier methods to travel. It also recognises the need for 'integrated' transport that is affordable, reliable and accessible with facilities for 'all' (e.g. bikes, buggies, wheel chair users) but the reality of bringing together a plethora of privatised transport providers is another matter.

However, specific projects and initiatives can often provide the opportunity for agencies to work together to promote access: Safe Routes to School[37] and Paths for All[38] are good examples of successful partnerships that deal with common issues, working with land owners/managers to provide improved access. Another positive outcome of joined up thinking is joined up places i.e. green networks formed by linking discrete greenspaces/parks and woodlands with green access corridors. The Greenlink project (see Appendix 1) is a good example of this.

4.2.2 Access for all: widening access provision

The 2003 the Land Reform (Scotland) Act has transformed the access situation by legalising open access to the Scottish countryside. The Act makes a political commitment to a statutory code of practice and places a duty on countryside agencies to provide for an increasingly widening range of countryside users. Providers are now aware that this duty also includes a requirement to provide access for people from different cultural backgrounds and of differing abilities as part of their remit to meet the legal requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and Race Relations Amendment Act.

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[35] Trees and Woodland in Greenspace

[36] SmartWays http://www.northlan.gov.uk/

[37] Safe Routes to School http://www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk/index.php?f=scotland.htm

[38] Paths for All http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/

There are many different responses to this duty. Sometimes it comes down to *getting the details right.* For instance, some wheelchair users prefer recycled material on paths – this provides a good hardwearing surface and has a better grip. It has all the qualities of tarmacadam but, when designed to blend in with the colour of the trees, retains a natural look.

There was also discussion about needing to ensure up-dated *signage, maps and guidance*: widening access means good information. This is important because, even in areas with open access, people who are unfamiliar with an area will not have the confidence to walk over open countryside without directions. We heard from a Highland Council recreation ranger that, in her area they have:

> very little in the way of waymarked paths – people have just found their own way. Its part of the appeal – finding a path for yourself

<div align="right">(West Lochaber Highland Council Ranger)</div>

However, when the Sunart Oakwoods project undertook to create new village access routes, the feedback points to the fact that in rural areas there are still sectors of the community that would like better access information. According to the ranger there had been no attempt, in the past, to engage a wider access community. Previously *you were either a walker or not* and it is only recently, through new routes and guided walks, that more local people have been introduced to walking in the area (for their health, dieting etc.).

As some providers are beginning to realise, opening up 'access for all' is not just about a legal right to access and opening up the countryside. Many of them are aware that, although the Land Reform Act is a huge benefit for people who already visit the countryside, people who are not regular users are still unaware of their rights and that there are still one or two places where you have to assert your right of access. An outdoor education provider said: 'I get asked frequently by the people we take out: *is it OK for us to use this footpath*'?

Creative use of maps can also provide information to encourage a wider group of users. Language is one issue that many providers are addressing, in order to communicate to a multi-cultural constituency. The Motherwell Greenlink partnership with *SMARTways* has also provided a number of maps that are designed to be not just route finders but also provide historical, environmental and cultural information. Similarly, the Woodland Trust is aware that information needs to be targeted to specific identified needs. Some of their maps are designed to appeal to and engage with children's interests by supplying interesting details and treasure hunts. The Woodland Trust is also considering the use of new digital technologies (through iPods and mobile phones).

There are now many schemes that offer guided walks and these have been successful in attracting people who do not have the confidence to walk alone or without a guide. But some potential users are still wary of being led by and interacting with, 'strangers'. It takes time to build trusting relations and instil confidence, to ensure that access considers emotional as well as physical barriers. Guided walks are often designed to encourage people to take part on a weekly basis (although people can and do 'drop in and out'); in this way participants get to know the leader and the other regular walkers. Alongside guided walks, there might also be scope for long term dedicated community rangers/council workers, who have the resources to be very visible in particular localities, and who can 'take the woods to the people' via community outreach (e.g. visiting community groups, having an accessible local office with regular 'drop in' sessions).

Many walks are themed to attract people with particular interests or needs and 'Health Walks' have been very effective in this respect. The importance of outreach cannot be overestimated and Health Walks provide evidence of the need for a facilitator to get everyone together on a regular basis and to guide the walk. Social interaction is also a key part of the outcome for well-being. This point was endorsed by a Highland Council ranger, who leads local health walks on a weekly basis, when she said: '*we call it a wee walk and a blether because a lot of it is the social aspect.*' Regular health walks are

also an ideal opportunity for the ranger to keep in contact with the local community, to learn about local issues, to maintain interest in the local environment and encourage people to stay active as long as possible (the oldest member of the group is 92).

4.2.3 Addressing conflicts of use.

Both providers and users spoke of different groups of people using woodland access for different purposes according to circumstances and life stage. Views on multi-purpose access routes varied. In some heavily used areas, such as Border Forest regions, it was argued that: '*you have to have set paths for set users, can't mix them for safety…. Where space is limited, walking predominates*' (Border Forest Trust, Development Worker). On the other hand, in North Lanarkshire the Council tries to construct:

> *paths suitable for all , for example, bridges with parapets suitable for all. The expectation [of users should be] that you have consideration for all. You have to raise awareness of other users' needs, for example NOT having swing gates as these are a barrier for wheelchair users.*
> (North Lanarkshire Council: SMARTways personnel)

We earlier noted that the argument for a multi-purpose track - and an informal code of conduct to govern its use - was put by a member of the rural community. This is a difficult balancing act for providers and, as each situation is unique, there are no set rules. The use of multi-purpose tracks requires mutual respect and, as the Sunart Oakwoods project leader and the local Highland Council ranger reflected, this often requires mediation and education:

> *There has been an issue with [young] cyclists because of them riding on the footpaths – but they needed [safe] places to go. We've done a bit of education with them and they know roughly which are the bits they should/shouldn't go….We sometimes have dog walkers complaining of kids rushing by as they are walking their dogs.*
> *And dog-fouling is an issue – as it is everywhere I suppose. But certainly here in Strontian its been raised again and again.*'
> (Sunart Oakwoods project workers)

Providers also spoke about the need to provide access that is flexible enough for both multi-purpose use and for the rapidly *changing use of local green space.* For example, the Langlee area in Galashiels has witnessed the growth of new houses and some of these built within walking distance of local woodland – woodland that a community ranger suggested, has traditionally been used by horse riders, most of whom come in from neighbouring rural communities. These paths can get quite churned up by horses' hooves, but as this is now a regular haunt for dog walkers it can become contested social space.

For many countryside managers one of the biggest problems for them recently has been managing the illegal use of motor-bikes on trails.

> *Some young people, they take motorbikes through [woods] illegally, too tempting for them. Means they're out and active but it's dangerous.*
> (Scottish Borders Council, Community Learning & Development Worker)

This is partly because of the safety issues it raises.

4.2.4 Public liability/health and safety.

In process of widening access and addressing the complexities of multiple uses of woodlands providers are now required to meet ever more stringent requirements for public liability. But, as we see from the examples given above, it is often difficult to meet the requirements for multiple uses where risk assessors have deemed there to be an uninsurable safety risk. Safety protocols are essential, but overly strict risk assessment requirements can be a problem, particularly for school parties. Rangers and teachers have found that they can kill spontaneity – e.g. having to organise school party trips into green spaces ahead of time in order to deal with paperwork. Risk assessment is an inexact science, heavily influenced by perceptions and, as one provider commented, negative media publicity and government attitudes to community 'safety' can heighten fear:

> There's a lot about community safety. . . . and a lot of it I would say is unfounded. The Government, Scottish Executive, have a lot of responsibility there - has made it as if communities are unsafe and they're not – put fear into people. Young people need to be outdoors without adults, learning skills [camping, route finding etc] and working in a group but this doesn't happen anymore.
> (Scottish Borders Council, Community Learning & Development Worker)

An added problem is that when outdoor access events are hampered, or even cancelled for minor safety reasons like poor weather this can reinforce negative attitudes to outdoor activities. Furthermore, it can act as a barrier for both users and landowners by emphasising risk rather than encouraging people to develop the confidence and skills to manage those risks. The result is that private landowners are hesitant about widening public access. Rangers, walk leaders and school teachers are often reluctant to take on activities in woodlands for similar reasons. When they do so they have to be willing to accept responsibility for possible accidents. As the headteacher at a primary school in the Scottish Highlands said: '*we've never had an accident but I take responsibility and would bear the burden if anything happened to the children whilst they were playing in the adjoining woodland – as they do every week*'.

4.2.5 Community 'ownership'

It is now recognised that a capacity building approach i.e. getting the wider public to 'take ownership' of their environments is the only way to make projects and initiatives sustainable in the longer term. From within existing greenspace initiatives such as 'Greenlink', the Woods in and around Towns (WIAT) and the (TWIG) initiatives, there is a desire to: '*get the community to feel a sense of ownership*' .

Where, in the past, public greenspaces and woodlands have been managed by Local Authority contract services, the aim of a 'community ownership' approach is to engage a local community in taking some responsibility and to be involved in management. From the providers' point of view, there is a belief that getting the community on board to address such things as vandalism and anti-social behaviour is a vital part of engendering access to and use of, local green space as part of community health and well-being. But, where there is irresponsible, or anti-social use of local woodlands, particularly by young people, it is often a challenge to accept responsibility for their impact on the environment and on other users. However, a rural development worker believes this is a challenge worth addressing.

> "Young people are chopping down and burning good wood, they leave branches hanging, hurt themselves, it's illegal, hacking and ripping branches. Get them involved in clearing etc., legitimate working with wood crafts, [. . .] making things from wood, kids having a go. [. . .] Get people out there steer them into a role, find the strong people. Help them to realize the potential they have unless they have the ownership, [of local woods/greenspace], it's going to die".
> (Scottish Borders Council, Community Learning & Development Worker)

In another, urban, situation where there is an outreach worker, the Drumchapel Community Forest Ranger explained how she had 'done a deal' with local teenagers to allow them to continue to use a

Forestry Commission picnic bench (that they had appropriated from another location) if they promised to clear up their rubbish (cans and bottles) and leave it at the entrance to the wood for the refuse collectors. This negotiated settlement satisfied the young people's need for independence at the same time as encouraging them to take some responsibility for their impact on the environment.

Some projects are beginning to develop plans beyond initial funding. For instance, Greenlink, now has an established Community Development Group, although there is recognition of the need for local council services to continue with maintenance (e.g. clearing fly-tipping and hazards). These initiatives are, as yet, underdeveloped in urban areas but their benefit, not only for the community, in better management, but also for the health and well-being of individuals, is undisputed. Project officers provide training and support (e.g. funding, running committees, community outreach etc.). CDG members spoke about the life changing experiences of active involvement. For instance, one interviewee spoke of his crushing depression that hospitalised him and made him housebound for some time. He described how 'stepping out into the woods' gave him back his life. He said: '*I love working with the groups of people, the social side, the fresh air, the whole show, helping the environment.*[39]' Yet providers have suggested that some 'hard to reach' sectors of the community are very slow on the uptake and there is still a mismatch between provision and uptake that fails to engage with the reality of the lives of the people to whom it is directed. We noted that the young mothers felt that the maintenance of the local environment was not their responsibility because: '*someone is being paid to do it'*. In the course of busy lives and whilst they were struggling to meet the needs of their young children, this was seen to be an inappropriate use of their time. However, during our walk with the Greenlink project workers, we noted that there was some discussion about a future tree-planting event involving the children.

In rural areas the notion of community ownership is not new. Community owned woodlands were beginning to be established in the 1980s and there are now over 200, mostly in rural locations but including some in inner city areas. The Community Woodlands Association was established in 2003 to represent the interests of existing groups. The community woodland on the outskirts of the village of Strontian is part of the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative. The Highland Council worked with the community to create access and to clear a network of paths through woods that were previously privately owned 'policy woodland' containing a mixture of tree species. Community ownership, in this remote area, began with the formation of a Community Company, created to 'buy out' local fishing rights followed by an offer, from SEERAD, of the village green and parts of the local woodland. The local rangers explained that the response to community ownership had been astounding and, in an area where 70-80% of the surrounding land is in private ownership (in the form of large estates) this is a new form of local politics. At the present time the majority of the community now feels more empowered and ready to come on board (although its usually a core group of people who shoulder the burden of the work) and, on the negative side, the rangers felt that the State now puts a lot of responsibility on local people to volunteer. One of the great benefits of community-based projects is the potential for local employment and enterprise and where: '*if you go back ten years there were outside contractors building a fence or cutting trees it now tends to be someone working within the area*'. But there is still a long way to go to create a sustainable economy in the area and the project workers are concerned that essential funding may be withdrawn before that happens.

4.2.6 Maintenance: the need to resource woodland access in a sustainable way

There is recognition, amongst providers, that engaging with communities requires a lot of resources. The roles of the countryside/forest ranger are complex, sensitive and highly skilled. In every area where we found community rangers their presence was highly visible within the local community. Residents may perceive them as brokers, stamped with a sense of 'authority', because they are often called upon to mediate between resident and council and other residents. The work is very demanding but the effect

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[39] Fieldnotes written after a group interview with Greenlink CDG members

on the local community is positive and we witnessed the rewards. In terms of maintenance and management issues the ranger's presence is crucial. But concerns were expressed about the responsibility for longer term management, particularly in terms of managing funds, overseeing development, dealing with health and safety issues and in general, attracting wide representation from the community.

A general view is that an 'exit strategy' needs to be built into all funded project work where staff allocation is dedicated to community access because projects lose momentum when funding streams are withdrawn and a project leader's contract terminates. Funding is often short term and project based. In many cases, particularly in well-used urban areas, it is not enough to rely on voluntary effort to continue the work. The Drumchapel Community Forest Ranger was half way through a WIAT funded project when she was interviewed: she said: '*we must always remember that we are affecting people's lives with our work*'. She was acutely aware that in another year's time when her WIAT project funding runs out, the access situation in Drumchapel woods that she has worked so hard to turn around, may very quickly revert back to its uncared for state. As another provider stated:

> *Scottish Executive's push to get people more active is brilliant, but needs more funding.*
> (Scottish Borders Council, Community Learning & Development Worker)

Several providers expressed the view that funding for outreach projects to engage a wider range of people in active outdoor use of woodlands and forests, was too little and 'too low key'.

4.2.7 Evaluation

It is also recognised that, in order to persuade funding bodies of the fact that these initiatives are, in the longer term, performing an important social function in meeting the health and well-being needs of local communities – particularly in deprived areas – they need to be properly evaluated. But it is always difficult to measure the success of a greenspace initiative when the outcomes are essentially anecdotal. We had noted, for instance, that many of the participants on health walk schemes and some of the project volunteers with mental health issues had reported improvements in general well-being since engaging with the projects. How best to measure, report and evaluate this? Community rangers and officers also spoke positively of anecdotal success, particularly self-reported improvement to physical and mental health and overall quality of life.

Part of this concern stems from existing indicators of success that tend to be numerical, such as those outlined in the Scottish Forestry Strategy (2006: 37 and 41).[40] Whilst these are valuable measurements of achievement, relying solely on quantifiable markers may unwittingly drive a culture of target performance (making the achievement of targets ends in themselves) and may stifle the reporting of creative, localised, success. Green space initiatives may be evaluated through their annual reporting of the number of conservation days, number of participants attending community events, number of health walks, number of community groups approached. It is felt that, alongside such reporting, there should also be recognition and *validation* of qualitative achievements, using the plethora of new media that is widely available.

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[40] The Scottish Forestry Strategy gives a number of measurable indicators by which it can evaluate the progress of its key themes. For example in terms of 'community development' such indicators include: Number of schools involved in woodland based learning activities; Number of community group partnerships involved in owning or managing woodland; Number of 'formal' volunteer days associated with woodland activity; Percentage satisfaction with woodland recreation provision (through Public Opinion Survey)

4.2.8 Need to bring about cultural change: rekindling a new woodland culture

During the course of our research we often heard references to the need for a change in culture in order to achieve wider access to woodlands for under-represented groups. There is an understanding of the potential that woodland and green spaces have to provide social benefits for communities. But it is argued that a *cultural change* is needed in order to address all of the issues raised above and to bring about a shift in perspective; from seeing local woodlands as being inaccessible alien environments to them becoming part of the extended community; and from top down provision to bottom-up engagement with local people in local contexts.

There is recognition that it's not just about changing the landscape. The experience of some of the project managers has led them to the conclusion that work to nurture and sustain public benefits of access to and use of woodland and green spaces has to begin with the community not the access point to the woodland. And that such provision can rarely be superimposed – it has to arise out of identified needs. In support of this overall aim we heard talk about the need to restablish *a new woodland culture* and about various new approaches to woodland management. For instance:

> *Borders Forest Trust is rekindling woodland culture, events and activities for wide and varied people.*
> (Borders Forest Trust Development Worker)

In the Ardnamurchan case study we talked to both the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative project leader and a member of the community woodland management group about their aspirations to recreate a new woodland culture in their local area in order to contribute to much needed social, environmental and economic improvements[41]. The project started after the community made it clear to the local woodland managers (the Forestry Commission) that they wanted the community to have a greater involvement and for the community to see the benefit of their own woodlands. For the local community it was not enough to be consulted about a future Forest Design Plan; they wanted to see changes that would affect their livelihoods – specifically in terms of local employment. They demanded, and won the right for the whole community including the local primary schools, to participate in the management of the forest. Alongside the restoration of the ancient oakwoods in the area and the opening of new footpaths and cycle tracks, success can be measured in real tangible community benefits such as a new High School and Community Centre and community companies and 'start up' businesses in the area. The project workers recognise that a key to these successes has been their own willingness to listen and respond to the needs of the community.

4.3 New Pathways to health and well-being

4.3.1 Identified needs of under-represented users

The following needs, relating particularly to our target groups were identified by the participants from our focus groups and by the access providers that we interviewed. Whilst the following quotation, refers specifically to the locality in which our mother and toddler case study was carried out, its sentiment aptly applies across the case studies. We would argue that ALL individual needs must be considered as being set within a *wider* context and being part of a broader situation:

> *You're talking about us right? But it's a wider problem, it's no just about us and our young kids. Teenage kids as well, that's why they're hanging about, that's why they're getting into gangs, that's why they're teasing people and intimidating us cos they don't have anything else to do either. So the problem doesnae just lie with us going out country walking and things like that. They don't have a*

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[41] The area has been classified as vulnerable by the Initiative at the Edge

facility or anywhere organised to get teenage kids organised into it. To get people away frae that idea of intimidating us and all… do you know what I mean? Sot it doesnae just land with us with kids, it works its way up to teenage people as well. You'll no get an older couple going don the Green walk or whatever you call it either cos they feel the same.

<div align="right">(mothers, Motherwell)</div>

Young mothers (Motherwell)

- Outreach provision and support is required for young mothers who lack confidence and feel vulnerable. This could include activities for children and accompanied buggy walks
- For activities further afield they need cheap/reliable transport
- They need better tended play areas for children to use on a regular basis (young children learn to love and respect their environment at an early age).

Young people 11-15 (Dundee)

- Young people need social space and places to 'hang out' – but they still need to be safe. The equivalent of playgrounds (they often hang out on playgrounds) close to their homes[42]. Trees provide shelter, some privacy and play opportunities.
- Young people need opportunities to take responsibility for their own actions – build confidence, new skills.
- Girls are particularly inactive – focus on changing their perspective on outdoor exercise.
- Adventurous activities – new horizons and fresh challenges

Young men seeking paid work (Galashiels)

- Young men identified the need for well maintained local community spaces for social interaction and recreation – and they would like to have a role in their design and location.
- Above all they need opportunities to develop skills and find work (volunteering is OK if it eventually leads to work)
- Young people like 'high impact', adventurous recreational activity.

Older persons (Drumchapel)

- Older people appreciate nice views of trees and greenspace – from their windows at home or from a bus or car window.
- Many have memories of more active times and they welcome opportunities to share those memories
- They appreciate well-managed outings and walks that allow then to re-connect with their local environment – if the weather is good and they have an opportunity to sit down.
- They also welcome opportunities for green space providers to come to them (particularly in the winter) and through audio-visual talks or craft demonstrations.
- The needs of older men are less well provided

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[42] Where the children's play areas have been 'appropriated' by teenagers this is often an indication that teenagers need places of their own.

Isolated rural community (Ardnamurchan)

- Local employment prospects in woodland management, woodcrafts, conservation and recreation
- Social spaces for young people
- Way-marked footpaths (particularly where they cross private land)
- Rural roads are hazardous for pedestrians and local communities need a network of off road paths connecting to services and schools and to other communities.

4.3.2 Possible solutions investigated/offered

The issues identified above are factors that affect access for under-represented groups – although they do not deter regular users. These factors may be understood as 'barriers' that need to be lifted, however, for many people – particularly (although not exclusively) in socially deprived areas – the problem is more complex than the removal of barriers. Factors such as the need for better information, open access and proximity of good quality woodland are necessary, but not sufficient, to promote access for under-represented groups. Lack of confidence, lack of cultural habit and media-hyped safety scares have all had a significant effect on people's mobility and personal freedom in open or secluded green spaces. Many people also talked about how this had changed for them from remembered childhood freedom that has been eroded by a perceived breakdown of social order.

Both the selected community groups and the providers and policy makers offered possible solutions that begin to identify, prioritise and promote potential opportunities to overcome these barriers. Indeed, where we have seen remarkable change happen is where projects are starting to reconnect people to their local environments; creating better environments, clearing rubbish, creating pathways etc. The following examples were offered.

Key initiatives:
- Like 'Greenlink', 'Green Gym' and 'Health Walks' provide FC/FE with ready made 'ways in' to access provision and a source of advice and support. These are tried and tested ways to achieve improved access on a number of levels.

Partnerships:
- With other agencies like BTCV and 'Paths for All' and local Health Authorities can share responsibility and spread costs.

Raising awareness of local environmental issues:
- Youth workers in Dundee are trying to create an awareness and respect for the local environment to address vandalism.
- A WIAT project in Drumchapel has been working with children to raise awareness that 'littering is selfish'.

Local outdoor education centres:
- Locally based outdoor education centres (such as Ancrum in Dundee) have trained staff and equipment hire to lead mountain biking, and other, activities that will challenge people in a safe environment, widen horizons and build the confidence needed for outdoor access.

Complimentary provision and expertise:
- The realisation of complimentary provision and expertise is evident in initiatives such as the North Lanarkshire 'SmartWays' project that provides maps for Greenlink.
- Safe Routes to School initiatives are another example of how organisations like FC/FE can share resources and expertise to create safe, green, access routes to schools.

Woodland as a 'route to work':

- Woodland is not just a place to access for a walk or cycle ride, it can also provide a route to work e.g Border Forest, Sunart Oakwoods and the Drumchapel WIAT project are working towards helping local young people to acquire accredited skills and find routes into paid work or to self employment.
- Greenwork Mates is a new scheme recently launched in Drumchapel in partnership with the Glasgow West Regeneration Agency, to provide unemployed people with specially designed training scheme comprising employability skills, personal development and a possible SVQ certificate alongside their voluntary work.

Forest Schools

- Forest Education Initiative comprises a national partnership of Forestry Commission Scotland, Timber Trade Federation, Community Forests, ConFor, The Tree Council, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), the Field Studies Council, Groundwork, and the Woodland Trust. There is a network of local FEI 'cluster' groups in Scotland supporting forest education projects including Forest School.

5. Summary and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of the findings

In summary, our findings have sought to understand the barriers that prevent people accessing greenspace and woodlands for their health and well-being, and to identify solutions. In the literature review (section 2) we listed the barriers that have already been identified in surveys and other studies (see below) and we suggested that it would be important to understand how these common findings are experienced in order to make sensible recommendations to address the issues. The commonly identified barriers are:

- Lack of knowledge:
- Negative perceptions, fears and safety concerns:
- Lack of motivation:
- Lack of time:
- Physical accessibility:
- Lack of physical fitness:
- Feeling unwelcome:
- Lack of reasonable facilities:
- Conflicts of use:

As we have shown, similar issues were raised in our research with the target groups and, when we investigated them in the context of everyday lives, they arose in a number of the following ways:

A **lack of knowledge**, or awareness about what the local and other woodlands have to offer appears to be significant only in so far as the groups lacked the familiarity of regular use. Their habit and their knowledge was often influenced by their perceptions, or by the 'reputation' of the area. In respect of locations further afield, many people were unaware of their access rights and lacked the confidence to go where **they might not be welcome** or where they were unfamiliar with the quality of the terrain.

When we explored **motivation** with our target groups, many of the groups did not appear to be very motivated by the idea of accessing woodlands. They lacked the habit and they did not anticipate this to be a positive experience for them. However, we found that when we arranged for them to go out and experience an activity, in the course of their day-to-day routines i.e. from a mother and toddler group, from a day centre, from a youth training centre and from an after school group, our groups enjoyed it. It seems that 'taster' activities can provide the motivation to repeat the experience if the activity can be fitted into everyday lives.

Physical accessibility is affected by many factors, from the quality of the woodland and the quality of the terrain to the extent to which woodland areas are accessible for people without cars. Surveys suggest that 86% of people visiting woodlands arrive by car but this is not the case for small areas of woodland in and around towns and villages and these are the areas most often accessed by our target groups. But, we found that if the woodland is not connected to a community by an off-road path, even in villages that are surrounded by woodlands, it is inaccessible for pedestrian use. Moreover, uncertainty about other users' needs, rights and responsibilities - particularly for example in relation to *how* to share a footpath with cyclists, walkers and horse riders - can undermine confidence.

Personal safety was a recurring and important issue across the case studies, and one that has been explored in some detail. We found that some of the concerns for personal safety were also defined by the cultural expectations of belonging to a particular group. For instance, when talking about their access to and use of green spaces, particularly those with trees, the mother and toddler group members spoke of being fearful of attack, particularly from groups of 'undesirables' ('junkies, smack heads'), or lone men, perceived to be sexually predatory. As a group they were vehement in their belief that they could not walk alone or with their children, in such spaces. They needed to travel in the company of other adults. Yet observation revealed that in the course of everyday life, some did travel alone within such spaces: to collect their school age children or to visit a friend. We concluded that perceptions and behaviour are not the same and perception changes over time and in turn influences cultural expectation. Teenagers' attitudes to personal safety in outdoor localities were similarly ambivalent in that they wanted to physically remove themselves from authoritative adults but they needed the reassurance of proximity and visibility.

In comparison, the group of older people did not express fears for personal safety. For some, throughout decades of living in the same locality, they had not been fearful of others. Yet their talk suggested that they both *monitored the perceived behaviour of others* and controlled theirs accordingly: going out in the morning when the 'riff raff' are not about and not going out after dark. Being alone in the woods did not incite fear of others. Rather there was concern with *being sensible*, suggesting perhaps that their **lack of physical fitness** in much older years, a less than steady gait, or poorer eyesight might result in a fall or injury. There was also an expectation that they might then lie undiscovered for a considerable time – a perception then that local woodland paths are not frequently used.

Overall, however, our most important conclusion is that the barriers to access are less about the single issues discussed above and highlighted by current access surveys, and more to do with wider factors. Our findings indicate that complexity, local contingencies and life-stage are equally if not more important in determining who will use a particular woodland and for what purpose. A young mother in the Motherwell group made our point for us when she said:

> it's a wider problem, it's no just about us and our young kids. …[and]….the problem doesnae just lie with us going out country walking and things like that..

So when we investigated how our groups experienced their locality we found that they recognised the importance of being able to access their local outdoor environment and in particular for young mothers, because of its contribution to their own or their children's well-being. But they had huge reservations about the conditions under which they would access areas such as woodland - in fact they would rather walk beside busy roads and take their outings in shopping centres. Many of our participants described feeling hemmed in or isolated by the bad weather, by anti-social disorder, by fear of personal attacks or, in rural areas, because of the traffic on narrow lanes.

We have noted that each of these groups have specific NEEDs at specific times in their lives. We identified the need for a range of levels of access – from views and memories to an opportunity to work in and with the woods and to full on community ownership and management. People's needs are different in different circumstances and they change according to lifestage: they need pathways, spaces, places and opportunities to fit their requirements. For the 'hard to reach groups' we identified a gap between these specific needs and provision of woodland access arrangements to meet them.

We also encountered access providers who were struggling heroically to balance the requirements of their jobs with the need to make headway in the following ways in order to:

- Mainstream access
- Open up, or widen access for all
- Deal with conflicts of use
- Deal with public liability issues
- Get communities to 'take ownership'
- Maintain access after the project
- Make a case for the economic value of what they are doing
- Trying to re-kindle new ways of using woodland in the community

Nonetheless, in struggling to cope with the complexity of what they are doing, providers are often aware that they have failed to engage with local needs and, in doing so, that they have inadvertently left those people who are hard to reach out of their provision. For instance, schoolchildren and older people remain in the classroom or sitting in the day centre because the risk assessments are too complex to allow them to get out; mothers with young children are trapped in their homes because they have nowhere safe to take their children; teenagers continue to wreck the local playgrounds and leave litter in the woods because no-one is willing to provide the social space that they need; young men are under-utilised and under-resourced to do work that they would enjoy in an outdoor environment because there are no training programmes to help them to develop the skills that they need to get employment and so on.

In summary, we have found that the process of promoting and widening access requires a step beyond – or rather *a step before* – the removal of 'barriers': an engagement with and reaching out to hard-to-reach groups in the context of their everyday lives. This is the opportunity gap that is so often left out in the provision of access.

We have discussed the key findings and proposed solutions here in detail and these raise a number of tentative recommendations that may begin to address the need to make Scotland's woodland more accessible for health and well-being. These are discussed in the next section.

5.2 How to make Scotland's woodland more accessible for health and well-being: recommendations

Key messages emerge from the study. We now consider the implications for FC Scotland in its future strategy in addressing the barriers to access to woodlands and forests for health and well-being of all its users. We make the point that the recommendations suggest a particular way of working as well as practical actions to address specific barriers.

Ways of working

We recommend that providers of access to woodlands and forests should adopt the following proactive approach in order to reach out to under-represented groups and to widen access to woodlands and forests in Scotland. It should be noted that these recommended ways of working cannot easily be ranked because they are not mutually exclusive, however, they are represented in 'priority' order as follows:

Engage Communities – we have discovered and provided evidence to suggest that access cannot be 'engineered' through top-down provision. Community engagement is about understanding the local context and building trust within the local community in order to create realistic projects and realistic expectations

Build local capacity – building local capacity means addressing local problems and meeting needs (such as unemployment and lack of local skills) with the community, and other community providers, rather than superimposing solutions.

Link services –working in partnership with other service providers and linking services, through the pooling of resources enables project leaders to widen capacity, address multiple needs and increase access.

Encourage changes in attitude to outdoor access – changes in attitude can arise when people identify with a new activity. They envisage 'people like themselves' doing it. Peer group images and media campaigns can have a marked effect (note, for instance, how the Jamie Oliver school meals TV series has affected public perceptions about healthy eating for children).

Provide mediation – outdoor social space requires a certain amount of social integration to address intolerance of other users and to address the 'them and us' mentality. This may require practical intervention and the development of mediation strategies and skills.

Develop codes of conduct – the need to address conflicts of interest and use, for example between cyclists and walkers or dog walkers and bird watchers, may require a negotiated 'code of conduct' to encourage respect for different access needs.

Contribute to a new cultural identity for a local woodland culture – in order to address under-representation in woodland access for health and well-being, we suggest that woodland managers need to think more widely than physical access, normally enjoyed by a narrow sector of the Scottish community undergoing traditional recreational activities. A new cultural identity promotes access on a range of levels – from a view from a window to working in the woods - and for a wider range of cultural traditions, including those enjoyed by minority groups.

Leave a sustainable legacy – woodland access projects should be planned with an appropriate 'exit strategy' such as the setting up of a community woodlands group in order to leave a sustainable legacy for the community.

Evaluate woodland projects to emphasise the importance of widening access – it is important to find appropriate ways of evaluating outcomes that have arisen as a result of improved and widened access. Evaluation, feedback and monitoring (who is using the service) should be an integral part of the management process. Qualitative health and well-being outcomes can be difficult to assess with economic models and unwittingly, when measured against target driven 'performance indicators', can overlook or stifle the reporting of creative, localised success. Thus, it is recommended that managers attempt to: 'Make the important measurable rather than the measurable important' (Scottish Council Foundation, 2005). The action research methodology adopted in this project demonstrates the importance of opening up communication networks and the value of local knowledge.

Address the reluctance of some private landowners to provide access – the attitude of some private land owners is still affecting access to woodlands in many areas and, although a more responsible attitude to public access may be encouraged by grant aid, this may require negotiation and diplomatic mediation.

Practical initiatives

We also recommend a number of practical initiatives for access providers. These include the need to:

Support transferable projects – we have noted the important role of 'transferable projects' like 'Paths for All' and the 'Green Gym' in widening access to woodlands in Scotland, by creating a new user profile. Each of these projects has been developed to address specific needs, created out of partnership, tried and tested and evaluated. New initiatives, such as 'Greenwork mates', have arisen in response to identified needs and these initiatives should be supported and 'rolled out' for other areas.

Create linked access networks - Target access areas to link with existing woodlands and greenspaces and to provide safe off-road access routes to local facilities (shops schools etc.) and local parks and playgrounds and out into the countryside.

Provide relevant information on access – barriers to access associated with lack of knowledge and familiarity can be overcome by the provision of *relevant* access information suited to the needs of wider user groups. Information could include: clear directions/waymarkers; distance between access points; quality of the terrain (e.g. suitable for disabled access, buggies, dogs etc.); nearest car park, refreshments/toilets; someone to contact for feedback and the availability of guided walks. But relevant information can also be directed to particular interests and needs – calorie counted walks, information directed at children's interests etc.

Provide balanced safety information – provide positive, balanced information to encourage people, give them confidence to access new areas safely e.g. how to approach grazing animals. It would also be very helpful if woodland managers were prepared to help visiting groups/schools to write a risk assessment in preparation for their visit.

Create spaces specifically for hard to reach groups – there are good reasons why some sectors of the community are under-represented in woodland access – our research has indicated that their needs are not being met and spaces are not being created to address those needs. For example, young people throughout the country have similar, and very specific, requirements for their own dedicated outdoor social spaces; mothers with young children need safe accessible play spaces and safe networks of paths that are suitable for buggies; older people also require short accessible routes with plenty of opportunity to sit down.

Volunteering – we have noted that the availability of volunteering opportunities provide an excellent way in for local people who want to engage more fully and develop a new relationship with their local greenspace and woodlands. But volunteering is not for everyone. Young people particularly have little desire to 'volunteer', although they would be active in creating facilities for themselves (such as skate parks). We recommend that, for such groups, volunteering needs re-branding and re-directing towards specific outcomes in order to harness youthful enthusiasm and energy.

Promote new woodland skills – managers could work with local, and other groups to provide education and vocational training in a new range of skills in managing local woodlands. Initiatives such as Greenwork Mates have the potential to widen access for unemployed people, contribute to local employment and to build a new woodland culture.

Provide Transport –physical barriers exist where woodland areas are remote or inaccessible for people without cars. Flexible transport, could be provided by a community based minibus service.

6: Appendices

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Motherwell: Parent and Toddler Group

Introduction
This case study examines access issues for parents with pre-school children in the context of an urban green network, the 'Greenlink'', in Motherwell, Glasgow.

The Place and the people[43]
Motherwell with a population of 87,078 is probably synonymous with Ravenscraig, a steel works opened in 1957 which spread over a 450 hectare, green field site. Whilst in the mid 1970s, Ravenscraig employed 13 000 people, the steel strikes of the 1980s lost Ravenscraig markets and steel production began to steadily decline. In 1989, only 3,200 people were employed and in June 1992 Ravenscraig closed. The brown field site has been earmarked for a new development of houses, schools, a retail park and an industrial park.

- In Motherwell, life expectancy for males: 71.7 yrs; females: 77.3 yrs;
- 65. 2 % of the population of Motherwell are of working age (50, 495); of whom 23.3 % (18, 075) are classified as having long term limiting illness; 15.4 % (7,430) are unable to work due to illness/disability and 4.1% (1,968) are unemployed claimants;
- 39% of Motherwell's population of 17 – 64 year olds have no qualifications; the Scottish average is 33%;
- In Scotland, 10% of the population classify themselves as in poor health. In North Motherwell it is 15%, Forgewood 13%, Orbiston 13% and Calder Valley 13%;
- In Motherwell, cancer, closely followed by heart disease are the main causes of death;
- In Motherwell, 39.5% of households do not own a vehicle; North Motherwell 48%, Forgewood 49%, Orbiston 35% and Calder Valley 49%
- In Motherwell, 23.1% of children live in workless households
- In Scotland, 7% of households are single parent families; in Motherwell this percentage is 9%;
- 40% of housing in Motherwell is social housing compared to Scotland's average of 22%.

The Policy Context
There are a number of regional and local policy strategies that the 'Greenlink' targets may feed into:
- North Lanarkshire Partnership Community Plan
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Open Space Strategy
- Job, Business and the Economy Action Plan
- Anti Social Behaviour Strategy
- Health Wellbeing and Care Action Plan

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[43] The following socio-economic profile draws on the 2001 Census statistics of Motherwell and at ward level, North Motherwell, Forgewood, Orbston and the Calder Valley and two further key documents:
- NHS Scotland Constituency Health and Well-Being Profiles 2004 – Motherwell & Wishaw
NHS Scotland Community profiles 2006 – Motherwell

- Community Workforce Joint Health Improvement Plan
- Economic Regeneration Framework Action Plan
- Housing and Environment Action Plan
- SMARTways Walking & Cycling Strategy/Local Transport Strategy, Public Access Strategy
- North Lanarkshire Draft Community Engagement Plan

A reading of this literature and an interview with personnel from 'SMARTways', *a* local council, web based resource promoting sustainable and integrated transport[44], suggest that **key green network policy issues** include:
- Partnerships and targets
- Public liability and responsible access
- Community ownership and local authority maintenance
- Volunteering and paid work: skills, recognition, responsibility/accountability

The Motherwell Case Study

Since 2005 and from within a multi-agency partnership[45], the Greenlink has been managed as a newly surfaced, 5 km lit cycle way providing a sustainable transport route through the Motherwell communities of Forgewood, Orbiston and Daisy Park and linking Stratchclyde Country Park to the Ravescraig site (see below). The Greenlink also encompasses 2 km of the South Calder Walkway which has been upgraded. Planned targets focus on organized: health walks; cycling events; volunteering and conservation (e.g. grounds maintenance: clearing rubbish; preparing for planting); outreach to existing schools and community groups with training (e.g. Cycle Patrol Leaders; Health Walk Leader Training), community events (Fun Day, Community Clean Up Day) and quarterly community newsletters.

There is also a Greenlink Community Development Group (GCDG) with members from the Greenlink communities. At the suggestion of the Greenlink Community Development Group (GCDG), contact was made with a local Mother and Toddler group (all mothers, no fathers involved), who meet twice weekly in a local Community Centre. The group is not funded. A focus group discussion, lunch and a health walk, the latter, facilitated by Susan and Michala, Greenlink Officers and supported by a Greenlink volunteer was organized. Field work also included discussions with Susan and Michala, a group interview with 3 GCDG members and one with 2 SMARTways personnel; accompanied and unaccompanied visits to the 'Greenlink' site and this included 'talk' with passers by and related discussions with people in Motherwell town centre.

Woodland and green space access issues arising from group discussion and Greenlink activity

Focus Group:
Seven women, about half of the mother and toddler group participated. Overall there was lots of talk of feeling fearful of local green spaces and of the 'Greenlink' being used by others for antisocial behaviour (drinking alcohol, drugs trafficking and taking drugs). There was general talk about gangs of youths gathering on the paths and 'verbally intimidating', of having to travel in small groups, of not venturing out alone or alone with their young children. All the women agreed that getting out of doors with young children is a good thing, 'the children sleep better'; the mothers sleep better. Also for most of the participants, green spaces offer more freedom than shopping areas where it may be hard to control the children: 'they run about in the shops'; 'it's hard to get the buggy in and out of the shops.' For a small

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[44] SMARTways is a North Lanarkshire web resource, providing information and best practices that aim to promote alternative and healthy methods of travel within North Lanarkshire, See www.smartways.info
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number however, they preferred the town centre, the shopping areas where there are people, activity, it feels safer.

Key issues affecting access to greenspace and woodlands:

Issue 1 - Safety

> *. . . . . see walking down that Greenlink it's no really safe for women I don't think.*
> *No.*
> *Mod: Okay, why isn't it safe for women?*
> *Cos it's all (inaudible) walking down yourself.*
> *Aye.*
> *Mod: It's not safe 'cos it's trees?*
> *No. There can be smack-heads or anything down there.*
> *It's no safe cos there's (inaudible). . .*
> *They all go down there and sit and drink. . .*
> *Smack-heads, junkies.*

Issue 2 - Getting out

These mothers view their outdoor environment as unsightly, uncared for and unsafe. One person referred to a local swing park to illustrate this:

> *….it's not had swings in it for as long as I can remember, it's an utter disgrace, I couldnae tell you the last time that park was even worth taking a kid to, and I've been staying[46] here all my life, it's been like that for about what… 10 year or something isn't it? There's no even been a swing in it…….*

The women also felt that there were financial restraints on getting out to places where their children could play, particularly in bad weather:

> *It costs money and you've no got it.*
> *You've got to have money.*

Issue 3 - Transport/mobility

> *Mod: Can I ask what's it like getting on the buses with little kids…?*
> *Nightmare*
> *Mod: Nightmare?*
> *Aye there's nae room for buggies….There's only certain buses that we can get them on, and I've noticed the type of buggy that I've got, a 3 wheeler right, it's got inflatable tyres, and I noticed that there's the (McInlays?? 4.32) buggy buses cos they weren't designed, it's like they've got bits where the seats fold up, they've still got seat there and there's a ledge for to climb up on it, you can't get the buggy over the ledge, you've got to lift the buggy up, and take it into the space…there's a [particular service] and there's one buggy only and he's no letting anybody else on. What if all of us wanted to come here, you're waiting on 4 buses to let you on at all? You're only allowed one buggy on a bus, in one time.'*

Issue 4 - Them and us

The group talked, angrily, as if their local needs were being neglected and as if 'others' were getting better treatment:

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[46] Staying = living, dwelling

See down [in another area of Motherwell] they're still bringing in [people from other countries] …. I waited about 3 year to get a back kitchen, I had to go back to work…and pay then before they'd give me a back kitchen.'

. . . .

That's causing grief now cos it's them and us and it's no fair on people that's been there all their days…

Issue 5 - It was different when we were young

The majority of the women were in their mid twenties but their perceptions about the area had changed since they were youngsters:

I mean I'm no that old, I'm only 26, I can remember going down the back roads and that and making cubby houses out of trolleys and bits of wood, play without fear of getting molested ….

. . . .

But then again I think now there's too much badness. You're needing more people maybe patrolling these areas, you know

Issue 6 – 'Not our place to volunteer'

The group was asked if they would get involved in clearing (removing fly tipping etc.) local green space:

Can I say I wouldnae do it. And you know why I wouldnae do it? Cos see 2 weeks after I'd go down that same walk and it would all be lying again…

. . . .

Now, they're saying would you do it, no, saying we wouldnae do it cos why should we do it when there's people getting paid to do that and no doing their job? Why should we do that job and they get the wage?

Observations from Greenlink Activity: Buggy walk

Accompanied by 2 Greenlink Officers and one volunteer. There were about 16 mothers with buggies and small children in tow. Some of the women were familiar with the walk which encompassed some Greenlink landmarks: a disused cemetery; a 9 arched railway bridge; an old metal and concrete bridge. Path surface changed from broad macadam to loose chippings and earth cover. The outward path swept down to a bridge over the river but the return meant a steep climb; we possibly walked about a mile and a half. In some areas, the edges of the path was exposed and fell steeply down to river some of the toddlers needed constant attention, running off and parents fearful of this drop. No problem with different surfaces – now all terrain buggies – one parent had unsuitable buggy – had been raining children with wellies, some with trainers – got very wet in puddles. However some Mums spoke of enjoying being outside children ran and played very much enjoyed the experience – some asleep some got very tired on the return and needed carrying – quite exhausting – have to be constantly alert with young children – steep banks, open water.

Evaluation of contact with mother and toddler group

Individual tokens were offered to participating mothers but the group decided to pool this donation as it has no funding and is short of resources; a small donation was also given to the group as a whole and to the Greenlink volunteer. The Mother and Toddler group were delighted with the contact with Greenlink and in turn, Greenlink are very happy to continue contact and to help organise specific events and inform the group of planned community events.

Michala and Susan, Greenlink Officers were invited to give a short piece of written evaluation, extracts below:

Taking the group out on a health walk was a great opportunity to see the Greenlink from the eyes of parents and it has opened our eyes to some of the dangers for little children on the Greenlink, which before hand were not that obvious.. … . . . .
. . . . After the safety walk we are going to investigate the options of hedge planting along the edges of the path leading down to the river as this will make it safer and provide valuable conservation experience for our group of conservation volunteers.

Susan and Michala also approached the Greenlink partnership to "ask their permission to invite the Parent and Toddler group to join the forum so we can also look at gathering resources to provide for small children too."

Galashiels: Young men seeking paid work

Introduction

This case study examines access issues for young men seeking paid work in the context of Langlee woodlands in Galashiels and through activities arranged by the Borders Community Woodland Forum (BCWF) officers.

The place and the people[47]

Langlee is a large housing estate in Galashiels, a central Scottish Borders tourist location; its main industries are tourism and retail. Whilst there is economic growth in the Borders, incomers are often commuters (through to Edinburgh) and local jobs tend to be low skilled and low waged. There is a concern about young people moving out of the area. Langlee has a migrant population; the Scottish average for people born outside of the EU is 2%, the average in Langlee is 5%. It also has a higher number of young people; 21% of the population is between 5-15 years old; Galashiels has 12% in this age category, Scotland 13%. The Scottish average for lone parent household with dependant children is 7%, in Langlee it is 17%. 13% of Langlee's population is divorced. 33% of 16 – 74 year olds have no qualifications in Langlee. Whilst 15% of Scotland population reaches a level two qualification, only 9% of people in Langlee reach level two in education. Langlee has a low level of unemployment; 2% compared to the Scottish average of 4%. However, the majority of people work in low paid jobs. In Scotland, 22% of people rent their home from the local council, in Langlee 42% do so. . While 11% of Scottish property falls into Council tax band F, there are no dwellings in this band in Langlee. 11% of households in Langlee have no persons in employment whereas in Scotland this is 5%. 39% of the population in Langlee does not own a car or van.

70% of people in Langlee rate their health as good; this is slightly higher than the Scottish average of 68%. On the other hand, 22% of people in Langlee have a limiting long term illness. Between 1999 and 2002 per 100 000 people, 1467 people were admitted to hospital for alcohol abuse and 332 per 100 000 people for drug misuse. In comparison, during the same period of time 530 per 100 000 people were admitted for alcohol abuse and 61 per 100 000 people were admitted for drug misuse in the Scottish Borders.

The policy context

The Borders Community Woodland Forum (BCWF)[48] was set up following a local community woodland conference coordinated by Borders Forest Trust in May 2003. It has a cooperative and practical approach to the management of its community woodland groups, is sponsored by European (Leader+) and Scottish (Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage) bodies and has two dedicated officers: Lee Hollings, Community Development and Training Officer; Anna Craig, Educational & Development Officer. Langlee woodland is steep in parts with sweeping views over Galashiels and the Southern Uplands. There are a series of informal grassed paths, which would not be suitable for those with limited access.

There are a number of regional and local policy strategies that are relevant to the work of the BCWF, including:
- An Outdoor Access Strategy for the Scottish Borders: New Ways to Access, Scottish Border Paths 2003
- In Fine Fettle – multi-agency report on improving health in the Scottish Borders, Annual Report 2002/3

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[47] This socio-economic profile draws on the following web resources (most data: 2004/6 accessed 04/07): http://www.galashiels.bordernet.co.uk/;   www.sns.gov.uk
http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/galashiels/galashiels/index.html
[48], see: http://www.woodsforpeople.org/fx.bcwf/scheme/default.aspx

- Borders Annual Labour Market Report 2006: The South of Scotland Labour Market and Economic Intelligence Project
- Scottish Borders New Ways/Community Planning Partnerships

Reading of this literature was supplemented with two provider interviews:
Norrie Tait, Scottish Borders Council, Community Learning & Development Worker (mainly youth work), who is based at the Langlee Community Centre which is adjacent to the woodland and who provided invaluable access to the case study target group.
Susan Kevin, Scottish Borders Council Ranger Services
In relation to this target group, it seems that **key green network policy issues** include:

- Need to encourage young people to volunteer, acquire accredited skills and find routes into paid work but there is a mismatch of training schemes and job opportunities.
- Public liability/health and safety can kill spontaneity – e.g. have to organise school party trips into green spaces ahead of time in order to deal with paperwork. Actual event may be hindered by poor weather which may reinforce negative attitudes to being outdoors.
- Access issues change with changing communities – Langlee has new woodland paths used by horse riders, seen as fairly rural. Now more local walkers with dogs etc. Horses churn the paths, they're narrow, difficult to widen.

Woodland and green space access issues arising from focus group discussion and woodland activity

Focus Group
A focus group discussion was held at Langlee Community Centre with 5 participants, aged 16 to 22 years (7 were recruited). These were young men looking for secure, paid work. One had paid work in the local convenience store, one was unemployed and the rest were in youth work training schemes.

Key issues affecting access to greenspace and woodlands:

Issue 1 - Work and Skills
There are few opportunities for paid work:

> I'm in a dead-end job, but I don't want to quit because if I do it'll take a year to get another job. Can't afford to give it up.
> Mod: Can I ask what you do?
> I work along at the [local shop]. It's… pretty crap, I don't actually like it, it's not what I was expecting to be doing, and I was more into woodwork and stuff like that.
> There's nothing round here.
> Nothing at all.
> To get a job you have to travel to Edinburgh or other places to… get a decent job nowadays.

Training schemes and accredited skills do not guarantee paid work:

> Because when I was at college, going through my college [. . .] after I'd finished my course at the work placement he just didnae want to take us on. I felt there was nae point in doing the course if I wanted to work.

A 22 year old participant wishing to find 'work outdoors, felt that he had longstanding skills:

> I used to go to the woods, work in the woods, because my father worked in the woods. So me and my father we built a few things in the past, aviaries, decking and that for folk.

Issue 2 - Transport

The Borders are very spread out, bus services are reasonably reliable but there is a perception that fares are becoming expensive and that a car is needed to maintain paid work, particularly outdoor, contract work:

> . . . the only reason I never got a job was I never had a driver's licence. That was at first for fencing [agricultural contract work]
> They jobs you need a driver's licence.
> Mod: And learning to drive is expensive. If there was some sort of…
> . . .[interrupts], they used to help you with that, used to give you I think it was £250 towards your driving licence but they don't do that now, they've stopped it.

The participants don't travel very far, they walk and some use bicycles.

Issue 3 - Local area

Most of the participants had lived in the area at least since childhood. They displayed a tension between wanting to stay:

> I want to stay but I don't think there's much point if there's nothing here…
> It's just where I grew up; all my mates live here, my family. . .

and a sense that increasingly, the community is struggling:

> Loads of folk taking drugs and that, too many junkies in Gala, far too many.
> Mod: So this has happened in the last few years. M sorry you were going to say about when you moved here?
> Aye when I moved here, quite quiet, in the couple of years since I'd moved in, it got louder and rougher. In my area I've seen that Post Office broken into umpteen amount of times.
> Well there isnae kids going out to play football and that, they go out but they buy fags off folk, 6 year old and that. Go about smoking, smashing windows and that.

Issue 4 - Young people and use of woodland

All the group had memories of playing in local woods up to about the age of 10 (building dens; hanging out; playing with other boys); one participant now has no interest in being out of doors:

> 'Well what is there to do in the woods? Apart from walking around? What is there to do?'
> He prefers to play on his PC. Another attributes his passion for the outdoors to his father: '. . .I cannae stand being stuck in the house. I'm no used to it. I've always been outside since I was wee. '
> '. . . used to go out camping a lot with my father, I think that's why I'm an outdoors person.'

Between the ages of 13-16, there were memories of forming gangs to share drinking:

> . . .there was a few places you used to have a fire and get pissed and stoned and stuff like that.

> When we used to go up there [the woods] we'd gone along the paths, then we'd cut up somewhere and sit somewhere quite hidden and that. Just so that no-one would come and bother us. We'd see folk walking their dogs and that and they'd see us walking up with big crates of beer and stuff
> Just walk past and say hiya.

> *There was a couple of folk that'd be 'mind and clean up after you' kind of thing. I ken they were all making sure the woods stayed clean.*
>
> *Mod; Did anyone every approach you and ask you what you were doing and …?*
> *Police a couple of times.*
> *Mod; What happened?*
> *They poured the drink away.*
> *Mod: Right, and. . .?*
> *. . . And walked away.*

There was also a suggestion that: *'there's a few lassies, there was more lads than lasses. '*and that girls in their young teens are seeking out older boys: '*I ken it's older laddies and younger lassies.'*

Issue 5 - 'Others'

There was animated talk about 'others' and a perception that 'they' take jobs and are given resources (houses etc) more easily than locals:

> *See in Gala, all the Portuguese guys coming across, like taking all our jobs. The Polish folk that came here just got houses straight away*
> *Aye exactly*
> *They've been treated like royalty.*

There was a sense that the groups don't mix:

> *I see loads in the pub but I nae understand them. . .*
> *. . .they're quite ignorant. . .*
> *. . .they walk around like gangsters.*

but 'folk *in Edinburgh'* (those encountered on the streets) were also described as 'ignorant'.

There was also acknowledgement that getting to know individuals may change this perception:

> *J He's all right, the guy I work with, he's Portuguese, he's all right.*
> *Mod: Actually working with someone do you get to know them?*
> *Well I've been to pubs and that with him, stuff like that. He's all right, he's a laugh, but…*

Observations from woodland activity: Building and installing bird and bat boxes

Facilitated by Anna and Craig from BCWF, using kits to build bird and bat boxes and install these in Langlee woods – using wood, nails, drill, hammer and folding ladder

Getting together to make something helps build relationships; some of the team had wood work skills. They enjoyed doing something with their hands. Helping one another whilst engaged in the task, meant that there could be 'talk without eye contact', disengaged talk. Making and installing something can bring about a real sense of achievement. Whilst there was 'indifferent talk' about returning to the site to visit the boxes, at least two participants said they would return. Participants chose trees on which to install the boxes, they liked this. One participant didn't get very involved, "not my thing", he likes on-line interactive games.

Evaluation of contact with young men seeking paid work

The participants were given tokens and these were appreciated. Anna and Lee were given a small donation to encourage further contact with the group. Norrie Tait from the Centre joined the group for lunch and was delighted to make contact with Anna and Lee (BCWF). Partnership work with other

community groups was planned. Two participants spoke of wanting to get involved with volunteering with the possibility of acquiring accredited skills (e.g. chainsaw certificate).

Anna and Lee were invited to give a short piece of written evaluation, extracts below:

> The group [. . .] varied widely in both experience and confidence. The event went well with around ten bird and bat boxes being produced. This practical task allowed many members of the group to open up, participate in team work, achieve a goal and make a finished product. Some of the group said they would return to the site at a later date to see how the bird boxes were doing, which was encouraging.
> [. . .]
> There seamed to be no assistance, in the form of one to one help for the attendees in society, many of whom were obviously unhappy to some extent with their current situations. Many of the attendees were looking to this brief activity to offer them some sort of opportunity to either volunteer or link into work some how. Shortly after the event I had one individual arrange a date to come out with myself volunteering.

Drumchapel: Older people

The Drumchapel case study examines woodland access and mobility issues for people in the context of woodland managed by the Forestry Commission in and around Drumchapel.

The place and the people

The Drumchapel housing 'scheme' was developed in the 50s and 60s as a result of Glasgow's slum clearance. The 1960s and 1970s slum clearance shifted the problem of urban deprivation out to the suburbs, where the environment was better but the living was still hard and employment prospects poor. At that time local employment relied on the shipyards, Goodyear and the Singer factory in Clydebank. A population, that peaked at 35,000, has now declined to about 13,500 with the decline of the traditional industries. A large proportion (80%) of the remaining population has lived in the area for more than 15 years but many rely on income support and health problems are above average (it is listed, in the top 15% in the Scottish Index of multiple deprivation) with three in ten people reporting long term limiting illness. This is an historical legacy that the Scottish Executive would like to address.

Recently, Drumchapel has benefited from massive investment as part of regeneration initiatives in Glasgow. The overall effect of regeneration and rebuilding has changed the look of the place. However, although the infrastructure and housing is now much improved, social problems such as , unemployment, poor health, teenage pregnancy, binge drinking and drug taking have yet to be tackled effectively. Unemployment and low pay are significant contributory factors to social deprivation. The proportion of single parent families is higher than average in Drumchapel (and single women often have children with different fathers). Nina Hutchinson, the manager of a local day care centre, described a 'lack of hope' in Drumchapel. She said that, although the environment has improved markedly, with much better housing, not much else has changed for the better: *'There is no sense of community. We used to socialize, play on the street, look after neighbours, but there is no heart in the place. Now parents have to clear up broken glass in the street before their children can play out.'*

Provision of social and environmental services

The formation of a **Social Inclusion Partnership** in 1999 was part of a concerted effort in addressing social exclusion in the area and to encourage public, private and community organizations to work together. The **Drumchapel Community Forum** arose out of this partnership to provide a community voice: issues identified for improvement include poor facilities and irregular transport; litter and fly-tipping; and anti-social behaviour issues.

Drumchapel is recognised as a priority for health initiatives and a **Community Health Action Team**, comprising staff and volunteers at the Drumchapel Health Centre, has identified the need for a community development approach to primary healthcare in this area. The area also supports a Centre for Healthy Living **Drumchapel LIFE ,.** which is a charity working in and with the local community to improve health and well-being The Community Health Action Team in Drumchapel promotes a GP referral scheme of '**Health Walks**' though the Leg it Around Drumchapel initiative in partnership with the **Forestry Commission** Scotland's '**Active Woods'** campaign.

The **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers** *(BTCV)* is active in Drumchapel in working towards improvements in the environment, creating new opportunities for people in the area to work in environmental conservation. It offers the opportunity to 'work out' in the open air through local, practical environmental work.

The Case Study

The Drumchapel case study focused on the Forestry Commission's Woods In and Around Town (WIAT) initiative in this area and on the work of the Community Forest Ranger Joanne Thompson.

Drumchapel Woods is managed by Central Scotland Forest Enterprise, in partnership with Glasgow City Council. JoanneThompson is a dedicated Community Forest Ranger in the area. She has set up and runs a number of initiatives in the woods, aimed at improving local surroundings and encouraging people to get more fit and active in the woods. These initiatives include: health-walks with 'Leg it Around Drumchapel'; volunteer activities, planting native oak trees, digging drains, and clearing rubbish and, with the help of BTCV Volunteers, creating new wildlife habitats.

Woodland and greenspace access issues arising from group discussion and health walk

The group of older people selected for the focus group were all attendees at the Focal Point Day Centre which is managed by Glasgow City Council Social Work Services to offer day care services to about 50 infirm older people and their carers each day. The focus group discussion followed the usual format and was followed by lunch. The initial plan, to take the group out in the afternoon for a guided Health Walk in Drumchapel Woods, was abandoned due to inclement weather, but this activity was rearranged and took place a later date.

Key issues affecting access to greenspace and woodlands
The following issues were identified, as a result of the research for this case study, as being the factors that influenced these older people in accessing their local greenspace and woodlands.

Issue 1 'Getting out' – locally
For older people their locality is defined by their mobility (or by the availability of cars and transport). However, they can and do enjoy 'remote access' to a wider environment. Trees can be viewed through a house/flat window or through the window of a bus. Memories of outings when they were younger can also be a trigger to thinking about pleasant past experiences to share with others.

Issue 2 Mobility
Lack of physical mobility due to old age, infirmity, poor eyesight, lack of physical and mental co-ordination. Problems with uneven paths, steep slopes, overhanging branches. Older people need to feel confident that they can walk on good even footpaths without any obstacles in their way. Resting places and benches, seats or 'perches' are also essential.

> But you must remember Sue a lot of people that come here are in wheelchairs they've got zimmers, they've got sticks, so very few, I'm one of the lucky ones, I can go anywhere, I can go into town, I can go off visiting friends.
> I've got to have somebody with me, can't go myself. It's only recently, I was able to go to B&Q and everything, and I feel frustrated that I can't get out.

Many elderly people have been active in their youth and would love to get out into the country if they had the confidence.

> Oh yes, my wife's a good hill walker, I used to always do a lot of hill walking when I went to Arran… holidays

> Well I don't travel about much, just locally as I say, I'm kind of afraid to go too far in case I get lost.

> Oh I wouldn't go to the woods alone, no definitely not.
> Mod: In case you fall you mean?
> Well that's a big problem, I mean, broken bones, osteoporosis, arthritis, I mean I'm well over 80 years of age, if I fall I'm there for life.

Mod: But if you're with a group…?
Oh with a group it's different, aye.

Issue 3 Transport
Transport is a big issue for people with limited mobility. Most older people in Drumchapel do not drive (generally low car ownership). Flexible community transport is very important. Free buses are available in some circumstances but they are not very flexible. The Council/NHS provides a limited service for people to visit hospitals.

Issue 4 Personal Safety
The issue of personal safety came up in other groups, particularly in relation to woodlands, but this did not seem to be a major concern for the elderly people.

Mod: Do you feel safe walking out locally?

Oh yes.

Mod: You don't feel hassled by young people?

No, no. No, lived here 52 years, I've never been bothered by anybody in my life in Drumchapel, and that's true, that's true Mary…I came up here in 1954, my younger son was born here. Never been hassled by anybody.

Mod: And if you've got the ability to walk, you don't mind being alone walking?

Oh no I don't…When we walk, when I walk, it's 10, 9 o'clock in the morning, no riff raff around then. We don't go out at night obviously, in the middle of winter I wouldn't go out at night time.

Issue 5 Memories

The problem is with cycling it's not done as much as it should be done, the young ones don't bother so much.

Mod: It's a pity isn't it?

Yes, it's a pity the young ones now, they're all play stations, I think life has changed so much. Well there's so much traffic on the roads nowadays

They've got playstations and all that just now..

When I came here when at first we took the children for walks in the bluebell woods

Observations from the 'Health Walk' in Drumchapel
We went out for a walk in the woods with eight people from the Focal Point Centre on a glorious day in April (we had been put off the first time by bad weather). Our walk had been chosen by Winnie who is an experienced health walk leader. She planned to take us to Garscadden Woods (the bluebell woods) but after we had been asked to consider that one member of the group was in a wheelchair, we realised that a steep, uneven path into Garscadden woods made this inaccessible for a group with a wheelchair user. Fortunately Winnie knew of an alternative woodland walk that would accommodate wheelchair access. During the walk at least four helpers (including the researchers) assisted people by providing an arm to rest on or by pushing the wheelchair. Overhanging branches were hazardous for those with poor visibility. Progress through the woods was very slow, with frequent stops and we were relieved to find a group of well-placed logs that provided an opportunity for the group to sit – or perch – on.

In retrospect, and in discussion with the day centre manager, we realised that in planning a simple one hour 'health walk' we had overlooked a number of mobility issues such as the special requirements of wheelchair users and the need to make provision for our participants to take the weight off their feet for a while. We were also acutely aware of the need for public agencies to address their responsibility for 'public liability' and health and safety. However, our group survived the outing intact and they really enjoyed the adventure.

Evaluation of contact with the older persons group

The participants were offered gift tokens as a gesture of appreciation and the Focal Point day Centre was offered a small donation to contribute to a future woodland outing for the people at the centre, this was much appreciated. Nina and Mary (a volunteer helper) joined us for the health walk and later for feedback over a cup of tea with Jo, the Community Forest Ranger. They were enthusiastic about the idea of arranging local walks in the surrounding woodland, particularly for the male members of the centre who are generally less physically and socially active than the women. However, as we noted, many of the people attending the centre were severely limited in their mobility and outings require pre-planning.

Jo listened attentively to what they had to say about the need for wide footpaths with gradual gradients. She suggested that, when the pathways are re-surfaced, she would ask the engineers to consult the people at the day centre. She also offered to invite people to future outdoor events (such as a planned battle re-enactment) and to visit the centre in the winter months bringing a wildlife slide show and woodland crafts. These suggestions were warmly received.

When asked to provide feedback about future access to woodlands for the centre members, the centre manager explained that this had been a learning experience for her too. She was adamant that the difficult process of getting a group mobilised for a walk should not be a reason to take the easy option – which would be to leave people sitting safely in the day centre all day!

Ardnamurchan: Remote rural community

This case study examines access issues for people living in remote rural communities in the context of the Sunart Oakwoods initiative.

The place and the people

The area covered by the Sunart Oakwoods initiative is broadly defined by the Lochaber Highland District and by the local communities of Strontian, Acharacle, Sale, Kilchoan and Lochaline and by the Ardnamurchan and Morvern peninsulas. These are isolated communities with an overall population of about 3,000 people that is much expanded by tourism in the summer months. These rural communities lack the level of service that many urban areas take for granted (like a petrol pump). Features of the area:

- Rural, isolated (single track roads). Ardnamurchan point is Britain's most westerly point
- Mixture of forestry,moorland, heaths and bogs surrounded by lochs and sea
- Unique ancient coastal oak woodlands
- Designated as a fragile rural community (by Initiative at the Edge)
- Local crofters, public sector service providers (schools, libraries, social services), tourist providers +staff, forestry (FE now employs few people but contracts are offered), mining, fishing.
- Incomers (many retirees therefore increasingly ageing population)
- Younger people and families with young children attracted back to Strontian by new High School
- Lack of good jobs (unemployment) and low wages
- Availability and cost of affordable housing for low paid workers
- Rural isolation and lack of services eg. No petrol pump on Morvern. If you want a job done you have to do it yourself – or ask a neighbour. Still a lot to do in terms of setting up small enterprises
- Education and skills training is fragmented
- Transport! Without a car you are isolated – village paths are important

Provision of social and environmental services

Social and environmental services are provided by local community Councils.
Issues identified include employment prospect, price of housing and, in the past, lack of local schools

- Highland Council – provides homes, healthcare, education and employment
- The area is a pilot site for Initiative at the Edge – supporting remote and economically fragile rural communities
- Forestry Commission work in the area, including project management for the Sunart Oakwoods project, is provided through Forest Enterprise Lochaber Forest District
- Community companies have been set up to manage local woodland and to buy out local fishing rights

The Case Study

The **Sunart Oakwoods project**[49] is a partnership of agencies, including FC Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage, with the local community seeking to restore the unique natural woodlands of the area. It aims to enhance the environment, develop the local economy and strengthen the culture of the local community through the creation of well-managed forest[50]. The partnership began in 1994, with a strong

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[49] http://www.sunartoakwoods.org.uk/
[50] http://www.ardnamurchan.com/oakwoods.html

desire in the community to create employment, training and new skills and to conserve local traditions alongside countryside and wildlife conservation. Features of the project include:

- Partnership: FE; ACC, SNH; Highland Council; local landowners; local community companies
- 1318 hectares: 70% conifer plantation, 19% native broadleaf, 11% open ground
- Objectives: restoration of woodland, skills training/employment, business enterprise, education, interpretation/tourism. 'This is a community with a longstanding 'woodland culture' – many of the older people had been involved in planting the Forestry Commission plantations. Through community consultation and 'Planning for real' the local community has had a role in shaping the Forest Design Plan. Other community initiatives have led to a new framework for education and training and
- Management: two FE forest rangers
- Funding – multiple sources of funding
- Creation of new footpaths/cycle routes – regular walks (Health Walks/ Tourist walks)
- Community woodlands – community woods around Strontian, outdoor classroom
- Involvement of four local primary schools in learning about the history of the woods and expressing their views about the future of the area

Local access issues: (as presented by providers)

The following issues were identified, by the local access providers, as being the most significant factors in promoting and sustaining local access to the woodlands:

- Physical access – Open access, does not necessarily make areas accessible. Need local knowledge about where there are way-marked routes (unfamiliar to people from urban areas/non Scottish), village paths are important
- New initiatives e.g. 'Health walks' – designed to engage local people
- Rural community issues – importance of the new school and community centre, community groups and volunteering '*I think the State puts a lot of responsibility on people to volunteer…it happens through necessity…so many communities running purely on volunteers.*', , formation of new community companies
- Features of the environment – its safe, beautiful and peaceful but difficult to find cheap housing for local people
- Patterns of ownership – Social Hierarchies 'Have's' and 'Have nots' – reflected in patterns of land ownership, 70-80% large estates with no real concern for public benefit and a historical tradition of dispossession
- Education and local knowledge about woodlands – people are now having to re-learn the traditions of their landscape and local crafts and to rebuild a core of new woodland craft skills in the area
- Economic sustainability – the area is still very fragile in terms of economic sustainability. There is a concern that, when project funding runs out, the new initiatives will not be economically sustainable

Woodland and greenspace access issues arising from group discussion and health walk

The following issues were identified, as a result of the research for this case study, as being the factors that influenced these rural communities in accessing their local greenspace and woodlands.

Focus group:

A focus group discussion was held at Strontian High School and community centre with 8 people from the local area (Strontian and Lochaber). The participants were recruited to broadly reflect the demographic makeup of the community'

Key issues affecting access to greenspace and woodlands:

Issue 1 Geographical Isolation

Geographical isolation is a feature of the extended location with isolated communities from Mull to Fort William and a long stretch out to most westerly point. Single track roads make travelling slow and the distances seem longer:

> '*Kilchoan is not very far, but it's a long way*!'

Until very recently (2002) secondary school children had to board weekly at schools in Fort William and Mull – the new High School in Strontian has changed this;

Issue 2 Personal Safety

Close communities and people feel relatively safe in terms of crime and anti-social behaviour. There is very little fear of crime and vandalism. In a close-knit community local people feel confident about managing any anti-social behaviour. Fears for personal safety is associated predominantly with the risk of traffic accidents and natural hazards (traffic accidents with deer).

> *Its good. The children go out to play and there's no adult supervision because you are not worrying about who is loitering around the corner that could whisk your child away.*

Issue 3 Pedestrian access

People walk a lot but there are access issues associated with access to local services, which are few and very scattered. Most people enjoy an outdoor life, children play outdoors BUT access to most facilities requires a car. Country lanes and single track roads running can make everyday walking and pedestrian access to local facilities hazardous (to school and to the post office for instance), particularly for children and older people.

> *I find that a nightmare with the children. Walking with the pushchair and the little one on his bike. People drive quite fast. There's no pavement. You just take your life in your hands!'*

In some communities there are very local, circular woodland walks suitable for young children, buggies etc. but in other communities people can feel isolated or 'hemmed in' by the lack of suitable footpaths.

Issue 4 Transport

Buses are infrequent and takes even longer than an already long car journey. For young people who are unable to drive, or lacking personal transport, this seriously affects the social networking that is so important to them.

> *I can't go anywhere unless my parents take me*

Issue 5 Lifestage

People's perceptions about access issues were very dependent on their 'lifestage'. Many people have chosen this area to retire to but, at that stage in their lives they are not affected by unemployment whereas younger people often struggle to find employment and housing.

Issue 6 Access to private land

Recreational walking is popular but may be hindered by prohibitive signs and locked gates particularly on privately owned land: *makes you feel unwelcome, it's unpleasant*;
Social Hierarchies 'Have's' and 'Have nots' – reflected in patterns of land ownership

> '*In Lochaline its estate after estate. Nothing is done with the land…if people want to build on local land they can't do that.*'

Issue 7 Open access

Open access, does not necessarily make areas accessible. Need local knowledge about where there are way-marked routes (unfamiliar to people from urban areas/non Scottish)

> *it's knowing where you can go without upsetting anybody.*

Issue 8 Community cohesion and 'ownership'

There is a strong sense of community – a 'peninsula' mentality; "*it's to do with the ferry*"; people reflected that this might change if they built a bridge:

> *I think it's that stretch of water, that ferry. It does… I suppose anybody could cross it, but I suppose the fact that it goes off at a certain point of night, you haven't got idiots coming out from Fort William at 3 o'clock in the morning tearing round the place … I don't know to me it feels that little stretch of water…*
> *We're almost an island*
> *You feel as if if somebody did something wrong and wanted to get away they could be stopped at the ferry*
> *there's limited points of entry and exit so if something happened they could cut those points of exit and entry off and…*

As mentioned earlier, there appears to be a strong sense of community and a willingness to take responsibility or to accept 'ownership' of local community concerns through volunteering:

> '*I think the State puts a lot of responsibility on people to volunteer…it happens through necessity…so many communities running purely on volunteers..*'

Issue 9 Appreciation of the scenery

The quality of the environment is important to some people, but not all, particularly young people who are bored and can't wait to get away to find a busier social scene;

Issue 10 Weather

In an area noted for heavy rain this can be an issue for parents with young children:

> '*Its weather dependent. Sometimes with two children it can feel a bit claustrophobic.*'

For young people. '*If its raining there's nothing to do.*'
For many people this is not an issue, 'bad' weather is part of the landscape;

> *Once you're up you forget about it, if you want to go somewhere you put a jacket on and go. This is the thing. You don't worry about the weather.*

> *I knew a man told me one time, 'there's no bad weather is Scotland, there's wrong clothes'.*

Observations from a local health walk and from a visit to a local primary school

A health walk is held every week in two local communities. We participated in one of the Strontian walks, led by a local Forest Ranger. Ten people, including ourselves and two rangers, met in the centre of the village. Three of the participants were retired, two were visiting second home owners and one young person was accompanying the ranger on work experience. Our short walk was selected to cater for the least mobile person in the group and took place some distance (2 miles) from the village, so we travelled to the starting point in cars. The ranger told us that it is difficult to find local walks suitable for people with limited mobility. Our walk, through the woodland alongside the loch to a lookout/hide, took less than 30 minutes and we returned by the same route after visiting the hide. We returned to the village for a coffee and a chat at the village café. These walks are often referred to as 'a wee walk and a

blether' and they are an enjoyable opportunity for local people to get outside and meet up during the day.

We also visited a primary school in the local area[51] to see for ourselves how outdoor and woodland activities have become a key part of the schools' curriculum. The children spend the whole of Friday afternoon outdoors, either in the woods next to the school or working in their garden. Many of the aims of the school are incorporated within these outdoor activities: they include activities for physical fitness; healthy eating; knowledge about the environment and art projects. The school supplies the children with a range of wet weather outdoor clothing to wear when it is needed.

Evaluation of contact with the local community in a remote rural area

The discussion group participants were offered expenses to compensate them for their much appreciated input into the discussion. We also made a donation to the Strontian Community Company through the Highland Council ranger. We realised the extent to which the community relies on the interest, enthusiasm and voluntary input of local people. Community companies have been formed to manage local community woodland and the local fishing rights. The Forestry Commission, working through the Sunart Oakwoods project, have facilitated a partnership that is effectively widening access for the local community and is beginning to create a new woodland culture based on local employment and social enterprise. But this is still a remote vulnerable economy, reliant on project funding and tourism, as such it remains to be seen whether the new initiatives are sustainable and whether will be able to facilitate wider access for local and visiting communities.

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[51] Acharacle Primary School
http://www.highlandschools-virtualib.org.uk/school_info/handbooks4/Acharacle%20PS.pdf

Dundee: Young people (aged 11-15)

The Dundee case study examines woodland access, safety and other social issues for young people in the context of the Dundee's recent regeneration and access strategies in and around Dundee.

The place and the people

Dundee is the fourth largest of Scotland's cities and is located on the river Tay. The city was formerly famous for the jute industry, in the past a major employer, and is now reinventing itself as a centre for hi-tech industries such as biotechnology. The current population is about 143,000 and with two universities, 1 in 7 are students. Dundee has a relatively high level of social deprivation, with 29% of its population living in the most deprived 15% category of the 2004 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) – second only to Glasgow. Compared with the rest of Scotland Dundee has a high proportion of people with low incomes, more unemployed people (26.6% long-term unemployed, compared with the Scottish average of 20.8%), more people who are chronically sick, more old people and more single parents. Dundee has the second highest rate of teenage pregnancy – 50% more single parents than the Scottish average[52].

However, many people see Dundee as, 'on the up' – via a knowledge economy and new technologies (two universities and 1:7 people are students). As a result there is huge pressure to develop sites and a conflict between greenspace and built environment. With a very low level of car ownership (45.5% of households with no access to a car in 2001) there is also pressure to develop a green city with a good transport infrastructure:

Provision of social and environmental services

 'Discovering the Liveable City' (May 2005)[53] is Dundee City Council's Outdoor Access Strategy. This policy document makes the point that access goes beyond greenspace and infrastructure– it is seen as a means and a key mechanism to address a much wider range of policy aims – particularly on improving people's health. Poor health and lack of personal transport, particularly in relation to low car ownership, is linked with social exclusion. The above document argues that, by building in exercise as part of people's daily lives this may be a good way to build up confidence and a positive attitude to physical activity (the first level of fitness). To this end the Council is developing a network of 'core paths' within and around the city (a green circular route). The idea is to create networks as an opportunity for physical activity – rather than football pitches and gyms – because everyone can use them and because they can be part of everyday activity. There is also a plan to link areas of greenspace such as parks and woodlands with pathways. This in turn links with Dundee Healthy Living Initiative and NHS Tayside guided walks and 'Health Walks' leaflet packs.

The Case Study

The Dundee case study focused on the Ardler area of Dundee which is a regeneration area on the northern perimeter of Dundee city[54]. The area is somewhat isolated by the busy four lane Kingsway northern circular trunk road but it is close to Camperdown Country Park and Templeton Woods. However, in Templeton Woods particularly, there are negative perceptions about crime in the area. This is a reputation that might have a legacy going back twenty years when two young people were murdered in the area. Parts of Templeton woods now have CCTV cameras to deter unsociable activites.

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[52] Statistics from the 2004 SIMD, 'About Dundee', and the 2001 Census.
[53] Dundee City Council (2005) Discovering the Liveable City: Dundee's outdoor access strategy.
[54] See http://www.regeneratelive.co.uk/story.asp?storyCode=3083849 and http://www.pzaconsulting.com/documents/ArdlerCaseStudy.pdf

Regeneration of the Ardler area has resulted in extensive new housing following the demolition of post war tower blocks. The Ardler Complex centre was purpose built to provide for community needs with, amongst other facilities, a library, sports facilities, a crèche and a youth café. Youth and community work in the area is managed by Lesley Wallace, who runs the youth café and various other youth and community services for young people in Ardler.

The following issues were identified, by local outdoor activity and community workers[55], as significant factors affecting young people's access to greenspace and woodland for their health and well-being:

- Many young people from inner city areas are quite unfit and they don't want to make too much physical effort. Girls are less fit than boys: *the girls are happy to come along if it involves sitting on their bums and watching the boys.*'
- In relation to the outdoor access, young people lack confidence: not aware of their rights (or their responsibilities).
- Young people in Ardler appear to 'out' every night – meeting their friends and socialising – but they don't venture very far.
- Many of the young people from the low income city areas (the 'schemes') have quite narrow horizons. Their 'locality' does not extend beyond the local area and some of the social groups are territorial (Ardler 'pirates'): '*Some young people are very insular. They don't have aspirations to move outside of Ardler.*'. Both Lesley and Lewis talked about how they were trying to widen young people's horizons through youth work and outdoor activities.
- There is a social order issue associated with the tendency, amongst young people, to congregate outdoors in large groups. Lesley mentioned that this was something that she considered to be normal behaviour in her own youth, when she would meet large groups of friends to play rounders in the park. But: 'through youth work locally we know that young people like to congregate around their local area in large groups, which can sometimes be perceived by the local community as threatening or anti-social behaviour.'
- Young people seem now to have a very limited attention span/poor concentration in relation to outdoor activities.
- There is very little evidence of aesthetic appreciation of the environment in young people, particularly outside their own locality.
- They don't see any point in 'walking' and prefer high impact exciting activities.
- Young people in Lesley's youth group are being encouraged to become more environmentally aware. But global issues must be related to a 'local' context.

Woodland and greenspace access issues arising from group discussion and cycling activity

A group of young people (two boys aged 11 and 12 and five girls aged 13 to 15) was recruited for us by Lesley, the Ardler youth and community worker[56]. In this instance we considered that a standard focus group discussion was inappropriate. Instead we adapted our protocol for dynamic small group work using a series of informal 'stations' to pose questions as follows:
1. Tell about where you live? (using large sheets of paper, pens and post-it notes)
2. What do you do outdoors? What is good/bad about it? (using large sheets of paper, pens and post-it notes)
3. What outdoor leisure facilities would you like in your area? (with local maps and post-it notes)
4. What sorts of woodland activities would you be interested in? (using leaflets and pictures as prompts)

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[55] Interviews with Lesley Wallace (Ardler youth and community worker) and Lewis Jones (Ancrum outdoor education center)

[56] In each case we obtained written consent from the parents for the young people to take part in these activities.

Feedback varied, and there were clear differences between the experiences and preferences of the boys and the girls (even accounting for age differences). It was a challenge for us to get them to focus on factors that would prevent them from using woodland areas for their health and well-being when this is not a part of their life experience, but several clear access issues arose:

Key issues affecting access to greenspace and woodlands:

Issue 1 The need for 'social space'
All of the young people we consulted in Ardler tend to be out every night (one of the boys, aged 12, said that he was sent out) until 10.00 or 11.00pm. For the girls this is an opportunity to socialise and they said: '*we need to be outdoors to see our mates, away from our parents*'. They like to socialise with large mixed group (12-20) and this takes place where it can, usually in the vicinity of local shopping precinct (McAlpines) – which is a row of local shops selling alcohol and take-away food. The boys tend to be more active, on bikes or playing football and tag with their friends. Sometimes they create 'dens' in the local greenspaces and bushes for seclusion and privacy – but never too far from home. One group drew a large bottle of 'white lightning' (cider) when asked what they do.

Issue 2 Personal Safety
They spoke about the local Country Park, Clatto and Templeton woods as places to go in the summer (again in groups – but never alone or at night. Normally they like to meet within their local streets where they know people and feel safe. They want to be alone together but safe. The park and the woods are not good places when it is dark and the perception is that it is unsafe and could be inhabited by mysterious wild animals and strangers (one of the boys talked about being followed by a 'paedo').

Issue 3 Uneasy relationship with authority/under-age drinking and 'anti-social behaviour'
There was lots of talk about being 'moved on' by the police and the need for somewhere they can go where they won't be moved on: '*we have nowhere to go without the police moving us on*'.

Issue 4 Lack of interest in/engagement with the environment
When questioned about access to and use of greenspace and woodland the young people showed no interest in walking, wildlife or conservation activities (its boring). They appeared to lack interest or any sense of engagement in the environment. They also appeared to have little or no interest in art projects. Instead they showed more interest in cycling and great interest in the 'Go Ape' high wires forest adventure experience.

What the 11-15 year olds want:
The girls want:
- More 'youth café nights at the Ardler Complex;
- Somewhere to meet their friends without the police moving them on. (Leslie later pointed out 'youth shelter', covered seating in the round, painted blue and overlooked by houses – this is what the young people wanted);
- Better facilities at the Clatto country park (including a tuck shop/café);
- Rock concerts at the Camperdown Country Park;

The boys want:
- Skate board and BMX parks
- Basket ball facilities;
- Paint ball activities
- A 'pleasureland'.

Observations from a cycle ride in Templeton Woods

We were taken, by a trained outdoor education worker, to nearby Templeton woods for a cycle ride.[57] It took some time to set up ten bicycles and to convince the girls that cycle helmets were necessary, even if they didn't look 'cool'. The boys were raring to go and found it very difficult to concentrate on safety instructions. We eventually set off in a wobbly huddle and immediately lost sight of the boys and a couple of the girls who were intent on racing ahead! We cycled through the woods and everyone (except one or two adults) enjoyed rushing downhill between the trees. At one point we stopped in order to talk about being in the woods and experiencing the quietness, but that interlude went down like a lead balloon! The group were particularly pleased when they discovered that they could ride down the wooden steps to the Clatto reservoir and, after some hesitation, were delighted to have overcome their fears – at this point they really began to engage as a group, spurring one another on.

It was a short activity, made even shorter by the safety factors and the initial reluctance to engage as a group. Both Lesley and Lewis (from Ancrum) had earlier told us that young women are often reluctant to engage in organised sporting activities.

Evaluation of contact with the teenagers in Dundee

The young people were given music tokens to thank them for their involvement in the research and we also donated a sum of money to the Ardler Youth Café for a future outdoor activity. It had been a challenge, at first, to get the group to focus on the subject we wished to discuss, they were far too easily distracted, but the feedback we received from them, facilitated by their community worker Lesley (who they obviously trust) was revealing and valuable. Lesley was very receptive to the idea of involving young people in a consultation process based on understanding their real needs. She is aware that they often feel that no-one is listening to them when they express their needs. When asked about the future of the brand new regenerated 'Ardler Village' Lesley said: '*The newly regenerated Ardler has many positives but through Community Planning, Youth Work and Regeneration we are still working towards tackling various community issues.*' Woodland access is clearly not a simple panacea for groups of young people who want to be out socialising in groups (drinking and smoking) every night. But it might be possible for the important issue, about what is perceived to be their anti-social behaviour, to be addressed through better *provision* (Forest rangers in partnership with youth workers) rather than *prevention*. Anti-social behaviour is a difficult barrier to overcome. Outreach provision for vulnerable youngsters whose needs are complex requires ongoing resource provision. But the young people of Ardler, and elsewhere in Scotland, are the adults of the future (single parents, alcoholics and unemployed by present statistical trends) and their health and well-being needs must be met.

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[57] From the Ancrum outdoor education centre

Appendix 2: People contacted and/or interviewed

Policy makers and senior managers:
Bob Frost (Forestry Commission Scotland)
Kevin Lafferty (FC Scotland Health and Wellbeing)
Ian Whitehead (Dundee TWIG)
Laura Campbell (Dundee City Council Access Policy)
Rena Tarwinski (FE Central Scotland)
Mark Wrightman (Access)

Access providers and project workers:
Nina Hutchinson (Focal point Drumchapel)
Norrie Tait, (Scottish Borders Council, Community Learning & Development Worker)
John Barr, (Technical Officer (Smart Ways) Planning and Environment Dept, North Lanarkshire Council)
David MacDuff, (Traffic and Transportation Team Leader, Policy Strategy and Safety, North Lanarkshire Council)
Lesley Wallace (Ardler Youth and Community Worker)
Romena Huq (BTCV Scotland Diversity)
Karen Latta (Drumchapel LIFE)
Taja Sidhu (BEN)
Sheila Nairn (Archaracle Community Council)
Tim Hall (Woodland Trust)

Community and Countryside Rangers:
Susan Rutherford, (Greenlink Project Manager)
Michala Phifer, (Greenlink Community Officer)
Joanne Thompson (Community Forest Ranger)
Sarah Somers (Community Forest Ranger)
Lee Hollings, (Community Development and Training Officer)
Anna Craig, (Educational & Development Officer)
Jake Willis (FE Community ranger)
Eilidh-Ann Madden (Highland Council countryside ranger)
Susan Kevin, (Scottish Borders Council Countryside ranger)

Appendix 3: Research protocol for the focus group discussion and woodland activity

Phase 1

The first phase of the group discussions are carried out as a conventional focus group. We begin by investigating the context within which people experience access to woodlands and gradually focus in to look at barriers or factors affecting access.

Time: 90 minutes

1. **Introduction:** Thank you for coming. My name is …and this is….We are independent researchers working for a public service agency and we would welcome your views. We would like to record the conversation and use the recording for research purposes, but nothing you say will be attributed to you personally. **Permission?** Please feel free to express different opinions. Can we just ask that you give one another space to talk because we would like to hear from everyone and we can't hear you if you all talk at the same time.

2. **Experience of the area:** Can introduce ourselves. It would be interesting to know how long you have lived in this area and what you like about it, and dislike about it.

3. **Exploring the motivation and context for 'getting out'.**

   - Discuss factors affecting people's ability /desire to get outdoors. Are they alone or accompanied?
   - How do they relate to this particular location? What's it like out there?
   - Other spaces/places?

   - Attitudes to, participation in, 'physical activity' i.e. what counts (specific examples eg. does housework count)? Time? Expense? Motivation?

4. **Exploring attitudes to 'greenspace and woodlands'.** How people use outdoor space? How far does their 'locality' extend?

   - Attitude to 'greenspace'. What do they like? How far would they go to get to it? What do they consider to be local? (exploring how people use outdoor space, attitudes to greenspace)

   - Attitudes, specifically, to woodlands. Use of, and levels of engagement with, woodland? Stories about woodland encounters (describe an interaction/walk/activity).

5. **Quality of woodland.**

   - What qualities/types of woodland do they like? (Pictures)

   - What types of woodland would they like to visit?

   - What would they like to do there? (Pictures)

   - What factors prevent people getting out and doing this?

6. **Awareness and perception of the Forestry Commission**

   - What message do FC signs and symbols convey?

7. **Explain the purpose of the research**

Break

Phase 2

The second phase of the research will be carried out in conjunction with an accompanied 'taster event' (woodland health walk, cycling, conservation work, nature watch, sharing/observing woodland skills, using woodland material to build sculpture, creative writing or other arts related work etc.).

The activity (and subsequent cup of tea) will provide an ideal opportunity to talk with the group about specific barriers to access: health, transport, safety, cultural/family factors etc.

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