"WHAT ABOUT US?"
Diversity Review evidence – part two
Challenging perceptions: Provider awareness
of under-represented groups

JULY 2005

This quantitative research examined how the policies, strategies and initiatives of countryside service providers address the needs of under-represented groups. These typically include the elderly and people with disabilities, people from black and minority ethnic communities, people with low incomes and from inner cities, women and young people. It is part of the Countryside Agency's evidence for the Diversity Review, a Defra commitment set out in the Rural White Paper (2000),

"By 2005, we will carry out a full diversity review of how we can encourage more people with disabilities, more people from ethnic minorities, more people from the inner cities, and more young people to visit the countryside and participate in country activities. Initially we will do this by seeking their views on what they need to enjoy the countryside. Then we will draw up a plan of action."

The majority of organisations, whether local authority or the voluntary sector, who manage outdoor recreation sites and routes, lack confidence in approaching people from under-represented groups. As a result, there is a lack of engagement with people who could use their facilities; and the potential opportunities that inclusion would bring to both the user and provider are lost. Insufficient effort is made to find out why people are not visiting their sites and routes through surveys with non-visitors. Additionally, there is a lack of effective monitoring and evaluation.

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Challenging perceptions: Provider awareness of under-represented groups

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Report to the Countryside Agency

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Scoping studies commissioned by the Countryside Agency have identified the need to gather and understand information from countryside service providers[1], and how it relates to their policies and practices directed towards increasing visitor diversity.

In response to this requirement, the research addressed a number of key questions:
1. What awareness do providers currently have of the needs of under-represented groups?
2. How are providers currently meeting those needs?
3. What plans do providers have for meeting those needs in the future? In particular how are they planning to implement the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, as these relate to their service?
4. Is there a gap between the public statements about meeting the needs of under-represented groups and on-the-ground delivery by organisations?
5. If there is a gap between the two, is this due to the attitudes of service deliverers towards people from under-represented groups, lack of understanding of need, scarcity of resources to meet need, or other factors?
6. What measures, such as information, training and support, are needed to assist service providers to increase and improve their provision? What would be the cost of a programme of measures?
7. Where is the best practice located and where is the worst to be found?

The principal objectives of the study were to provide evidence and baseline data about:
- countryside service providers' understanding of diversity and awareness of the needs of under-represented groups;
- countryside service providers' interpretation and application of legislation as well as related policies, strategies and practices relevant to under-represented groups;
- how knowledge of diversity issues is transmitted through countryside service providers' organisations;
- how countryside service providers intend to address the challenge of ensuring equality of access.

The methodology comprised:
i) An extensive literature review, as well as a critical review of recent UK and European legislation and government private and voluntary sector initiatives to enhance equity, reduce discrimination and encourage diversity, where it may have an impact on access to the countryside.
ii) Following the construction of an extensive database of organisations (n=798) involved in all aspects of countryside activities, these organisations were surveyed to assess the degree to which they were aware of both the need and how to address diversity issues[2].
iii) Countryside service providers from across England were invited to a seminar designed to present the initial findings, elicit responses, and gather further data.
iv) Telephone interviews were conducted with a subset of respondents (n=97), allowing a more detailed exploration of issues.

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[1] Countryside Access Providers include policy makers, funding bodies and direct access providers across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

[2] Sample sizes of Countryside Service Providers were always sufficient to ensure robust, reliable and valid analyses of data throughout this research for both quantitative (survey results) and qualitative (interview results) responses.

v) The final stage in the research involved in-depth interviews and site visits with ten service providers.

There is a lack of confidence with, and comfort in using, existing language

We have found that language is a critical issue and needs addressing urgently. It was regarded by service providers as preferable, and 'safer' in terms of avoiding unintended offence and embarrassment, to assume homogeneity in their visitor base, rather than differentiate between, engage with and specifically address the needs of under-represented groups.

There is ambiguity, confusion and even exclusion in the day-to-day language we all use to talk about under-represented groups. Some service providers revealed a lack of confidence in addressing under-represented groups. Consequently they found it difficult working with them as potential customers. Although Government Departments and Commissions such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) may believe that there is an agreed language for addressing issues of under-representation, it appears that it is neither understood nor accepted, and there is little consistency in its use. Natural England needs to address this issue, in conjunction with the CRE and DRC, developing training and awareness programmes, as well as more general guidance on the use of language. Activities and spaces that are subject to access policies and programmes can then be communicated effectively and with confidence by service providers and without causing offence.

It is recommended that:
1. Natural England, in consultation with the CRE and DRC, issue guidelines to service providers in order to encourage confidence and remove ambiguity in the use of the language of diversity. (A&C)
2. An accepted and accessible terminology is developed to describe the activities and spaces referred to in policy documents.
3. In order to achieve more successful projects, there is a need for increased dialogue between on-the-ground workers and senior management about the delivery of policy and legislation. (LA's & SP's)
4. Senior management should regularly swap positions with on-the-ground workers in order to experience dealing directly with under-represented groups of society. This should be followed-up by reconvening in a neutral environment to discuss the implications for leisure planning and management. (LAs & SPs)
5. Service providers need equity awareness training so that they are more sensitive to that the language they use to describe the groups they serve; and to frame their thinking and management actions. (LA's & SP's)
6. A training programme is instigated to understand the terminologies that are regarded as appropriate to describe the activities and spaces referred to in policy documents and by the various agencies. (LA's & SP's)
7. Leadership and cultural change is brought about through training of professionals, members and volunteers.

The need for a specific person responsible for access to recreation

Service providers rarely identify a single person, team or even cross-departmental responsibility for initiating or co-ordinating equal access work where issues are crosscutting. Within local authorities, there is scope for involving elected members who are in a position to take an overview, and can ensure action as well as encourage and facilitate community consultation, engagement and responsiveness. Within private sector or charitable organisations, a board member or trustee should take on responsibility for championing these issues, in order to ensure that legislative requirements and obligations are met.

At a national level, there is no single organisation that champions this work; this needs to be addressed urgently. We recommend that a position be established in the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights that would oversee responsibility for recreation and access to recreation opportunities. This position should be mirrored in Natural England with the creation of a dedicated unit with responsibility for diversity and equality. Local authorities must take on board that diversity and equality is more than equal employment opportunities and should encompass countryside and all other services. This will need a champion within the organisation.

It is recommended that:
8. An individual in the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights is made responsible for recreation and access to recreational opportunities. (CGD; A&C)
9. A simple but comprehensive monitoring of current human rights and equality legislation is developed, with provision for regular updating.   (CGD)
10. Natural England, as well as service providers, will need a high level of coordination in order to identify what barriers and opportunities exist across groups. The current shortcomings in treating diversity and equity issues as cross-cutting, reinforces the need to avoid having different sections dealing with ethnic minorities, disability, gender, etc; (A&C)
11. The targets within 'Choosing Activity: a physical action plan' for outdoor recreation provision, should be placed in the mainstream, to ensure continuity across policy arenas and Government departments. (CGD)
12. Encourage an integrated approach to the development of Community Strategies to ensure that the outdoor access and the recreational needs of the local community are addressed, and that there is co-ordination between the strategies, Rights of Way Improvement Plans, Local Transport Plans and land use planning. This approach should address the agenda set out in Modernising Rural Delivery and the new Rural Strategy. (LAs & SPs)
13. Boundaries. potential overlaps and inconsistencies of local strategic planning should be identified and addressed. (LAs & SPs)
14. A dedicated unit within local authorities is established to ensure that diversity and equality is championed beyond equal employment opportunities to encompass countryside and all other services.
15. Service providers need to be pro-active in seeking out information on fulfilling their statutory responsibilities with regards to equity and diversity issues and acquiring good practice.

The opportunity to improve dissemination and communication

There is clearly a need for awareness-raising, legislative briefings, training and the exchange of best practice for all service provider staff, many of whom feel, and often are, ill-informed and unsupported. The emphasis on compliance with legislation inevitably results in those responsible seeing diversity and equity as a duty, rather than an opportunity, for the benefit of both under-represented groups and the service-providing organisation. It also tends to focus the agenda on compliance rather than aspiration.

Although service providers are expected to update themselves on relevant policies, in reality this is mainly achieved through informal networks and word of mouth. Consequently the quality of the information degrades through the dissemination process. In addition, there is limited opportunity for two-way communication between site managers and senior policy makers. We strongly recommend that serious attention is given to improved communication, both within organisations and between national bodies and headquarter organisations and member organisations. This can be done by means of published briefing notes, organising annual events such as national or regional seminars and workshops, and employing innovatory methods to disseminate good practice (e.g. Worcestershire County Council's Pledge Event in 2004). These should publicise research, policies and best practice, as well as provide a forum for discussion. Service providers need to think imaginatively and laterally in order that lessons learnt from addressing one area of under-representation can be applied to others.

We found little evidence that the training of frontline staff was taken seriously enough to allow them to acquire a practical and meaningful understanding of the legislation and policy background to the widening participation and diversity issue. Whilst a few organisations suggested that there was training, it was more typical that knowledge was assumed, or relied on the member of staff proactively seeking it out because they were interested or they realised there was a need.

It is recommended that:
16. Service providers should be made aware of the benefits of enhancing accessibility for under-represented groups (A&C). The benefits are economic (for example, it has been estimated that the 'disability pound' is worth £15bn) and professional/career satisfaction. It became apparent in our research that local authority and service provider staff gained a great deal of job satisfaction from working with under-represented groups.
17. Service providers are encouraged and shown how to think positively, as will be required by the new legislation, (e.g. we *shall* strive to create a working environment based on good relations between people with and without disabilities; and use diverse images in all published material to demonstrate a positive inclusive ethos. This is in contrast to a negative approach of risk aversion, i.e. we *shall not* discriminate. (A&C)
18. The full potential of the Diversity Review action research programme be explored to ensure that it provides the type of integrated learning platform required to address under-representation.
19. Guidance should be developed and disseminated, working with the Learning and Skills Council, LANTRA, SkillsActive and the relevant advisory bodies and other experts in the field (e.g. universities) to develop suitable education and

training programmes for the members of Local Access Forums and strategic partnerships. (CGD)

20. The extent to which the focus and remit of Local Access Forums could be related explicitly to championing access for all should be explored. (A&C)

21. To ensure that the National Access Database includes specific information on access for all and maximise the dissemination of this database, explaining specific information on diversity issues.

22. Service providers are given information on how to create a more diverse visitor base and respond to particular social groups rather than instructions simply to do it.

23. Guidance is provided for service providers relating to visitor surveys, catchment surveys and identifying gaps in visitor profiles.

24. Natural England must ensure that service providers are made aware that equality and diversity policies and actions apply to people visiting the countryside. (CGD)

25. Service providers devise regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation exercises in order to identify the needs and preferences of under-represented groups. Active dissemination such as annual roadshows, to disseminate the results of research, would be useful.

26. As with the Heritage Lottery Fund, monitoring should be a funding pre-requirement for projects; funding agencies should specify a percentage of any award for monitoring projects. In this way, projects will not be started if there are insufficient funds to monitor and evaluate.

27. Senior officers are sensitive to and informed about the specific needs and preferences of under-represented groups, so that they are better able to formulate policies.

28. Senior staff will need to develop strategies that extend their working role to encompass both the environment and visitors.

29. Service providers should not think about enhancing access in terms of starting new initiatives, but embedding good practice within ongoing (beneficial) activities so it diversity provision becomes part of the mainstream.

30. Service providers are given examples of good practice on which they can develop their own strategies and action plans in relation to each and all of the under-represented groups. (A&C)

31. Consideration should be given to identifying local authorities that can have Beacon status and provide exemplars of good practice.

32. Service providers are encouraged to undertake evaluation and monitoring studies. This may be a requirement if recent changes to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act are applied across the equity area. Central government or Natural England may need to provide support for this in the form of finance and expertise.

33. Natural England should commission a research team to devise a package of instruments that can be used by service providers with minor modification to monitor progress in increasing under-representative participation, e.g. visitor and catchment surveys. (A&C)

34. Natural England commission guidance notes for distribution to service providers on best practice. These should be based on research evidence from the present studies (University of Surrey and Ethnos), past experience and advice from expert bodies as well as evidence derived from the Action Based Research Project Evaluation. (A&C)

35. Natural England, as well as service providers, will need to think laterally in order that lessons learnt to address one area of under-representation can be tried, tested and applied to others.
36. Partnerships to encourage visitor diversity should incorporate not only various departments within local authorities, but also link to independent and voluntary bodies to increase the profile of diversity issues in all areas. (LAs & SPs)

Encouraging Visitor Diversity through Performance Indicators

There are various drivers and instruments that can be employed to encourage as well as enforce compliance with legislation and policy, e.g. laws and regulations, financial incentives (positive and negative), information and education. Evaluation and monitoring can also be used as part of any of these strategies, and should be considered an essential prerequisite for the funding of projects. Only when evaluation and monitoring takes place will it be possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of policies and actions and monitor change. Catchment area surveys are required to measure needs and progress beyond current visitor information.

There is a compelling case for initiating Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets to encourage change as well as permit transparency and public scrutiny. The financial support that follows PSA targets to be achieved and exceeded will answer countryside service providers concerns that monitoring, evaluation and other data gathering uses funding which could be otherwise spent on actual implementation. Although such targets are voluntary, they complement Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) that must be collected under the Local Government Act, 1999. We recommend that a PSA target be constructed to monitor progress with increasing diversity in the countryside to enable local authorities to measure the success of their strategies and learn from good practice. Furthermore, local authorities have a duty under the Local Government Act, 2000 to produce a Community Strategy. The Audit Commission published a set of Quality of Life Indicators in September 2003, which is designed to help local authorities and their partners in Local Strategic Partnerships to monitor their community strategies. They cover economic, social and environmental well-being and are also intended to complement Best Value Performance Indicators.

It is recommended that:
37. Inspection, regulation and sanction should be used to encourage cultural change. Natural England should commission research to identify appropriate indicators that can be used in a national auditing exercise.
38. A new PSA target to achieve a measurable increase in the diversity of people assessing outdoor recreation should be proposed by Defra. PSA targets, Equalities Standards, Best Value Performance Indicators and Quality of Life Indicators should be used by local authorities to measure progress in increasing the diversity of countryside visitors. (CGD). For example,
    i)   Percentage of a local authority's parks and open spaces accredited with a Green Flag Award. (For a Green Flag Award, there must be management and provision of green space for community. It is recommended that the qualifications for achieving a Green Flag Award include the implementation of outreach projects, combined with evidence of which groups are under-represented through visitor surveys compared to local population statistics.)

ii)   Area of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population.
Local Nature Reserves are defined by English Nature as an 'Accessible Natural Greenspace less than 300m in a straight line from home' and 'for informal enjoyment of nature by the public'. There is a Quality of Life indicator under development (K7) that relates to access to local green space that is already linked to this BVPI. One reason for their existence is to provide an opportunity for people to become involved in the management of their local environment.

This research has recognised that there are many perspectives held by different groups that together explain under-representation. There are the responses of the under-represented groups themselves as well as central government, government agencies, and decision-makers and frontline staff within the direct service providers. It is the combination of all these perspectives that will lead to people from England's diverse population making informed choices about access to outdoor recreation and greenspace.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

In the Rural White Paper of November 2000 John Prescott stated:

> *"Above all, we believe in a countryside for everyone… we believe that rural and urban areas are interdependent. Our aim is to deliver an improved quality of life for everyone in the countryside – as well as in cities and towns. Our vision is of a protected countryside in which the environment is sustained and enhanced, and which all can enjoy."*

The notion that the countryside provides a source of well-being and enjoyment is powerful and deep-rooted. It's perceived as a place of refuge for residents and visitors alike, so that enhanced access benefits both the individual and the wider community in terms of improved quality of life.

Previous surveys show that visiting the countryside is a popular leisure activity. In 2002 there were 167.3 million trips made by residents within the UK, spending more than £26.5 billion in total. Walking has been identified as the most popular reason for visiting the countryside, although other leisure pursuits such as cycling, riding and water-based sports are also enjoyed.

But just who are these visitors? Demographic profiles show them to be mostly white, usually aged 35-54 with a relatively high income (social groups A, B and C1) and who travel by car (State of the Countryside Report 2005). The inevitable conclusion is that far too many people are simply not accessing a resource that ought to be enjoyed by all. Indeed, research has identified that under-represented groups form a significant and untapped market, and despite attempts to remove the structural as well as the psychological barriers faced by this audience, it is clear that current policies are not working. This could be because the needs or the problems experienced by under-represented groups in the countryside are not properly understood; or perhaps certain strategies are not effectively implemented.

The following box describes the proportion of people in the under-represented groups.

- **20% - 1 in 5 - adults are disabled in some way in England**
  (Department for Work and Pensions 2004)

- **1.5% - less than 1 in 50 - children are disabled in some way in England**
  (Department for Work and Pensions 2004)

- **9.6% - 1 in 11- people are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in England** (Office for National Statistics, 2001 Census)

- **20% - 1 in 5 people - are aged 8-24 in England**
  (Office for National Statistics, 2001 Census)

The population of England is 49.1million (Office for National Statistics, 2001 Census) and 80% of the population live in urban areas.
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The Countryside Agency has committed to provide a Plan of Action to Defra in 2005 (Rural White Paper, 2000) to make access to the countryside more inclusive by attracting a wider and more diverse visitor base. Studies have revealed the paucity of research available to policy developers, both at a governmental and organisational level. Accordingly, this report focuses on countryside service providers'[3] understanding of their visitors, and the means by which they target specific groups who are currently under-represented.

Research questions

This research sought to address six key questions:
- How aware are providers of the needs of under-represented groups and how are providers currently meeting those needs?
- What are the providers' plans for meeting those needs in the future, and in particular how are they planning to implement the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000, and the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005?
- Is there a gap between public statements about meeting the needs of under-represented groups and on the ground delivery by organisations?
- If there is a gap, is it due to the attitudes of service deliverers towards people from under-represented groups, lack of understanding of need or scarcity of resources to meet that need? Or are there other factors?
- What measures (such as training and support) are needed to help service providers to improve their provision, and at what cost?
- Where is the best practice located and where is the worst to be found?

The term 'countryside' in this research is defined as anywhere that the respondents themselves refer to as the countryside; although this is an expression that is open to considerable interpretation and other terms such as 'green open space' are equally pertinent. Equally, 'visitors' to the countryside are as much 'users' and 'participants' or even customers, since people use the countryside in many different ways and for a variety of reasons.

One important issue tackled by this research is whether countryside service providers conceptualise their service through the eyes of others – both potential visitors to the countryside and others within their own organisation. Each individual or group makes sense of the environment as a result of their needs, experience and social/cultural life and it is assumed that their meanings are neither self-evident nor equal among different groups.
The study is informed by 'affordance theory' (Gibson, 1979) in which it is argued that the environment offers opportunities for use and manipulation, but these will be perceived and evaluated differently by different groups depending upon their needs, expectations and sub-cultures. This provides a way of understanding the functionally and psychologically significant aspects of the countryside for policy makers and policy implementers (Clark and Uzzell, 2002).

'Co-orientation theory' is also drawn upon, in which the key assumption is that people's behaviour is not based solely on their private cognitions of the world. Behaviour is the result of an individual's understanding of the perceptions and

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[3] Countryside Access Providers include policy makers, funding bodies and direct access providers across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

attitudes held by others around them, and under certain conditions this may well affect their behaviour. Consequently, co-orientation recognises that people (anyone from park managers through to disabled non-park users) do not exist in social isolation but are influenced implicitly and explicitly by the thoughts and actions of others. Communication and awareness of the gaps between need and provision is central to increasing access and removing barriers for as many countryside users as possible.

Research objectives

The overall objective of this research is to provide evidence and baseline data from countryside service providers about their awareness of, and awareness of the needs of, under-represented groups; related policies, practices and strategies; the interpretation and application of parliamentary Acts relevant to under-represented groups; and the attitudes and behaviour of countryside service providers, and their employees, towards under-represented groups.

This objective was achieved through:
- A detailed review of countryside service providers' policies, the evidence base for these policies and existing (or potential) projects
- Extensive quantitative and qualitative data collection
- Creation of a database of countryside service providers whose work relates directly to under-represented groups recognised by the Rural White Paper *Our Countryside Our Future* (November 2000); and importantly those highlighted by scoping studies initiated by the Countryside Agency as under-represented in countryside activities (e.g. elderly people, women, those with low incomes) – see www.countryside.gov.uk
- Understanding the requirements of countryside service providers in addressing the needs of under-represented groups (e.g. to comply to legislation such as the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 and Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005, and implement policies which will address these issues.

Complementary research into the needs and perceptions of the under-represented groups identified in the Rural White Paper 2000, was carried out by Ethnos**.**

Report structure

This report begins by presenting reviews and case studies of projects and literature related to increasing visitor diversity. The legislative requirements are also reviewed, and these inform a Service Providers' Survey, which reports that understanding, awareness and attitudes of organisations towards legislative requirements (e.g. Disability Discrimination Act, 1995), as well as their visitor base and projects, policies and strategies, effects visitor diversity.

Qualitative interviews are based on information elicited from the service provider's interviews. The results of telephone Interviews are presented, followed by the findings from on-site interviews providing width and depth to the previously reported survey. Lastly, mapping of the organisations and their activities according to their provision is reported, followed by the conclusions and recommendations of this research.

Completed outputs of this study

- ➢ Interim report 1 & 2 combining findings of desktop reviews, legislation reviews and Service Provider Survey.
- ➢ Interim report 3 informing of methodology and samples for quantitative and qualitative surveys.
- ➢ Research Note available through www.countryside.gov.uk

Chapter 2: Service Provider Surveys

Summary

An extensive database of organisations (n=798) involved in all aspects of countryside activities was compiled, in order to assess their awareness of the need to address diversity issues and to overcome the lack of readily available information. In particular, there was a focus on communication through organisational hierarchies, with many of the organisations surveyed incorporating a Head Office and Regional Offices. Where this was the case surveys were deliberately sent to all regional branches. The survey results show that:

- Providers identified three groups to be most under-represented: people from black and minority ethnic groups (BMEs), people on low incomes and young people
- Service providers found it relatively straightforward to recognise the physical needs of disabled groups, compared to other under-represented groups
- Only 3% of respondents said that they had not addressed the changes required by the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995
- Although most organisations were aware that they had to face up to their responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 (84%), not all were actively responding
- Whilst previous research has shown that an individual's fear of prejudice or inexperience are barriers to using the countryside, there does not seem to be a related or parallel understanding within organisations
- Service providers thought it safer, in terms of avoiding unintended insult and prejudice, and preferable, to homogenise their visitor base, rather than address the needs of smaller individual groups
- Although countryside service providers collect data from visitors, it only tends to identify which groups are absent rather than assess their actual needs, so catchment area surveys are required
- There needs to be a separate budget for funding monitoring and evaluation projects, so that it does not detract from financing the actual projects themselves.

Background

In January/February 2004, a *Service Providers' Survey* was carried out and a subset of the results presented in an Interim Report a month later. The full survey results are presented below, together with supporting evidence from qualitative responses made by organisations.

The survey focused on several key questions*:*
- Are providers aware of the needs of under-represented groups?
- How are providers currently meeting those needs?
- Do providers engage in evaluation studies in order to identify visitor demographics, or are their judgements based upon anecdotal evidence?
- What plans do providers have to meet these needs in the future, and in particular how are they planning to implement the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995?

Method

A postal questionnaire examined organisations' awareness of and approach to these core issues. Respondents were given a list of under-represented groups and asked whether they felt their organisation needed to encourage a more diverse visitor base, and what initiatives or projects they had in place or have planned in order to encourage a more diverse set of users. They were also questioned over the nature and extent of their research and monitoring into their visitor base, since this would contribute to the development of evaluation frameworks. For the full survey see Appendix 1.

Respondents were encouraged to distribute the questionnaire within their organisation and it was provided in an electronic format so that collective responses would be possible. Organisations were invited to enclose examples of their promotional literature, especially relating to projects specifically tackling under-representation; and they were also asked to indicate their interest in attending a workshop focused on the current research.

Response and follow-up survey

In total, 730 questionnaires were distributed: 324 to service providers and 406 to local authorities, and overall 198 (27%) were returned[4]. Of those, 23 were not used as the organisations stated that the questionnaire was not relevant to them. These organisations comprised advisory bodies and funders who specified that they did not own sites, and therefore did not have "visitors".

Local Authorities
Out of 406 local authority service providers contacted, 88 surveys were returned of which ten responded that they did not have "countryside responsibilities" (see below). The overall response rate from local authorities was therefore 23% (18-25% is the normal response rate).

Due to the limited initial response from local authorities, 190 who had not responded were telephoned to identify a named person. Of those 190, 133 people were contacted directly and further surveys dispatched by email, and as a result 28 (21%) responded within the four-week deadline. Their responses are incorporated into the overall results.

It was also apparent whilst contacting local authorities that a possible reason for the unexpected response rate was that there was often no single person responsible for addressing these issues. Comments included:

> "This is a cross-agenda issue so it's not really in my remit."

> "I'll have to consult a few people because I'm not really sure who's covering that."

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[4] A response rate of 20% is expected for postal surveys. The response rate in this instance provides a statistically reliable sample from which to carry out analysis.

The full range of job titles of those contacted is listed in Appendix 2, but they include Countryside Manager/Officer, Strategic Planning, Tourism Manager/Officer, Leisure Services, Parks and Open Spaces Manager and PROW Officer.

Interestingly, a local authority contacted in the second round was one whose chief executive office had previously responded that they were an 'urban' authority and therefore had no requirement to encourage people to use the countryside or outdoors. The officer contacted (Head of Parks and Contracts) duly returned the survey, indicating a large number of interesting projects that they run for under-represented groups, especially their multi-cultural local population. This indicates a lack of bottom-up communication and the difficulty faced by local authorities when there is no clear lead or responsibility for these issues.

Non-Local Authorities
Of 324 non-local authority service providers who received a survey, 110 were completed and returned. Of these, 13 respondents considered this survey out of their remit; their response was discounted giving a final response rate of 30%.

National/regional organisations
Some organisations responded that they were co-ordinating their answers through their national headquarters only. These included British Waterways (2 responses), English Nature (4), Forestry Commission (5) and Sport England (6). It may be that others adopted a similar approach. For example, the regional Wildlife Trusts returned 18 surveys out of 37 sent, and 12 from a possible 24 were received from Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Results

Seven under-represented groups are of particular interest to this research:
- The elderly
- Disabled people
- People from black and minority ethnic groups
- People from inner cities
- People with low incomes
- Women
- Young people

Respondents were aware of the need to encourage visits from all of these groups (Figure 2.1). The majority of respondents (92%) were aware of the need to encourage disabled visitors, but fewer felt the need to encourage visits from women (69%) or elderly members (76%), since they felt that they were already "well catered for" in their organisation. Inner city residents also scored less (70%) but there was greater acknowledgement of those on low incomes.
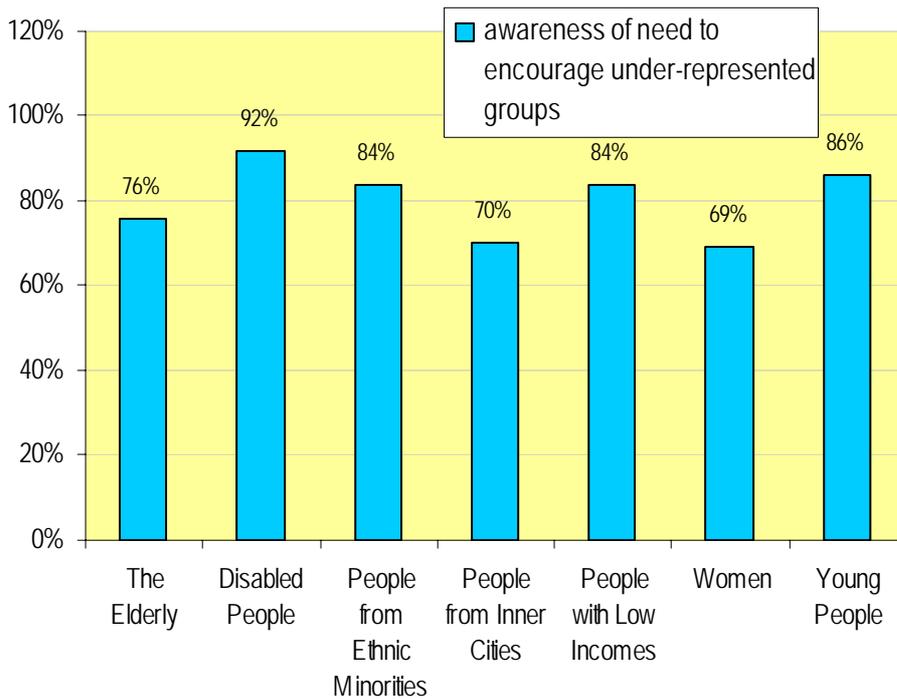
Figure 2.1: Organisations' awareness of the need to encourage visits from under-represented groups

Almost all organisations (99%) were aware of the need to address their responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995; however fewer (84%) were aware of the need to address the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000. Only one organisation stated that they were not aware of the need to act under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 and 16% believed that they had no need to address the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000. See Chapter 1 for organisations' responsibilities under these two Acts.

The majority of organisations (68%) specified ways in which they had responded to the Disability Discrimination Act, although 25% said that they had responded to the act without providing any specific examples of projects. Only 3% said that they had not addressed the changes required by the Act in the last two years. Future plans often related to developing projects or strategies already in place. Some examples include:

> *Now:* "Implementation of 'X' initiative, making all… facilities accessible by 2005."
> *In future:* "Continuation of the current campaign."
>
> *Now:* "Where possible, help provide disabled access to our network."
> *In future:* "Try to find ways of improving access."
>
> *Now:* "Contacted disability groups to find ways of providing suitable products."
> *In future:* "As above."
>
> *Now:* "We are continuing the audit of our facilities and making the necessary physical changes where needed. Training for all staff concerning tourism for all is ongoing."
> *In future:* "As above."

Now: "We now have active Equal opportunity policies."
In future: "We will continue to do this."

Now: "Slow adaptation of facilities as resources allow."
In future: "Will continue to adapt infrastructure as resources allow."

Although most organisations were aware of the need to address their responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000, not all were doing so. Indeed, only 32% specified ways in which they had actively made changes, whilst a further 29% reported non-specific strategies. Only 22% of organisations admitted that they had not reacted to this requirement; 21% reported that they had specific plans to address race relation requirements in the future, and 41% reported that they had non-specific strategies to implement at a later stage. It should also be noted that 19% of organisations made no response to questions about the Act, beyond stating whether or not they were aware of their responsibilities. Examples of current or planned projects include:

Now: "Two community projects that target all sectors of society."
In future: "Development of further community nature reserves."

Now: "Make all aware that we are open to all races."
In future: "Continue with the above."

Now: "Begun project to encourage volunteering on nature reserves by members of black & ethnic minority communities"
In future: "Continue the volunteering project, extending it to all our volunteer activities."

Now: "We have a number of specific projects which provoke & encourage racial equality in terms of access to the countryside."
In future: "We will continue to promote and set up projects which will allow us to engage with people from BME groups."

Most organisations have projects in place to encourage visits from under-represented groups, targeted in particular at the elderly (43%), disabled (57%) and young people (53%) – see Figure 2.2. However, this table also shows that 49% have no initiatives to encourage visits from women, minority ethnic groups (44%) or those from inner city areas (42%). For those on low incomes, almost equal numbers of organisations had specific initiatives aimed at encouraging this group to access the countryside as those who did not. Many organisations said that they encouraged visits not from any specific group but from everyone. In the absence of any other knowledge, it seems that service providers are assuming that their initiatives must be reaching these under-represented groups and there is no need to develop more targeted strategies. It is also possible that organisations are sensitive over whether it is acceptable to treat certain population groups in isolation, so that they opt to homogenise their visitor base rather than address the needs of smaller individual groups (cf Chapters 2 and 3).
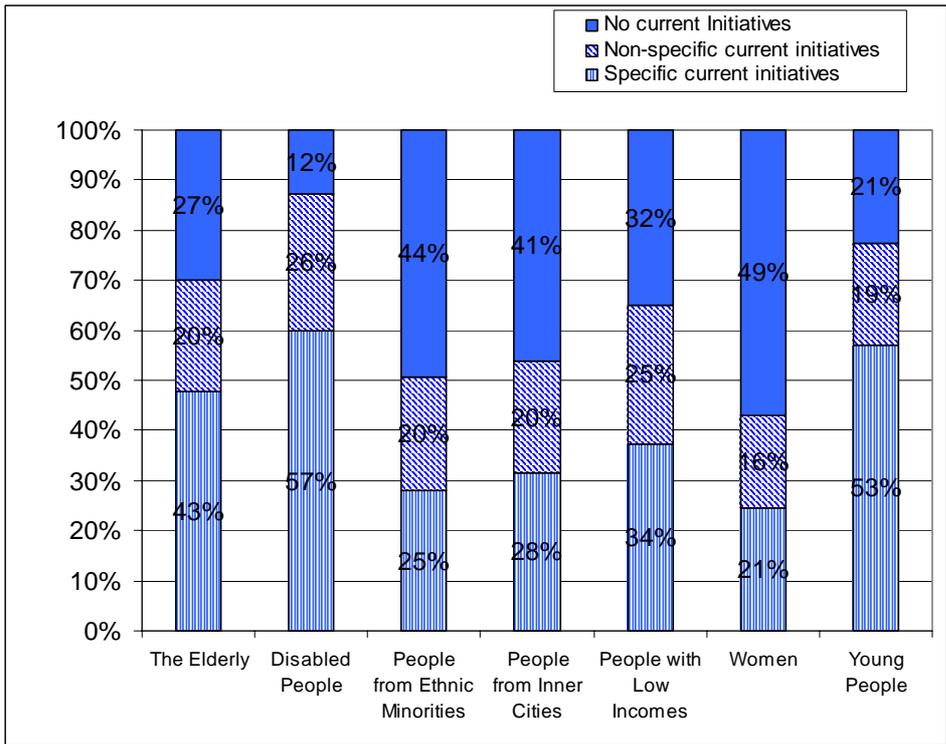
Figure 2.2: Organisations' current implementation of strategies to encourage visits from under-represented groups

In terms of future strategies, Figure 2.3 shows that organisations made reference to mainly non-specific projects, which were again aimed at encouraging a range of visitors. Where group-specific projects were mentioned, they were mostly aimed at disabled people (40% of organisations) and young people (37%). The majority of organisations reported that they had no future plans for encouraging visits from women (46%) and ethnic minority groups (40%), nor from people from inner cities (38%) or the elderly (30%).
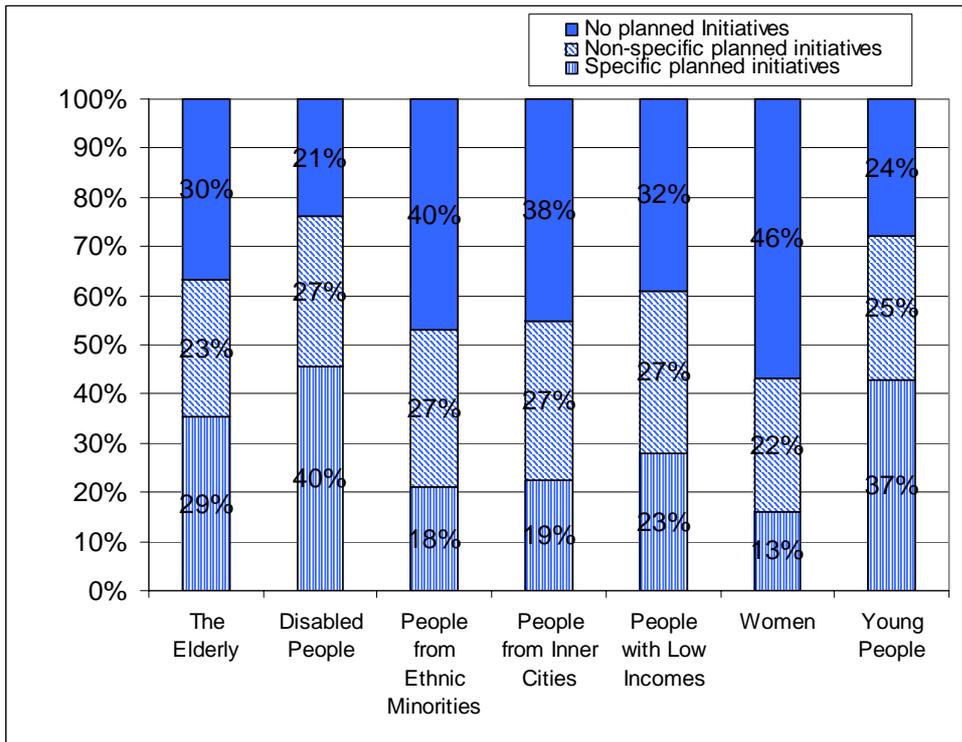
Figure 2.3: Organisations' planned implementation of strategies to encourage visits from under-represented groups

Although greater participation from people in the black and minority ethnic community is acknowledged as important in improving the diversity of the countryside visitor base, few projects seemed to be aimed specifically at their needs. Instead, organisations respond that they are open to all visitors regardless of their background and ethnicity:

> "We actively encourage all to participate in our activities."

> " Membership open to all nationalities."

> "Community projects that target all sectors of society."

> "General promotion mostly through website and presence at appropriate events."

In terms of identifying visitor or user groups to the countryside, 53% of organisations had specific methods of monitoring (although 31% said that had done none at all). Many acknowledged that where surveys existed they were outdated, but in the absence of available funds were unlikely to be renewed.   Funding, as it related to monitoring, was specifically mentioned by several organisations. For example:

> "Improved monitoring – IF funded."

> "Via visitor surveys and consultation. There are no immediate plans to do this because funding is currently so restricted."

> "Conditions of grant aid is to monitor and evaluate projects."

Of the responding organisations, 12% had non-specific monitoring methods that included anecdotal observations and informal feedback from visitors.

When asked to describe their typical visitors, many organisations did not have quantitative data available, but based on simple observation described them as "predominantly white, middle aged and middle class". Under-represented groups examined in this research rarely featured in the description or images of everyday visitors. At the same time, organisations were aware that there were certain groups who rarely accessed the countryside. The majority of organisations *who had specific forms of monitoring in place* identified people from ethnic minorities (55%) and inner city areas (38%) as groups who rarely access the countryside (Figure 2.4). Here, it seems, are clear target groups for marketing strategies aimed at increasing visitor diversity.
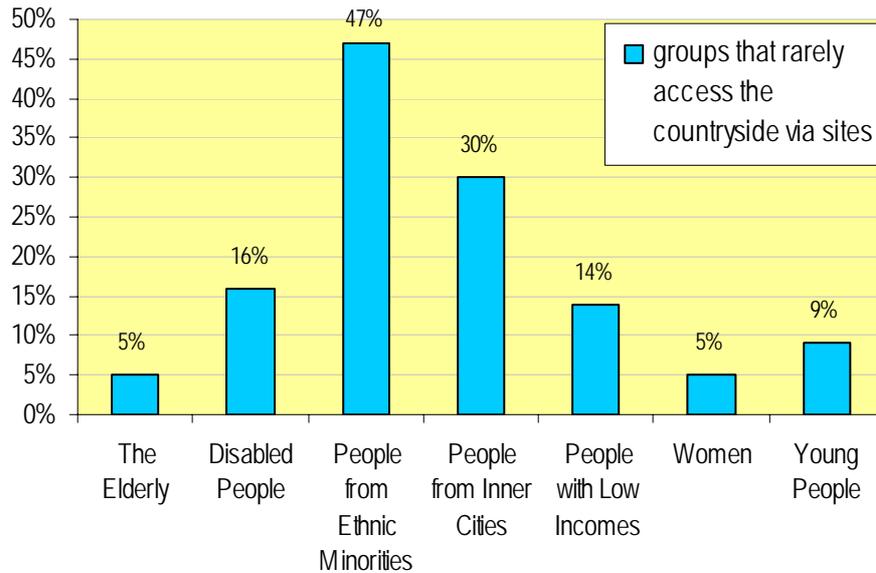
Figure 2.4: Organisations' awareness of groups that rarely access the countryside

Finally, the survey examined how organisations measured the success of their strategies to encourage under-represented groups into the countryside. In understanding the needs of such groups, 55% of organisations referred back to survey results, whilst a similar amount indicated that they planned to implement specific forms of evaluation in the future. Examples include:

"Survey works and anecdotal observations. Comparisons of known users profile with that of local population."

"We have done some survey of needs/ opinions on urban community projects. Through interview/ questionnaire."

"National and regional monitoring of access and take-up of services."

"Survey specific groups, ranger direct communication with users."
"Continuation of annual visitor surveys, out and about responses. Investigating methodology to assess non-users requirements."

Other methods of evaluation included public consultation days and reported outreach work (9% each). Against the acknowledgement of the need to evaluate was balanced the practicality of cost. Almost all organisations had used and had access to some form of visitor information. About 46% of organisations had carried out membership surveys, whilst others had used on-site surveys to evaluate projects or monitor visitors. For example:

"Regular questionnaires at two sites."

"Best value surveys. Feedback forms on the countryside activity diary and at our visitor centres."

"Continued surveys on track, continued use of monitoring cards, use of website."

> "Regular surveys – onsite observation/surveys. General membership surveys."

> "We register participants in every ramble that we organise."

If these members and site visitors are indeed mostly "white, middle aged and middle class", then it is unlikely that the *needs* of under-represented groups are being properly assessed or understood; and until catchment area survey information is properly gathered little progress will be made.

Analysis of promotional material

Organisations were asked to submit promotional material and published information relating to projects working towards a more diverse visitor base (such as websites). This was provided by 57% of organisations, while almost 40% specified an internet address for further details. Of the former, 200 pictures depicting people were randomly selected for a descriptive analysis:

- Older people tended to be mostly active and usually walking or hiking
- Young children were portrayed as part of a family group or in an educational setting involved in an organised activity
- Older children/young adults were only present when the material was describing projects in which they were directly involved
- Disabled people were only shown when the material was directly aimed at a place or activity for this group
- Women were almost always depicted in the role of 'mother'
- Men were often shown engaged in an energetic activity such as cycling
- Out of 200 pictures, 12 included a non-white face
- Where non-white faces were featured, they were almost always children
- A very 'white, middle class' England emerges, where visiting country pubs would appear to be a universal attraction
- Promoted outdoor activities such as hiking, camping and cycling, assume that participants enjoy them and have some prior experience
- Boating, horse riding and camping always portrayed white faces

'Not applicable' responses

A small number of respondents failed to find any relevance in the Diversity Review to their organisation, including ten local authorities and 13 service providers. Local authorities typically claimed they were an urban borough/district council and did not interpret their remit to include responsibility for encouraging access to the countryside:

> "Try a bit of elementary research. We are an urban area" (*despite the fact that there is a large country park within their boundaries*).

> "We are only a district council and as such do not have countryside responsibilities."

> "We have no direct responsibility for the management of access to premises, land holdings or via the rights of way network."

It also appeared that the survey did not always reach the appropriate respondent, so that it may still be in circulation:

> "Have passed on copies of questionnaire to countryside access manager and officer for their information."

> "Letter forwarded to XXX [name], acting Corporate Director for Environment and Culture."

Among the service providers, the majority of non-respondents found the survey irrelevant to their organisation, as they had no sites or visitors. Rather, they regarded themselves either responsible for overseeing the environment or protecting the countryside in some way; a governing body for an activity, or a lobbying and campaigning organisation. They did not feel in a position to encourage visitors, regardless of their backgrounds.

Conclusions

Although service providers identified three groups to be most under-represented - members of the black and minority ethnic community, those on low incomes, and young people - few organisations have specific projects in place to address their needs. Our results also suggest that people on low incomes are viewed quite differently to those from inner cities, with service providers less aware of the need to encourage visits from the latter.

Taking an overview, it appears that service providers have found it relatively straightforward to recognise the physical needs of disabled people, compared to other under-represented users, and indeed are already dealing with this issue but overlooking disabled people with other impairments. Only 3% of respondents said that they had not addressed the changes required by the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, in the last two years. It was often the case that future plans related to an extension of the projects or strategies already in place; and although 84% of organisations were aware of their requirements under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000, not all were actively responding. Indeed, only one third specified actual changes they had made.

Whilst previous research has shown that an individual's fear of prejudice or inexperience are barriers to using the countryside, there does not seem to be a similar understanding within groups and organisations. Almost as many state that they have an 'Open to All' policy as those who have specific projects aimed at attracting people from black and ethnic minorities, those on low incomes and inner cities, and women. Service providers need to understand that it is simply not enough to say: "We are open to all." Instead, there must be group-specific and positive encouragement to reduce the impression amongst non-users that they do not 'belong'.

Perhaps organisations assume that they are reaching these under-represented groups and that there is no particular need to treat one particular group differently from any other? Equally, it is also possible that organisations are not targeting specific groups because of sensitivity over whether it is acceptable to isolate certain population groups. Instead they see it as preferable and certainly safer to homogenise their visitor base rather than address the needs of smaller individual groups (see Chapter 2).

Although monitoring identified certain groups as rarely accessing the countryside, the actual *needs* of these users are not assessed because data is only collected through on-site surveys or membership surveys. Information comes from the "white, middle aged and middle class" visitors and not from the very people who are under-represented, such as those from the black and minority ethnic community or from inner cities. A small number of organisations were carrying out consultations or outreach projects; but in the absence of catchment surveys, it is impossible for service providers to begin addressing the actual needs of under-represented groups.

Monitoring also clearly presents a funding problem. Where money is available for a strategy or initiative it is understandably directed at the projects themselves, rather than evaluation and monitoring. Funding must include a separate budget for monitoring, so that it does not impact upon the amount available for projects, strategies and events. Only in this way will organisations be able to judge whether their initiatives are effective, both in reaching under-represented groups and, if so doing, providing for their needs.

Chapter 3: Telephone Interviews

Summary

Once the *Providers' Awareness Survey* was complete, 97 telephone interviews took place with a subset of respondents. Co-orientation methods were employed to improve understanding of communication channels within organisations. The main findings were:

- Organisational orientation is either resource or people-oriented, and in the case of the former the preference is to attract a more diverse range of people within the visitor numbers that they already see
- Some organisations simply did not see the need to encourage a more diverse visitor base, but felt they were being pressurised to do this by guidelines and funding bodies
- Organisations rely upon externally-imposed legislation or guidelines rather than actively consulting under-represented groups, and this is usually due to overall cost and a lack of expertise in the field of consultation
- Funding is a key issue for organisations, both the actual amount and available time, and it appeared that guidelines or initiatives were not necessarily followed unless they were attached to funding
- Although organisations respond to the 'Countryside for All' idea by saying that their sites are 'open to everyone', it means in practice that they can then avoid taking specific action to encourage visitors from under-represented groups
- In terms of *non*-disabled under-represented groups, organisations felt that information and presentation was a key factor in encouraging visits
- Most respondents were aware of the existence of legislation via informal processes such as general publicity and the sharing of information between organisations
- Communication within organisations mostly conformed to the 'top-down' model: legislation or policy is created and then passed down to people on the ground for implementation.

Background

The interviews took place in May/June 2004 and incorporated a co-orientation methodology in order to identify:

- What policies/projects are in place
- What awareness of the policies/projects exists
- What are the attitudes of providers towards the under-represented groups
- How legislation and advice is interpreted in the policy-making hierarchy and how this result in projects aimed at addressing under-representation
- The usefulness of government guidelines and other advisory sources to on-the-ground organisations
- What actual projects have emerged from policies specifically designed to improve under-representation
- What evaluation has been made of these projects and what evaluation methods have been employed

Method

Two interview schedules were used for first and second contacts, i.e. senior members and on the ground staff. The interview schedule (see Appendix 3) was designed to reflect the research objectives and comprised questions regarding legislation, under-represented groups and visitor monitoring and evaluation methods. In addition, there were specific questions for local authorities.

To start with, senior members of organisations who had completed and returned a questionnaire were contacted in an attempt to develop their survey-based responses. In this way, each interview was essentially unique, since it was tailored to suit their individual survey response. At the end of the interview they were asked to provide details of a suitable second contact who worked more directly with everyday issues, such as a site manager, ranger, etc.

Interviews were carried out in proportion to the total surveys received, and they were also stratified within organisations in order to achieve a representative sample of different types of organisations.

Overall, 97 telephone interviews were conducted with 57 organisations[5]. Of these organisations, 33 were service providers and 24 were local authorities.

group	Survey response rate	First contacts	second contacts	total interviews
non-local authority service providers	97	33	24	57
local authority service providers	78	24	16	40
perceived n/a	23	n/a	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	198			
Valid Total	175	57	40	97

Non local authorities
Telephone interviews with the 33 non-local authority service providers involved senior members of those organisations. Of these, 24 were willing to provide us with second contacts who dealt with 'on the ground' issues, while 9 organisations were unable to provide second contacts for further interviews. In total, 57 interviews took place with service providers.

Local authorities
Of the 24 members of local authority service providers who were interviewed, 9 were unable to provide a second contact due to the fact that their team size involved a

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[5] Qualitative data analysis is carried out on information gathered through interviews. Due to the nature of the analysis large responses are not necessary. The numbers interviewed here give extremely reliable and valid data.

limited number of people; and 16 provided details of further contacts. In total, 40 interviews were conducted with local authorities.

Results

(a) Orientation

Orientation, either resource or people-based, was a recurring issue and one that clearly shapes an organisation's approach to tackling under-representation. Since the primary role of many of the organisations interviewed is to protect and conserve the landscape, manage routes, and so on, they can be said to be resource-oriented. As such, some representatives said that they did not feel that attracting more visitors was a priority:

> "We are aware, with certain constraints. The AONB has a policy to not be too proactive [in encouraging visits]. But we are aiming to increase diversity in those that already come."

> "The trouble is we can't accommodate coach loads [of people]."

> "It varies throughout the organisation, but there have been issues about the impact of visitors on nature conservation, which requires careful management."

> "We have three objectives: protect species, maintain reserves, interact with people."

> "The natural heritage still needs to be taken care of."

It appears that the preference is to attract a more diverse range of people within the existing visitors. In many instances, initiatives such as greenspace projects are established, where people from under-represented groups are encouraged to work on the sites in order to both maximise their participation and reach preservation goals:

> "We're working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds."

> "We've got a project in the Dales that is aimed at getting local communities involved in their local greenspaces… it's about encouraging groups from urban sites to get involved… providing opportunities for youth organisations to come and work on the sites."

However, other organisations said that they did not see the need to encourage a more diverse visitor base. Rather, they felt pressurised to do this by funding bodies and guidelines, even though they thought that funding could be spent more usefully elsewhere:

> "This is what all the funders tell us what we've got to do."

> "We see ourselves as trying to provide facilities for all to use; attracting groups with unreasonable effort seems to me to be not always the most productive thing we could do."

> "Because our corporate and departmental policies and strategies encourage us to do that"

Since these sentiments were echoed so often, it seems that many organisations rely upon externally imposed legislation or guidelines rather than actually going out to actively consult under-represented groups in their own catchment area. However, due to a lack of expertise or experience in the implementation of such large-scale consultation exercises, as well as the associated costs, many organisations have simply not consulted fully.

(b) Funding

It seems that guidelines or initiatives are not always followed unless attached to funding:

> "We need roughly half a million quid to do the whole of the AONB… unfortunately there's no sign of that money."

> "Removing barriers is going to be a much more expensive job; we certainly can't do it with our current resources."

The fixed length of time for which funding lasts was also an issue:

> "When you're working with communities, and particularly excluded groups, I don't think the funders find it easy to acknowledge or have it in their systems the particular difficulties that it can bring, i.e. that things happens more slowly, that you have to be very flexible and responsive to that community's needs, its no good going in with a predetermined agenda."

> "It normally takes over a year to get people to see that you're there... If you're funding last for less than 3 years people get the impression that people are coming and going and that there's no real support."

(c) Ideology

In recognising that the countryside should be 'for all', the majority of organisations respond by taking the stance of welcoming everyone to their sites. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that they *act* to encourage visitors from under-represented groups:

> "I don't think a West Indian lady's requirements are any different to a local Norfolk guy who's 60 years old… They require access to the route and the route to go through some beautiful landscape. But I wouldn't say there was anything particularly different.'

> "In the past we've taken the attitude that we're not excluding anybody and seen that as enough."

> "General access - I think it would be discriminatory to promote access to one particular group."

For a few organisations, the ideological basis of their approach to encouraging diversity involves projects aimed at specific subsets of society. It has involved examining the many different sub-sets that each group is made of, rather than looking at the group as a whole. The successful projects have seen members of under-represented groups consulted about their actual needs, leading to targeted projects:

> "Difficult to say there are projects in place… [we] prefer to make contact with groups and tailor make them to their needs… [it] works best that way round… many projects have waiting lists. Target groups, tending to come back after having one activity and then book a programme of activities for the summer."

> 'It depends on the group themselves, for example the local Bangladeshi association: all they want to do is use the area for meetings; they don't necessarily want ranger involvement… They tend to want to just use the park..."

(d) Attitudes and awareness to under-representation

An organisation's or individual's attitude towards under-representation is an important component in translating legislation and policy into practice. Although such attitudes are extremely varied, they can be broadly categorised as either active or passive, as shown by organisations' awareness of their own visitor groups and whether they perceive a need to encourage a more diverse visitor base.

With few exceptions, all respondents believed that their typical visitor could be described as predominantly white, socio-economic group ABC1 and often middle age:

> "White, middle aged, middle class."

> "White – close to 99% I'd guess."

> "White… often middle class or reasonably well off… "

> "White, retired, semi-retired, middle-aged, Anglo Saxons"

Interviewees said that they were aware of a need to encourage a more diverse visitor base, often through the philosophy of their organisation or through a general belief in promoting diversity:

> "Our charitable remit [to encourage love and care and understanding of the countryside, especially amongst the young and underprivileged…] means that we should be looking at individuals and groups that don't have access to the countryside."

> "The West Midlands is very culturally diverse… so we need to reflect that and basically work out how we can make much better connections with a broader range of people."

"We also believe that contact with nature is actively good for people's health and well-being."

Some respondents were also aware of this need as a result of visitor surveys:

"Surveys that we've done, that would tend to indicate that we have an under-representation of young people, the elderly as well, disabled groups."

"We do market research every year… our age profile and ethnicity profile is significantly white."

"We have undertaken surveys which have included very few people from black and erm… BME groups."

The majority of organisations also expressed some knowledge, largely through anecdotal observations, that they were experiencing under-representation from certain groups in their visitor numbers:

"There has been a visitor survey, but actually just going on the trail it's pretty damn obvious."

"Just because of the fact that… the type of visitors that we attract… we're very conscious that we don't get many people from city centres and ethnic minorities."

"We know we don't get many disabled people"

Many interviewees responded that they believed under-representation to be a concern.

"It's something the trust is always thinking about."

"Well, we want to do something about it, does that add up to yes?"

"Probably, especially in light of the new legislation, yeah. In the past we've taken the attitude that we're not excluding anybody and seen that as enough."

This concern at under-representation could be seen as a knee-jerk response to conform to the demands of current legislation. The standard, jargon-laden responses beg the question of how concerned organisations actually are with under-representation, and suggest that some organisations are merely paying lip service to guidelines and funding requirements.

Organisations tend to be more aware of the under-representation of disabled people, and the various ways to approach this group. This can be seen from the number of respondents who were aware of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, and the steps they had taken to satisfy this (cf. *Service Providers' Survey*, see Chapter 2), compared to a noticeable reluctance among the same interviewees to discuss the requirements of the Race Relations Act, 2000.

Many organisations showed that they were aware of the needs of disabled groups and the barriers they face in gaining access to the countryside. Most tended to identify conventional needs, such as access, information and transport:

"Having ability to get to all places that everyone else can get to."

"I think the main one is access… those are the things that I feel we need to look at a bit closer."

"Finance, transport."

"Information in alternative formats is quite important."

In some cases, improving access, transport and information has also encouraged visits from other under-represented groups, albeit a narrow range:

"By the nature of that [working with schools] we tend to find we're working with the parents as well."

"We're getting an increasingly diverse spectrum of the population, but that's only from anecdotal observation."

"Increasingly the sites are used by disabled and less able visitors."

In terms of *non*-disabled under-represented groups, organisations felt that information and presentation were key factors in encouraging visits, although they often said that they were uncertain as to how they should be encouraging more visitors or why their current schemes were not successful:

"We don't necessarily understand what we need to be offering, or whether it's a question of better packaging of the product."

"I really do not have a clue as to why we're not getting the number of visitors and what we should be doing to attract them."

"I'm a little unsure as to what we can do other than direct our marketing into the right areas."

"I think it's a question of… how do we get the word to them."

Some organisations were also aware that people from under-represented groups might not necessarily wish to visit their sites for various reasons:

"Ethnic minorities don't visit historic houses in very large numbers, and that's partly because of the historic elements are of a time of the British being… none too favourable."

"…culturally, as far as she is concerned, she doesn't want to go anywhere near a forest."

"This is why we're not overly concerned, because we know that we don't provide a facility that would necessarily be attractive to teenagers."

The notion that the countryside is perceived differently by people from black and minority ethnic communities, in particular, is borne out by these service providers who appear to believe that it is simply a question of demonstrating to under-represented groups that the countryside is not 'out of bounds':

> "I'm sure they would [want to visit], it's just a question of getting out and telling them."

> "Their local park is somewhere they don't want to go because they feel threatened and so forth."

> "It's not something that's ever crossed their minds that they'd want to go there or they're allowed to go there or that it's something they'll enjoy."

Organisations were generally aware of the demographic composition of their catchment areas, from which the majority of their visitor base originates, and in a significant number of cases an organisation was situated in an area with a low proportion of people from black and minority ethnic communities or inner cities. Therefore concentration tended to be on encouraging a more diverse visitor base according to the potential catchment area.

> "The West Midlands is very culturally diverse… so we need to reflect that and basically work out how we can make much better connections with a broader range of people."

> "We conducted some research a few years ago… yes, we have to improve our performance… [Place name] hasn't got a significant BME population, but that's no excuse for doing not enough."

> "Our sites are on the urban fringe, so we get a lot of visitors from urban areas"

Few organisations saw the need to promote countryside access nationally. This may be a reason for the high number of projects aimed at the elderly and people with disabilities (found in relatively high numbers in all catchment areas) in comparison with specific projects aimed at people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds or those who live in inner cities.

Some respondents claimed that although people know the sites are there, they use them "once or twice a year at best", and that:

> "We need something to get people excited about coming here."

Many organisations view the situation pragmatically and feel that there is a limit on how far they can go to increase the diversity of their visitors:

> "We can set out with good intentions to say that this reserve is going to be for all of the community but it doesn't mean they're all suddenly going to turn up just because you say that."

> "I'm not sure if it's a concern… the idea of a country park is that it's open to everybody… we're not going to attract everybody, because some people just

aren't interested. It's making sure that we don't put up any barriers to anyone… if groups don't want to come, they just don't want to come."

"…. deep seated and well beyond our abilities to deal with."

"We'd like to encourage people who'd like to come, rather than tick all the Brownie point boxes"

(e) Legislation and policy

All respondents were aware of the need to respond to the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (see Chapter 1). Fewer were aware of their responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, 2000. Many had already taken steps to fulfil the requirements of the former, especially in the case of local authorities. This was borne out by the number of people who had discussed issues with their in-house Access Officers, compared to those who have race equality schemes in place; and the number of interviewees who were able to discuss at some length the different walkway surfaces, for example, but were less sure of what they could do to encourage visits from other under-represented groups. There is, though, an overwhelming focus on mobility needs and little on the needs of the vast majority of disabled people.

"…for them [disabled groups] to be able to find out what's out there… Information needs to be that doesn't talk down or make the choices for them… we've undertaken no work with other groups… no work with groups in short term future."

"We have a Braille guide, and budget to advertise through blind networks… Trying to develop some print and web based material to go some way to tell people what the paths are like along the route… Actually targeting specific groups is another issue."

Most respondents said that they were made aware of legislation through informal processes, either as common knowledge or by general communication between members of organisations:

"It's filtered down from various conversations, documents…"

"The Acts themselves have been in existence and therefore are common knowledge; we as an organisation ensure that we keep ourselves up to date"

"It's just common knowledge, working in this field we get general periodicals, leaflets and so on."

"We have been on internal training courses which are mandatory to ensure that all staff are aware of our statutory obligations."

It is rather alarming to learn that statutory bodies seem to be reliant on informal networks to learn about legislative developments and their statutory responsibilities.

Awareness of the *Countryside for All Guidelines* [6] varied within and between organisations. In the majority of cases, awareness was high and the Guideline's usefulness was also regarded relatively highly. Many organisations have utilised the Guidelines when implementing solutions to Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, requirements:

> "It's been used but it's been used in conjunction with other information… stuff that we work out ourselves… perhaps 60% of what we do in terms of provision is taken from technical specifications, 40% is made up on the spot."

> "We follow them like crazy."

> "The guidelines are actually based on [our project]."

Some respondents felt that the guidelines were too restrictive, and that implementation to the suggested standards was difficult without major funding.

> "Yes it was useful. I thought it was fairly generic"

> "It would be unfair to say it wasn't useful… I thought it had quite an urban bias… it was quite wheelchair ghetto..."

> "It doesn't translate that well into a rural setting… [often] the topography is an issue."

> "Removing barriers is going to be a much more expensive job; we certainly can't do it with our current resources."

The guidelines focus on mobility needs rather than the needs of the learning disabled or mental health system users, and are in part responsible for the consequent provider focus.

Much of the information upon which respondents rely has originated from legislation or from governmental bodies, the most obvious examples of these being the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. Information at lower levels tends to have filtered down through the organisation, although in many cases extra details have been sought out.

> "The national action plan would identify actions to be carried out by regional directors and regions. The regions would then have regional action plans and that would be passed down and individual offices have their own action plan."

> "We have in-service training for staff in both areas."

> Higher level: "We have been on internal training courses which are mandatory to ensure that all staff are aware of our statutory obligations."
> Lower level: "Its just information we're passed down really."

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[6]The BT Countryside for All Project (1995) sets out national standards' for accessibility. However, while important when they were published, there has been subsequent concern about the applicability and fitness for service in some conditions.

Communication within an organisation is vital for the successful translation of policy into practice. In many cases, communication conforms to the 'top-down' model: legislation or policy is created and then passed down to people on the ground for it to be implemented. Much rarer is communication that fits the 'bottom-up' model, whereby those on the ground perceive a need for policy and as such and set about trying to influence those higher in the hierarchy to formulate policies and strategies.

(f) Compliance and implementation

Many organisations have become interested in under-representation in their visitor bases, but the measures they have taken to increase visits from under-represented groups vary. Most have been reactive to legislation and policy, but have not gone further to encourage visitors from other under-represented groups. This is shown by the number of organisations who have complied with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, but have not taken action to comply with the requirements of non-mandatory guidelines, e.g. providing a race equality scheme covering service delivery[7].

> "…probably, especially in light of the new legislation, yeah. In the past we've taken the attitude that we're not excluding anybody and seen that as enough."

> "……increasingly the sites are used by disable and less able visitors."

> "[in reference to disabled people] to be aware of the opportunities and facilities we are providing… where possible we will endeavour to provide a service or visit that can be further tailored to their needs."

Organisations that are seen to be reactive often show a desire to be more active but are aware of their own limitations:

> "We need to be a bit more proactive and find out what they want."

Other organisations are more pro-active, having adopted legislation and formulated their own policy, or even already produced their own policy before legislation came into force. In addition, a minority of organisations have not followed the legislation. In most cases this is due to a belief that the same results can be met without adhering to guidelines:

> "I work to a very high standard if that's what you mean… I'd like to think my thinking is based upon what is right rather than legislation."

> "We tend to work with our own access officer, we did have somebody who came out from the race relations department within the [organisation]."

Many organisations recognised the need to legally comply with legislation that is in place. Some representatives cited punitive reasons for doing so such as legal action being taken by disabled groups:

> "It's simple, we get lawsuits from disabled groups if we don't keep up"

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[7] Once the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) is enacted, service providers will be required to prepare disability equality schemes.

The majority of organisations have put in place a basic infrastructure to comply with legislation due to come into force shortly. However, some have gone further and have actively consulted with representatives of under-represented groups in order to produce projects and services that suit their specific needs.

Some organisations have found it difficult to comply with guidelines and legislation for reasons such as finance.

> "Government funders are not prepared to fund core costs… we need staff that need paying and electricity that needs paying…"

> "We need community interaction to get support – as electors hold sway. The people that make decisions are elected on a four-year term, they're very quick to give money to buy schoolbooks and fire engines but need a huge incentive to give money to countryside…"

As far as implementation is concerned, many organisations already have projects in place that aim to increase the diversity of visitor groups to their sites. The majority, however, take an all-inclusive approach to attracting more users, and so these projects are not necessarily aimed at under-represented groups – either specifically or in general:

> "We provide plenty of opportunities and do not see why [people from] minorities are not coming."

Projects are often related to attitudes to under-representation. Where an organisation has taken a targeted, pro-active approach and identified why groups are not visiting their sites, they have produced projects that have a specific target audience and tend to provide good results.

> "Yes… we've consulted with the local disabled club; we've also had contacts with groups that represent people."

> "They need a friendly welcome… a few relevant links… various outreach projects to introduce people rather than assuming that they will just turn up."

> "Its breaking down those barriers and showing them they can go out… it's often showing them how to use maps and that good footpaths actually exist."

It's important to point out that the difficulty is not necessarily in generating projects; it is in the consultation and research beforehand to identify the types of projects that are needed and their target audience. This is particularly evident in the case of projects that have received significant funding from bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, whereby implementing a consultation and evaluation framework is part of the conditions of funding.

The promotion of projects varies widely, often according to whether an organisation has taken a fragmented or inclusive approach to under-representation. The majority of organisations promote their projects through standard channels such as website and the local media. However, this can cause problems when trying to encourage a

more diverse visitor base, because such promotion tends to reach those who are by and large already current visitors:

> "[we promote at] Rotary's and Round Tables and Inner Wheels and Church groups."

> "…..general events leaflet, website, locally via mail shots and flyers, locally in schools, newspaper adverts… radio interviews occasionally."

Where groups have taken a targeted approach, they have come to realise that the most effective way of promoting projects is by means of direct contact with target groups. This is most evident in the case of one local authority, which used a liaison officer to work directly with groups that they identified as under-represented in their visitor base.

The use of non-specific projects to encourage a more diverse visitor base is widespread. For example, the creation of 'all ability' trails provides a solution to the low visitor numbers for groups such as people with disability and the elderly. These projects do not need significant involvement from the organisation other than maintenance and promotion.

Active projects need far more interaction between the organisation and local communities in order to understand their needs and preferences, and therefore provide 'a countryside experience' which will encourage these groups to visit.

(g) Visitor monitoring and evaluation

The majority of groups did not have evaluation frameworks in place. Many responded that they found evaluation inhibited further work and that it was 'very difficult to evaluate evaluation'; or that they doubted whether it was a successful management tool in the first place and misunderstood its purpose.

> "I'd like to measure outcomes rather than outputs."

> "With people oriented projects, realistically it's visitor and participant feedback."

> "If you try and make it too scientific we'd be doing nothing else."

Organisations claimed that the main drawback was the cost, both financially and in terms of personnel time. Most evaluation projects occur when it is a stipulation of funding, such as Heritage Lottery Fund grants; or where an evaluation project has been undertaken by a third party, such as a university or government organisation.

More organisations had visitor-monitoring methods in place. However, these varied from simple car counts to detailed visitor questionnaires:

> "…..gender, type of visits, mode of travel."

> "We just do counts on the number of cars in the car parks."

Respondents found it difficult to gather data on under-represented groups. This could be due to an unwillingness to fill in questionnaires, the fact that many sites are not enclosed, or that groups simply aren't visiting the sites and little or no information can be gathered by surveying existing visitors.

"…unless someone is registered disabled it is very difficult…"

Chapter 4: In-depth On-site Interviews

Summary

Following the telephone interviews, ten sites were selected and visited in order to explore in more detail their responses to both the Providers' Awareness Survey (Chapter 2) and the telephone interviews (Chapter 3). Interviews related to diversity and under-representation took place on site, followed by a tour of the site during which time field notes and photographs were taken. The main findings were:

- The majority of service providers adopted a resource-oriented approach. Their priority was to maintain and preserve the physical environment. Generally, they tended to follow an "Environments for All" ideology and have less awareness and concern about under-representation than other organisations.
- The characteristics of the local population were a salient theme in the interviews. When service providers were probed about encouraging visits from under-represented groups, they felt that there was little requirement for them to do so as these people were not a significant element of their local population. Awareness of diversity issues and under-representation were closely linked with whether under-represented groups were numerically significant in the area (survey selection criteria meant that groups were present in the locality).
- The 'red tape' associated with funding was a consistent theme of interviews, with criticism of the criteria that needed to be met for successful funding. It was claimed that it lacked reality, hindered the promotion of diversity and didn't encourage projects that appealed to the needs and requirements of the local population and environment.
- In the interviews, service providers often reflected upon whether diversity in the countryside was an achievable goal. There was an admission that guidance is needed in order to target projects aimed at under-represented user groups, beyond addressing Disability Discrimination Act requirements.
- Senior managers and site managers tended to approach the issues of under-representation and encouraging diversity from different perspectives: senior managers provided a holistic overview of organisational policies, whilst site managers adopted a problem-oriented approach to issues of access and diversity.
- There is a need for increased opportunity for two-way communication between senior managers and site managers to allow the immediate experience gained from working with visitors to filter through to policy makers.

Site selection process

Sites were selected on the basis of a number of critical criteria that were identified after extensive discussions with the Countryside Agency. Of course, some of the categories within the criteria are not discrete, but this serves to identify different sectoral involvement.

1. *Population characteristics of the area* – in particular, the presence of a significant number of people who fell within one or more of the under-represented groups that form the focus of this study. This was determined by reference to the *2001 Census.*

2. *Stage in policy cycle* – the type of communication between the organisation and the various under-represented groups: two-way and interactive; top-down; bottom-up; no communication
3. *Geographical spread* – to ensure an even distribution across the English regions
4. *Type of experience* – the type of countryside managed or owned by the organisation, e.g. country park, woodland, coast, heritage landscape.
5. *Provider type:* funder, policy maker, frontline delivery
6. *Size of visitor base*
7. *Ideology of the organisation:* whether the organisation has a stated ideology of inclusiveness (i.e. countryside for all) or a fragmented approached to under-represented groups
8. *Ideology of organisation:* people-oriented *versus* resource-oriented
9. *Sector of operation* (1): tourism, conservation, recreation, heritage farming, sport
10. *Sector of operation* (2)*:* private, public, local authority, voluntary
11. *Local community roots' awareness:* high, medium or low

Having identified the above eleven criteria to guide the selection of sites for the in-depth on-site interviews, the sites were then chosen according to the following set of criteria:

Providers' Awareness Survey: A representative from the organisation completed and returned the *Providers' Awareness Survey*. This ensured an initial pool of 192 organisations.
Telephone interviews: A successful telephone interview was conducted with a respondent to the *Providers' Awareness Survey*. At the end of the interview the representative was asked to nominate a suitable second contact to be interviewed. This second contact would be someone at a different level of the organisational hierarchy to themselves.
Matrix compliance: Sites were initially selected on the basis of a balanced or appropriate distribution of sites across the above criteria. The final selection is listed in the *Criteria Matrix* (see Appendix 4).
Interest: Organisations were contacted and their final agreement to participate in this final stage of the exercise sought. The first and second contacts agreed to a visit by one or more members of the research team for the purpose of an on-site interview.

The interviews took place on-site in June/July 2004. A typical visit involved meeting members of organisations followed by a tour of the site, during which time field notes and photographs were taken. During the interviews managers were asked to talk about issues related to diversity and under-representation as relevant to their site. Where practical, as many staff of the organisations as possible were also interviewed. In total, 23 interviews were conducted across all sites. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1½ hours and were digitally recorded with the permission of the participants. The subsequent analysis of the interviews utilised the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), identifying recurring and emergent themes grounded in the empirical data. Photographs were taken at each site to provide a visible representation of each interviewee's description of their centre according to how it encourages visitor diversity.

The purpose of the interviews was to elicit information relating to:

- Physical affordances, which identify the space as a suitable site for each of the under-represented groups.
- Social affordances, which identify the space as a suitable site for each of the under-represented groups.
- The interviewee's view about how their site is, or could be used, by under-represented groups.
- Communication between managers of organisations.

Results

The resource-oriented perspective

The majority of service providers adopted a resource-oriented approach, whereby their main priority is to maintain and preserve the physical environment, particularly in the case of smaller areas of green space.

> "There's a limit to how far [name of service provider] will allow its officers to promote the area as a resource, because we're only small and we get 1 to 1.5 million visitors a year, so intensity is enormous. So our policy is to say – 'if you find us, then we would like to help you learn about and value the [site], but we won't go looking for you to come here'".

One interviewee felt cautious about encouraging diversity, since he felt that visitors might not understand the importance of conserving the countryside:

> "I'm a bit nervous about actually socially engineering access to the countryside because …we have concerns about townies coming out, because they have different values that don't necessarily fit within the countryside. I do have concerns about suddenly trying to promote people who don't understand the countryside. So I will ensure that people have all the information that they need, and then they will have the choice to come…whether they are on low incomes, inner cities or with disabilities, the choice is theirs."

Generally, those who adopted a resource-oriented perspective tended to follow an "Environments for All" ideology whereby sites are open to all regardless of user backgrounds, and social issues take a low priority. These providers appear not to design projects with specific users in mind. However, an important theme that arose in the telephone interviews became more apparent during the on-site visits. It's clear that service providers aim to encourage visitors primarily from their local catchment area, so if their local population is predominantly white, middle class and middle-aged, then their promotions and projects will inevitably be targeted at these groups.

> "We have a very low profile of ethnic minorities in [names area], but a lot of people with physical problems. So we focus our energy on that really…"

Although the physical environment may be the main priority, service providers tend to identify and focus upon population characteristics and the needs of local people.

> "Elderly people have difficulties in gaining access to the landscape of the harbour, but there are varying levels of requirements. The people who live in [name of local area] are some of the wealthiest people in the area, so they don't really need a transport provision system. We've started to put in short

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distance wheel-chair paths; we've also looked at possibilities of long distance wheelchairs…."

When service providers were probed about encouraging visits from other under-represented groups, particularly people from black and minority ethnic groups, those on low incomes and from inner city areas, they felt that there was little requirement for them to do so due to the fact that these people were not a significant element of their local population and therefore didn't feature in local projects. Thus service providers on the whole do not appeal to visitors from broader geographical areas.

"Perhaps we should ask people who live in Birmingham why they don't go sailing…but we don't have the opportunity to do that because they don't come down here anyway…"

"We have outreach programmes that fund schools because of low incomes and so on… we cover all the costs and the trials are working very well. But one of the areas that we do little or no work directly…or targeted work is with ethnic minorities. I don't think we're making excuses in relation to that, but we have a specific policy that relates to [names local counties]. I know there are some ethnic minority groupings within some of those areas but we reach out to them only through schools…so we haven't got a mechanism for looking at a particular group…and it's difficult to see how we could identify a relationship between [name of service provider] and a particular ethnic group. We like to think our approach is fairly universal, and I can't think there's any deliberate exclusion process going on…it's just a question of "we're here, and if you want us you can use us".

The characteristics of the local population was a salient theme in the interviews, and it became clear that awareness of the issues related to diversity and under-representation were closely linked with whether under-represented groups were numerically significant in the area. In one organisation, the interviewees felt that they lacked awareness about the subject because their local population were mainly white and middle class. They admitted that although they had projects in place in order to respond to the Disability Discrimination Act, they "do not get involved in racial issues."

Due to the fact that some organisations are located in areas with low ethnic populations, providers occasionally had partial understanding of the needs of these groups:

"I believe that walking in the countryside is very much an English thing and I get the impression that it's not something that other countries do a lot of… it's part of our culture. But they [ethnic minorities] might want to use the countryside for other things… I know that they like to go fruit picking for example…"

However, there was an awareness of the need to find out more about the specific requirements of black and minority ethnic groups:

"I've very rarely seen people from ethnic minorities using our facilities. Having said that I think we probably get more people from ethnic minorities here on

holiday…but there's not a lot living in [name of area], maybe we should do some research into that, to find out what they would like us to do."

In summary, service providers who adopted a resource-oriented approach tended to have an average level of awareness and concern about under-representation. Their major projects involve providing accessibility such as public transport and paths and gates for wheelchair-users in order to promote "Environments for All". However, amongst these providers there was little awareness or evidence of initiatives directed at inner city people, ethnic or lower income groups, since they reasoned that the demographic profile of the area did not warrant it.

The people-oriented perspective

A small number of service providers assumed a 'people-oriented perspective'. Typically, service providers who take this approach tend to be located close to major conurbations, and with higher than national average numbers of black and minority ethnic communities, people on low incomes and from inner city areas, these service providers consult more frequently with local populations and design projects accordingly. Service providers tend to identify the demographic characteristics of their catchment area as a starting point. The key to their success is that they work *directly* with local users and consult them about their needs.

Best Practice

One particular organisation has an impressive number of projects in place which often involve both young and retired people, as well as those from disadvantaged groups, since they are well represented in their local population.

> "We have a number of projects around the county. We work with young people from disadvantaged estates. We also have projects working with all types of people trying to get them involved in projects. We have about 500 volunteers, their ages range from 17 to the 80's…"

This organisation had gained significant expertise in working with people from inner city areas.

> "We give them experiences that they wouldn't usually get…being in a city, they don't come across lots of things, so they open their eyes to all sorts of different things like seeing the stars at night. They're often a bit unsure initially about where they're being taken, that a place is a bit wild, and not as they perceive it should be. But afterwards they say things like "can we go again please?" on the evaluation forms! It's working very well. We're trying to expand this work, and we'd like to work more with ethnic minorities…."

Although the staff from this organisation were highly knowledgeable about the needs of under-represented groups, their focus was limited to people with disabilities. Moreover, they were not only concerned with attracting visitors, but in involving the public as a *workforce*, e.g. for restoration projects. The exceptions were projects involving young people from disadvantaged areas, which have an educational purpose and are designed to encourage young people to use the countryside. This serves to illustrate that whilst service providers may focus upon the needs of some groups, they may neglect the needs of other groups, as well as the general visitor.

One such service provider set an impressive example of good practice.

> "My job is to try and improve and encourage access to the countryside for everyone. My brief is countywide, but within that I do more specific work with what we call target groups. We found out that there are certain members who are under-represented in our visitor figures, and we're now trying to work with them. My main role is to go out into the community and to try and find the hard to reach groups and make contact with them, and to provide information, which probably one of the main things that they don't have. People often don't know where we are, who we are, or that we exist…so my role is to provide them with opportunities. "

The Countryside Access Officer for this organisation ensures that the Disability Discrimination Act requirements are not only met, but also exceeded by implementing a number of policies and projects. The rest of the team are, perhaps as a result of the work by the Countryside Access Officer, also highly aware of the needs and barriers of most of the under-represented groups, although the strongest focus is on access for the physically disabled and the elderly (paths, buggies, etc) and young people. This demonstrates the importance of a 'champion' within an organisation to promote issues and groups; and also an awareness that different groups have different needs, some of which may be generalised but others not.

The interviewees stated that they are aiming for a better understanding of the other groups, i.e. women, people from inner cities and people on low incomes. There was good knowledge of people from black and ethnic minority communities and some of their common requirements, e.g. visiting in groups and the importance of social gatherings around food, but although their requirements are met there is little evidence of site-promotion specifically aimed at this group. In this particular organisation, the communication seems to be excellent within the team and between staff at different levels. The countryside service manager works closely with the sites and is familiar with the ranger staff. The rangers seem enthusiastic about their role and find it easy to have their voices heard and their ideas implemented, therefore promoting this site as an excellent example of two-way communication.

Wider best practice examples

For another organisation, public statements at a national policy level draw attention to projects including regeneration initiatives, community links, outreach workers and other youth-based initiatives. When visiting a regional site within this organisation, the site manager talked about a specific outreach project in place, involving inhabitants from the nearest inner city area. He described these projects as having highly positive outcomes. Thus the site manager provided practical examples of the ways in which the organisation seeks to provide "venues for community groups to meet, for schoolchildren to learn and for local people to train and develop new skills". There was direct evidence of how top-down communication from this organisation is interpreted and put into practice on the ground. In addition, the manager also stated that he has regular contact with headquarters.

Although the stance of this organisation is very much people-orientated, when visiting the site it was apparent that the site manager was keen to provide visitors with a positive experience of the environment. Therefore visitor management has involved

people-centred and resource-centred approaches, thus conveying a meaningful experience for visitors regardless of their background.

When asked how to encourage visits from under-represented groups, he responded by saying that there is no easy way to tackle this issue. With regards to addressing the needs of different groups, the site manager said that it is difficult to design projects without understanding the needs of users; and he also acknowledged that certain groups within society might not necessarily wish to visit the countryside due to the fact that the countryside simply may not appeal to them. In so doing, he defended the idea that it is not his role to impose his love of the countryside onto others. He also stated that he might not necessarily wish to promote certain types of visitors (e.g. *"people on a stag weekend"*) due to the general disruption associated with such events. This shows that whilst managers of organisations at senior levels may be willing to promote visits from "people from inner cities", they may fail to take into account the practical issues that site managers must face. Their perceptions of under-represented groups may be completely different to those held by on-the-ground staff who are aware of more practical issues.

Another best practice example demonstrates a different take on the people-oriented approach. One particular site manager has sensitively addressed the needs of people from different religious faiths. With group visits from people of Jewish, Muslim and Christian backgrounds, amongst others, the site manager has respected the varied religious tenets of these groups (e.g. serving Kosher food, taking his shoes off when appropriate, and so on). These "religious retreats" take place once or twice a year and are excellent examples of understanding and responding to the needs of a heterogeneous society. This was a rare example in which a service provider demonstrated awareness that "ethnic groups" do not comprise a homogenous group of people. In fact, very few service providers clearly conceptualised differences between people from different ethnic backgrounds, or put forward practical suggestions or examples of ways in which to address their needs.

When asked whether this was a policy within the organisation as a whole, the site manager intimated that the Head Office were most likely unaware. So, although the site manager initially suggested that he had regular contact with headquarters regarding issues related to diversity, it would appear that such contact is related to the implementation of set guidelines and procedures. There is an evident lack of 'bottom-up' communication, where ideas or projects initiated on the ground may not necessarily come to the attention of an organisation's headquarters.

Barriers to encouraging diversity: funding

> "There's too much red tape…I mean you have to go through all these risk assessments and stuff…"

Addressing the role of funders, one interviewee responded that there is "a lack of reality in funding". He was referring to selection processes, namely the criteria that needs to be met and the channels through which funding are derived. His criticism of "red tape" was a sentiment shared by many other respondents, believing that criteria imposed by funders was often unrealistic since it did not appeal to the needs and requirements of local environments and populations. In fact, he stated that "money is

wasted" meeting targets and criteria, rather than understanding the key issues at stake.

Another interviewee felt that some funders were in fact reluctant to support new projects, and another even described the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) Rural Enterprise Scheme as "tortuous". He suggested that funders need to reconsider how they go about approving projects and suggested more flexibility. He said that by going through the "correct channels" processes of funding are too rigid and fail to understand the interests of local people - the needs of people should come before the needs of criteria. In developing his argument, he put forward examples of projects that he had sought funding for, but were denied due to the fact that they had failed to meet the standards and assessments of funders. He complained that these red tape issues ultimately inhibited the promotion of diversity, and hinders attempts to put positive projects in place.

> Senior Manager: "We'd like to do more work [addressing the needs of user groups] across the board, but there's a resource constraint on doing that type of research. It's a shame it isn't factored much into…funding is a tremendous constraint. We have only so much resources for looking at land based issues on the ground and beyond that, things are difficult."

> Site Manager: "Justification is the toughest thing. I'm asked to justify things to my masters within the trust, and then we're asked to justify things to the funding agencies in order to deliver. And we haven't necessarily got all that information at hand in order to do that because most of the information we rely on is quite anecdotal! I mean to do visitor monitoring would cost us thousands. Somebody has to find the money from somewhere to do it."

It became apparent in some of the interviews that there are also tensions between resource management/conservation and providing services to society, particularly with regards to the role of funding. Some service providers clearly felt that capital should be used to conserve the resource.

> "…a lot of staff roles [in organisations] are generic roles for things like desktop publishing and things like that. You find that money that is meant for the environment is paying for delivering services."

"Is diversity in the countryside an achievable goal?"

In the interviews, service providers often reflected upon whether diversity in the countryside was an achievable goal.

> "I do think more work could be done in the field, but it's a case of "you can bring a horse to water, but you can't make it drink". We can only do so much to inform people and promote projects but at the end of the day it's down to them to get off their butts and get out here."

> "I do think that some people just won't entertain the idea of visiting the countryside. That's one of the problems I'm facing – there are some people out there who just don't want to know, and it just doesn't matter how much you consult with them. So trying to get everybody out there… there's just some people who won't do it."

Others questioned whether it was appropriate to be picking out some groups from society for "special" treatment.

> "Everything is achievable with resources. You need money. If you want to have people coming from urban areas into the countryside, then they need to be able to get there. If we can organise the venue and supply the transport, then that is a big boost. Otherwise it's very difficult for people to get out into the countryside without transport. I think the BME community would be slightly harder to engage…"
>
> *Interviewer:* "Why do you say that?"
>
> "Well I think that many individuals who we might class as BME, might class themselves as being integrated in the local community…I spoke to one person who is black, and I talked to him about the multi-cultural forum and I said "how about you getting involved?", and he said "I don't consider my self any different from the rest…I'm integrated and I've been here for several generations, and I'm just part of the community". So they don't consider themselves as being a 'special' group as such."

Other interviewees felt that there is still a long way to go in promoting diversity. One in particular felt that there was more evidence of "rhetoric than substance", suggesting that more ideas and theories need to be put into practice as part of a wider learning curve.

> "When I looked at tackling issues of social inclusion, again there wasn't any kind of overview and we got on and did our own things. You read all the glossy magazines and see lots of nice little projects and subsequently have work like what the Black Environment Network and I think we've come to learn that there's a lot more rhetoric than substance there…which is not a criticism but just to say that we've looked at some [people] that did have an overview…and actually they're just learning like the rest of us…they might have just done it once, but that's just about it."

Consolidating the physical environment with access requirements

When talking about the ease of implementing projects, service providers referred most extensively to implementing the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, whilst preserving the natural beauty of the area. There was evidence of a focus on disabled people with physical impairments, leaving the needs of others (such as those with mental health issues) unconsidered.

A key concern in implementing physical changes was to avoid detracting from the physical environment.

> "We try not to compromise the natural beauty of the area. A lot of people have expressed concerns about urbanising the landscape, and the only way around that is to provide the right surfaces and materials…"

Therefore service providers introduce footpaths and ramps that are appropriate to the physical landscape, and try to take into account the local landscape and terrain of the area whilst also providing ease of access.

At times, finding the right balance between maintaining the physical beauty of the environment whilst providing accessibility proves challenging.

> *Site manager*: "40% or so of wheelchairs are electric wheelchairs and they're even less able to get through. And electric wheelchairs have a very low centre of gravity…and the only path that's suitable has to be a very even, like concrete or tarmac. And we're not going to tarmac through an ancient woodland…so…it starts to put forward a number of challenging concepts…"

> "Many of my colleagues would be quite resistant to putting tarmac pathways…they would say "tough, you can't get into the woodland if you've got a bad leg". I would say a common perception within the countryside section is that "the countryside is only for able bodied people, because otherwise you're going to urbanise the countryside". So there is a real debate there, but there's no coherent vision. In comparison to the continent, we're in the stone ages when it comes to the provision of access. We're just so introspective here. As a country we just haven't got a grip on it yet."

> *Interviewer:* "What would you say is behind the introspective attitude in this country?"

> *Senior Manager:"* I think there are two strands to that. Firstly there's the landowners attitude – keep the masses out. And then there's the whole biodiversity driven theory – people are going to disturb the natural balance of the countryside."

One interviewee felt that whilst responding to the requirements of the DDA is a positive step forward, service providers need to take broader contextual factors into account, and also need to consult users in order to ensure that changes to the physical environment are practical and the needs of all disabled people are considered.

> "Issues like the DDA…we have to get to grips with these issues on site…my experience shows me you have to work with your local people, and people who are going to use it."

Barriers to encouraging diversity: the need for guidance

One organisation had a particularly optimistic and positive response to the Diversity Review, with related issues very high on their agenda:

> "We've got a good reputation locally and we're valued, but whether or not that's the icing on the cake is questionable. But we're getting there. We want to get people involved in their local space and feel empowered. And I think we're good at it…we're not about saying "oh, you can't do that", we say "what do you want to do and how can we help you?"

This specific site is very well maintained, with the majority of paths being suitable for wheelchair users. They also have a good selection of three-wheeled, hand-pedalled bicycles for public use. However, there was little evidence of further efforts to improve access for either other types of disability or other categories of under-represented groups. Despite some awareness of under-representation, there was a clear admission that more education was needed on these issues.

> "There's a lot of keenness to get involved with these user groups. We're definitely heading in the right way….but we're always looking for new ideas."

Gaps between senior management and site managers

Where possible, interviews were held with managers of organisations during the on-site visits in order to explore how knowledge and ideas flow within organisational hierarchies. Adopting a co-orientation methodology, our aim was to identify whether there were gaps between the public statements provided by senior managers, about meeting the needs of under-represented groups, and on-the-ground delivery by organisations.

The findings of the on-site survey show that senior managers and site managers tended to approach the issues of under-representation and encouraging diversity from different perspectives. Whereas senior managers provided a holistic overview of organisational policies, those who worked on the ground tended to adopt a more 'hands-on', problem-oriented approach to issues of access and diversity, based on their local experiences. By contrast, senior managers often articulated their views in a somewhat theoretical, distanced and (at times) guarded manner. In one visit, the site manager - perhaps by default - showed a genuine enthusiasm and passion for working closely with under-represented groups. The senior manager also portrayed a willingness and interest in these issues, but he also gave the impression of being slightly detached.

> *Senior Manager:* "Some of our sites are quite close to deprived communities. We've reached out to them on a site-by-site basis. As an organisation we recognise the importance of making what we do more relevant in an urban context. We have to deliver quality of life benefits for people, to reinforce that [the countryside] isn't necessarily a rural concern…. We have a project called XXX, which involves mapping the extent of accessible [green space] throughout the UK. So we're aiming to target these areas to the more deprived communities."

> *Interviewer:* "And what are you doing to promote these projects?"

> *Senior Manager:* "It's not an area that we've done as much as would be ideal in all honesty. There's probably more we could do in terms of reaching out into urban areas."

In addition, since senior managers focused primarily upon all-encompassing organisational matters and generic issues related to under-representation, they seemed to lack the 'hands-on' experience and detailed knowledge about user needs

that site workers possessed.[8] In one case, the site manager, drawing on his everyday experiences of interacting with the local community and implementing projects, illustrated a direct knowledge of access issues, such as whether wheelchairs can get through kissing-gates.

> "The first time I focussed on "less able people" I worked with disabled users in helping to design the footpath and I used standard specs from xxx, and when it was finally done, I proudly got 20 or so users from a local day care centre to come and test it for me…I think half of them failed to get on to the path in the first place from the car park…the other half gave up because of the dog s**t that was on the footpath, and then two or three got to the kissing gate down at the bottom and none of them could get through it! "

The site manager not only demonstrates his understanding of the needs of disabled users but is also in a position to criticise existing guidelines and show that, in his experience at least, the specifications failed to meet the needs of user groups.

> "Over and above, we did come across wheelchair users and day care groups bringing their clients out into the forest, before we'd even done an improved path…so…perhaps what we needed to do to meet local peoples' needs was not quite what all the experts and organisations like the [name of organisation] were telling me…I mean I did training with them and I didn't find that particularly helpful…I just found it all airy-fairy nonsense I have to say, it just isn't rooted in the real world. So I identified that the key need was probably to talk to the potential users and work it out with them! It reinforced to me that we the needed to be keyed in to the local community, which we weren't…"

This is evidence of the importance of incorporating user groups in the design and implementation of projects. All too often, specialists impose their own criteria, yet fail to take into account the practical and social needs of the user. This links with the findings in Chapter 3, where some service providers stated that the key to encouraging diversity resides in consulting with the actual user groups.

Differences between senior managers and site managers stem primarily from their separate work-roles, and are unavoidable given the hierarchical structure of organisations. However, bearing in mind that senior managers and site managers *differed* in their awareness of access and under-representation, this can be seen as a potential problem. With site managers demonstrating more insight, and senior managers demonstrating more detachment, there may be a case for more 'bottom-up' communication rather than solely 'top down' communication strategies within organisations. However, it is recommended that greater two-way communication is probably the most appropriate way forward. The detailed knowledge possessed by on-site staff regarding the needs of user groups should be readily available, and existing guidelines should be heard within strategic contexts.

Encouraging two-way communication within organisations

The previous example is essentially an application of 'bottom-up' communication. The site manager is passionate about consulting the needs of the local population

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[8] Given that the surveys were distributed to organisational headquarters and filled in by senior managers of organisations, this may explain why 'non-specific projects were cited more often.

and is very keen to improve access to under-represented groups. Although he has put several projects into action (e.g. providing paths for wheelchairs and activities for young people) he acknowledges that implementing projects in a 'bottom-up' manner without policy in place poses difficulties.

> "… the thing I find frustrating about a lot of the work that I do is that there's an awful lot of re-invention of the wheel, and there's a lack of clear coordination and clear direction in how people are doing things…"

> "I think the work here is indicative of that within the organisation…we identified the need to do things locally. We have an external person who oversees what I do, to ask the difficult questions and check on directions and things and also to write up things…. but one of the things that they keep pressing me for is, "how does this fit within the organisation?" Of course I hadn't really questioned that at the start…and of course it fits but its not really a cosy fit, and I've come to appreciate that one needs to work in a strategic context within the organisation..."

Whilst at present there is interest in generating more two-way communication, more guidance is clearly needed. In one visit, the interviewees expressed a wish to explore the needs of the under-represented groups in order to implement appropriate projects. Although there was evidence of some projects in place and accessible paths for wheelchair users, these have been initiated by the site manager – by his own admission – on an 'ad hoc' basis. Both he and his more senior colleague felt that further strategic and sustainable approaches would therefore be desirable.

> *Site Manager:* "We wanted to go out to these cultural groups and just see…well I asked myself "is there anything I can do to make things better…to provide a better quality of service? And can I do it and what do I need to do, and if there isn't anything, then at least I've tested the water…", so it's been a very much on the ground sort of thing, but I haven't functioned within a strategic context, and I think that's the gap. I've had a free hand… it's been empowering because I work on the ground, so I get away with a lot! But to be truly sustainable all this had to function within a strategic context, and that's promoting quite a bit of debate with the organisation."

> *Interviewer [to senior manager]:* "Would you agree with that?"

> *Senior Manager:* "Yes, I think so. Our objectives are to enhance public understandings and enjoyment of woodlands and I think there's a growing realisation that perhaps we need to be looking at these things more strategically and the work that's been going on on the ground here is more of a…wider picture, so… yeah."

Chapter 5: Seminar Overview

Summary

In April 2004, a seminar was held at the International Conference Centre in Birmingham for all those who had shown an interest via the *Providers' Awareness Survey.* A total of 81 people replied positively to the invitation, representing a range of service providers from across England. See Appendix 5 for the invitation and agenda.

The purpose of the seminar was to present the initial results of the research; to ascertain their service providers' response to the results; to involve the participants in a further data-gathering exercise; and provide a forum for discussion. The findings from the discussion groups on the day include:

- Participants differentiated between the various under-represented groups – they were not seen as homogenous, and all facing the same barriers
- The group discussing disabled access to the country generated twice as many ideas per person compared with those discussing low income and inner city groups; and coupled with the *quality* of the responses, this is says a lot about the current bias in local authorities and service providers' thinking about the different groups
- Suggestions and proposals which are seen as appropriate and relevant for one group are not necessarily viewed the same for another, even though such an intervention might be beneficial
- Financial solutions were not regarded as the simple answer to under-representation
- There was some ambiguity concerning the relative importance of attitudinal versus material and practical barriers. For example, there appeared to be an assumption amongst those generating ideas for attracting people on low incomes into the countryside that any barriers were material rather than attitudinal.

Method

An important part of the day was a brainstorming exercise in which participants generated ideas for attracting the various under-represented groups into the outdoors. They were asked to think about policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for just one of the under-represented groups, with each table of eight representing one group: disabled; black and minority ethnic communities; the elderly; the young; women; inner city residents; and those on low incomes.

Everyone was given a sheet of paper divided into three columns. They were asked to write down in Column A any policies or initiatives which they thought could be put in place to make access to the countryside more inclusive by attracting a more diverse visitor base, in respect of the particular under-represented group they were asked to consider. They were specifically told that it didn't not matter how 'way out' their ideas are – the more imaginative and innovative the better; but they must limit each idea to no more than four words. They had three minutes to complete the task.

One member of the table was then asked to read out *slowly* each of the ideas they had written in Column A, with a short pause after each idea. While the first person is reading out their ideas everybody else on the table should write in Column B any new

ideas that come to mind as a result of hearing those being read aloud. This was repeated several times with Columns B and C.

It should be stressed that the responses to this exercise should not be regarded as representative of all service providers. The number of ideas generated by a group will be partially dependent upon the number of people in the group, their interests and experience, the nature of the organisation they belong to and their role, etc. Nevertheless, we believe that the results do reflect common perceptions and responses to the needs of different under-represented groups.

Results

THE ELDERLY

The six participants generated 80 ideas for policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for the elderly. The most striking aspect was that participants drew on a stereotype of the elderly that saw them as dependent, slow and in need of carers. No indication was given that the elderly could be active – or as active as any other group. The ideas can be categorised as follows:

Access - these focused on improved transport provision to the countryside (e.g. transport pick-up service) as well as removing mobility difficulties once there (e.g. stiles, gates).

Facilities - toilet provision; disabled facilities (e.g. induction loops); chairs; short guided walks; large print information.

Financial - concessions were the principal financial incentive mentioned, although one person mentioned concessions for carers, too.

Education, information and promotion - providing maps; large-print guides; information for family groups; promotions in magazines and publications read by the elderly; 'health initiatives'; TV.

Events - special events were seen as having the potential to increase access, although the type of events was not specified; events at a slower pace were one suggestion as well as a guided planned itinerary.

Organisational - the use of volunteers drawing on organisations such as Help the Aged and Age Concern was seen as having the potential to play an important role, along with other 'over 50s' volunteer services; enabling guides and carers to accompany the elderly; the potential role of elders mentoring youth (i.e. by recounting their experiences) thereby giving elderly people a valuable role; families encouraging countryside participation; young volunteers to help the elderly (including carrying chairs); self-help by means of guide services by peer groups. Building friendships and confidence by same age groups was seen as one of the benefits of this approach. The organisational role of agencies, e.g. local authorities, and service providers could train elderly visitor guides, launch health initiatives, plan itineraries, organise group visits; social enterprise opportunities such as developing skills and knowledge; countryside should be brought to care homes by means of presentations and the recounting of past experiences, organised by statutory bodies, e.g. Social Services Departments, as well as care and retirement homes.

Consultation and participation - it was noteworthy that only three suggestions revolved around consulting and involving the elderly themselves in decisions and choices concerning visiting the countryside.

THE DISABLED

Seven participants came up with 150 ideas for policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for the disabled. Although participants clearly found it easier to think of policies and initiatives that would encourage disabled access into the countryside, they tended to think in terms of a narrow range of disabilities, principally involving physical mobility restrictions (e.g. wheelchair-bound) and other physical impairments (e.g. partially sighted) rather than mental health conditions.

Access – shortcomings in access and transport to the countryside are seen as serious impediments and an area where local authorities and providers have an important role to play; removing barriers (e.g. stiles, gates); integrated and more transport; friendlier transport service; more flexible and door to door provision; community transport.

Organisational - institutional and organisational response to meeting the needs of people with disabilities highlighted the necessity to employ staff with disability training; the need for training; voluntary and community groups were also identified as having a role to play (e.g. community arts and disability arts organisations), but they were mentioned considerably less frequently than they were in the case of elderly people. Organisational responses focused as much on strategic as much as day to day issues, e.g. the involvement of regional cultural consortia, the role of SOLACE (the representative body for senior strategic managers working in local government); the need to integrate with regional cultural strategies. The role of the arts as well as conservation groups (e.g. disabled volunteer conservation groups) was seen as routes by which the disabled could be encouraged into the countryside; encouraging access by means of greater social support e.g. countryside companions and facilitating a network of disabled ramblers.

Events - special events; events targeted at particular groups; art in the countryside; demonstrations; open days; promotional events.

Training - identified as important in terms of changing perceptions and attitudes, as well as developing skills for dealing with the needs of different types of disabilities; training on the requirements and implications of the DDA legislation.

Education, information and promotion - more information with a greater emphasis on maps and interpretation, information on audiotapes and video, greater use of websites, and TV; changing the attitudes of the public towards disabilities through role models and the use of celebrities and famous people; using more disabled images in photos and making disability mainstream on TV.

Consultation and participation - the use of fora and involving users and carers in decision-making to discuss and act upon disabled peoples' needs were highlighted (more so than with elderly groups). This may be a consequence of a longer history of user group involvement in this area and the greater degree of political pressure that disabled groups tend to command.

Facilities - toilet provision, lighting, pubs, baggage facilities disabled facilities (e.g. induction loops; Braille), buggies.

Financial - provide expenses; discounts to groups.

PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES

There were 46 suggestions from the five participants for policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for people on low incomes. This group came up with the fewest policy and initiative suggestions, and perhaps not surprisingly the overwhelming emphasis on the strategies was financial. Also mentioned were educational strategies, which sought to compensate poor home provision by school trips. This group tended to be more critical, posing questions such as 'access to what?', 'what is the motivation and what will motivate?' and 'is free the answer?'

Financial - subsidised travel, free transport (cycles, boats, canal trips, and overnight accommodation including hostels), review public transport rates and sponsorship. The importance of 'branding' was also mentioned.

Organisational - better links between city and country, typically in the form of either urban fringe projects or green corridors. Walks and events linking where people live with open space, itinerary plans and facilitators.

Education, information and promotion - the role of education and encouraging countryside access through children and especially schools (e.g. regular school outings), even to the extent of compulsory monthly school trips. Free information, guidebooks and information via unusual channels (not specified) were all mentioned.

PEOPLE FROM INNER CITIES

The five participants came up with 50 ideas for policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for people from the inner cities. Again, participants found it difficult to think of specific strategies, suggesting that most providers do not think of inner city residents as a target group. The under-representation of people from the inner cities was largely seen to be consequence of a lack of awareness rather than means. Consequently, the largest number of suggestions for initiatives focused on the provision of information, promotion and marketing. As with initiatives for people on low incomes, the use of educational services was seen as potentially important.

Education, information and promotion - these included better information; websites; remove jargon from promotional material; break image of the countryside as a place for white, middle aged and middle class; reference on maps; use celebrities (sport; pop) to promote countryside and make it more fashionable; provide information in urban meeting places (e.g. schools, doctors' surgeries); provide map reading exercises through to countryside awareness lessons in school; teacher packs; promote school visits; interpretation and guided walks programmes in order to help people engage with local sites.

Access - provision of more buses/public transport from inner city areas to the countryside, subsidised bus services to provide free bus/train tickets or tokens, circular and liner walks around public transport hubs, 'walking bus' schemes.

Financial - most of the suggestions for financial interventions focused on subsidised transport. Other proposals included highlighting grant schemes and aiding Rights of Way Improvement Plans.

Organisational - direct on-site provision, such as way-marked walks and trails, the provision of nature reserves, through to working with urban community groups, encouraging membership of bodies such as the Scouts/Guides and confidence building. Two participants suggested asking people from inner cities what they wanted/needed and conducting a survey.

Events - one participant thought that 'youth raves' or dances in the countryside would stimulate interest. Other events included art projects as well as general and unspecified events.

WOMEN

The seven participants suggested 74 ideas for policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for women. It was noteworthy that the suggestions for policies and initiatives to encourage women to use the countryside were significantly different from those suggested for other groups. In response to the issue of confidence and perceived vulnerability, the participants suggested a degree of intervention and support that goes far beyond that expected or requested for other groups. In addition, suggestions were made for *changing* the environment in order to make it safer (e.g. cutting down trees); again, this kind of intervention was not suggested for any other group.

Organisational - a significant proportion of suggestions concerned issues of protection and support including changes to the physical environment, e.g. women/staff wardens; outreach workers; family zones; 'chop down trees'; promote open landscapes; visible on-site staff; all-women 'friends' groups; security; safe havens; walking groups for women; tailored activities.

Events - women and children's activities; exercise classes; dog-walking; 'bring on the WI'; food-production activities; activity planning by women; introductory days out; mother and toddler away-days/afternoons; children's workshops/mothers' 'chinwag'; traditional country craft days (e.g. wood craft; drystone walling); stress management days; yoga; women's open days; churchgoers' day; heathland restoration projects; soft walks programme.

Facilities - better toilet facilities; simple shelter provision; child facilities and crèches; flora trails and gentle walks; 'nice' facilities/coffee shops; outdoor equipment/books loan centres; facilities research.

Access - local transport, accessible paths.

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) COMMUNITIES

The six participants generated 116 ideas for policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for people from black and ethnic minority communities. The emphasis of these strategies was different from the other identified under-represented groups. Whereas many of the suggestions for addressing gender biases in countryside visiting focused on consultation, intervention and support, the emphasis with regards to BMEs focused on education, marketing and the promotion

of positive images. A second noteworthy feature of these responses was the identification of the need to train staff and staff from other agencies.

Organisational - concentrate on one ethnic group; formulate policies (e.g. training; provision; languages and skills); enhance networking in the community (e.g. transport; sports; countryside agencies); champions in the workplace; ethnically representative staff; recruit from BMEs; focus groups with prizes; invest in children and young people, NCT, child groups, clubs etc; one to one working; invest cleverly; use volunteers; find compatible interests, i.e. what groups have in common with others, not what is different.

Training - integration training in schools; IT skills; modules; cultural festivals; train trainers; training of different agencies.

Information – provide better quality information; show positive group imagery; show ethnic minority groups in marketing; photo display of ethnic minority groups; targeted information (e.g. website); email information to groups; welcome panels; iconic images; plain English; website/leaflets/posters in different languages; use of TV; tourism initiatives; advertising in the ethnic media; virtual visits via the internet; use of 'stories' of good visits in the ethnic minority press; use ethnic minority group role models; link to group culture; use new media and keep up-to-date.

Consultation and participation - schools and groups liaison; breakdown service provision barriers and develop proper partnerships; consult with ethnic minority groups on initiatives and activities; consultation forum; investigate reasons for non-use; survey of needs; recruit grandparents.

Events – competitions (e.g. travel writing; photo; writing; painting); workshops; link sport with countryside; tasters; special promotional events.

Access – provide free transport; make countryside more accessible.

Financial – divert all marketing resources; provide vouchers for visits in locality; ticketing initiatives from inner city; give people/groups money.

YOUNG PEOPLE
There were 85 ideas from the six participants for policies and initiatives that would make access to the countryside more inclusive for young people. The emphasis was more a matter of degree rather than kind. Most of the suggestions focused on organisational responses rather than practical issues, such as improving physical access. Interestingly, this was the only group where a participant suggested that there was a need for new legislation and a political will.

Organisational – work with local schools and the national curriculum, youth groups, children's TV and the media; engage families; extended curriculum; network of regional leaders; liaise/lobby with Scouts/Boys Brigade; set up Young Ranger Groups; vocational work placements; new legislation coupled with political will; volunteering; leadership programmes.

Training – skills training; general training.

Information – promotion by celebrities; dedicated publications; communications strategy; cross-organisational liaison and communication; use of internet materials, TV and other media.

Consultation and participation – projects led by young people, e.g. Young Roots Programme (a grant programme set up by the Heritage Lottery Fund); targeting families, not just children.

Events – tree planting; forest schools; school grounds work; sport and recreation; adventure-type physical activities; visit working farms; farm trails; learning trails; family learning days; story telling.

Access – every school to visit countryside.

Financial – funding for transport; more funding generally.

Conclusions

It is clear that participants differentiated between the various under-represented groups; they were not seen as homogenous, or all facing the same barriers. Equally, it was recognised that different policies and initiatives would be necessary, given the particular disadvantages or collection of disadvantages that different groups experienced. At one level this is very positive, as it means that providers are thinking about the needs of the specific groups and appreciating that differentiated approaches and responses are required. However, in many cases providers simply reflect widely held stereotypes and offer typical organisational responses.

There were significant differences in the number of ideas generated by the different groups of workshop participants. Groups ranged from generating 46–150 ideas/group (mean = 85). Even taking into account the unequal group sizes, the group discussing disabled access to the country generated twice as many ideas per person (20) compared with those discussing low income and inner city groups (9; 10). The numbers are only indicative, but coupled with the *quality* of the responses, they tell us a great deal about the current biases in service providers' thinking about the different groups. Of course, the differences could be partially due to the composition of the group, their experience and even the dynamics of the group on the day. However, we believe that the overwhelming reason for the differences is that little or no thought has been given to attracting certain groups to the countryside, and legislation, financial instruments and political lobbying have been the drivers for highlighting and giving attention to the needs of certain groups.

In addition to the quantitative difference in the number of ideas generated, there was also a qualitative difference. One only has to compare the kind of responses which were put forward to counter gender biases, i.e. quite sophisticated management interventions which draw on equity philosophy and practice, with those proposed to increase the proportion of young people, i.e. low level practical interventions that have been employed for years but arguably with little success.

It is interesting that suggestions and proposals which are seen as appropriate and relevant for one group are not judged applicable to another, even though such an intervention might be beneficial. For example, it was suggested that there is a need to promote positive images of people from the black and minority ethnic community

using the countryside (to a lesser extent, this was also suggested for encouraging disabled groups). It was not, however, suggested for young or elderly people. Likewise, it was argued that there is a need for more support, protection and intervention to encourage women into the countryside; and yet, surprisingly, this was not suggested as a need for BMEs. While such differences may be sensitive to the groups concerned, the question is inevitably asked: should not the same responses be relevant for other groups? For example, would it not be appropriate to promote positive images of the elderly using the countryside? Is not a programme of awareness raising and attitude change appropriate in respect of all groups, directed either at the target groups or the providing agencies?

It was notable that financial solutions were not regarded as the simple answer to under-representation. Of course, many of the proposals have a financial tag to them, but it was not seen as sufficient just to say that there needs to be more financial resources. Many of the proposals would not require a great deal of financial expenditure; they would simply necessitate doing things differently, such as networking with sympathetic organisations and using volunteers, consulting and involving the targeted groups so that one had a better understanding of their needs

Very few participants, if any, suggested links across the groups. This may have been partly because they were asked to think about a specific group.

There does seem to be some ambiguity concerning the relative importance of attitudinal versus material and practical barriers. For example, there appeared to be an assumption amongst those generating ideas for attracting people on low incomes into the countryside that any barriers were material rather than attitudinal, and that if only this group had the means to get into the countryside they would. And what *is* the countryside? Different groups may have very different ideas, of course. For example, there were suggestions to provide shops and to make the countryside more 'urban' (e.g. provide facilities and manipulate the grounds and paths), whereas many people enjoy the countryside precisely because it does not include these features. While some like the countryside as wild and natural as possible, a few of the participants seemed to think that the outdoors would be made more appealing by urbanising it. This begs the question: do we even know how these different under-represented groups see the countryside, and what sort of countryside would they like to visit?

Chapter 6: Mapping Study

Background

This chapter provides a visual representation of responses to the Service Providers' Survey reported in Chapter 2. It is interesting to note that the groups which service providers report as most under-represented do not necessarily tie in with extra numbers or projects, strategies or initiatives directly targeted at their needs or to encourage them specifically. Indeed, these maps show the provision of projects that emphasise physical mobility, particularly aimed at disabled groups, which may be a basic response to DDA requirements.

Using the information collated during the Service Providers' Survey, a database was created to show the distribution of service providers across the country and the types of projects that are, or will be, available. This chapter reports the results of the database and presents Geographical Information System (GIS) representations to display the service providers.

Method

To allow for a GIS representation of the service provider information, an access database was created which gave a unique reference number to each organisation; geo-coded each organisation through post codes; indicated whether there were specific projects for each under-represented group or whether they existed as non-specific projects (under the Countryside for All umbrella); described the project (by name where available); specified the project status; and indicated the organisational sector for each provider (local authority, independent/government sponsored, voluntary).

The GIS representation was completed by ESRI (UK) under the Countryside Agency Ordnance Survey licence.

The first map shows the distribution of responses from countryside service providers surveyed across England. Following this, pairs of maps show the total number of projects in each area aimed at *all* under-represented groups, and then the existence of current or planned projects for each under-represented group, delineated by county boundaries. For example, map 6.3a shows current projects, strategies and initiatives, marked by points in each county, specifically targeted at the elderly; whilst map 6.3b shows projects, strategies and initiatives which are planned to specifically encourage elderly people to visit the countryside.

It is important to remember that this is not a definitive map, simply a visual representation of service providers who responded to the earlier survey and projects described at that time.

Results

Figure 6.1 (also shown at figure 2.4, Chapter 2), shows groups that service providers believed to be under-represented in their visitor profiles.
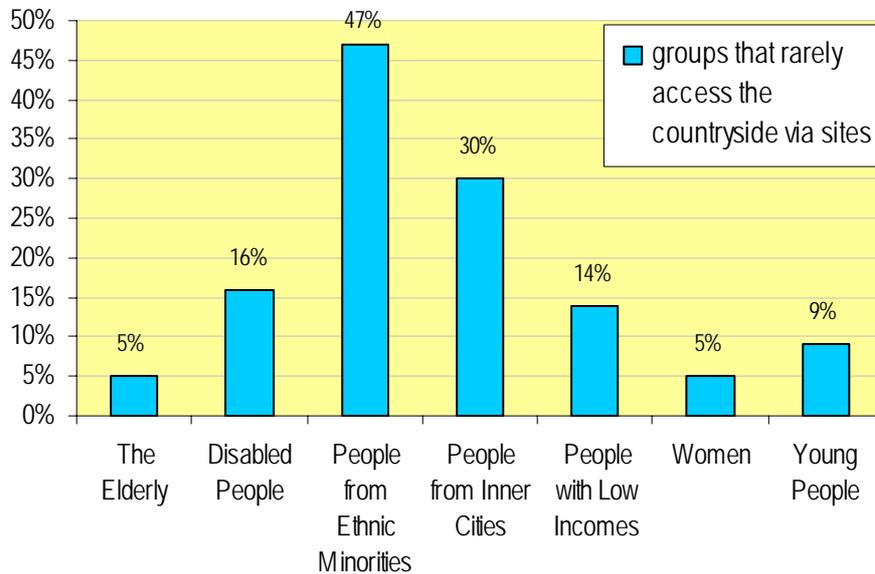
Figure 6.1: Organisations' awareness of groups that rarely access the countryside

Subsequent maps show the extent to which service providers not only recognise these groups as under-represented, but are also acting, or have acted, on this understanding. Figure 6.2 simply shows the responses to the postal survey reported in Chapter 2, reflecting the even distribution across the country. The highest response was from local authorities, but this may be partly due to the fact that it also includes responses from Wildlife Trusts and AONBs.
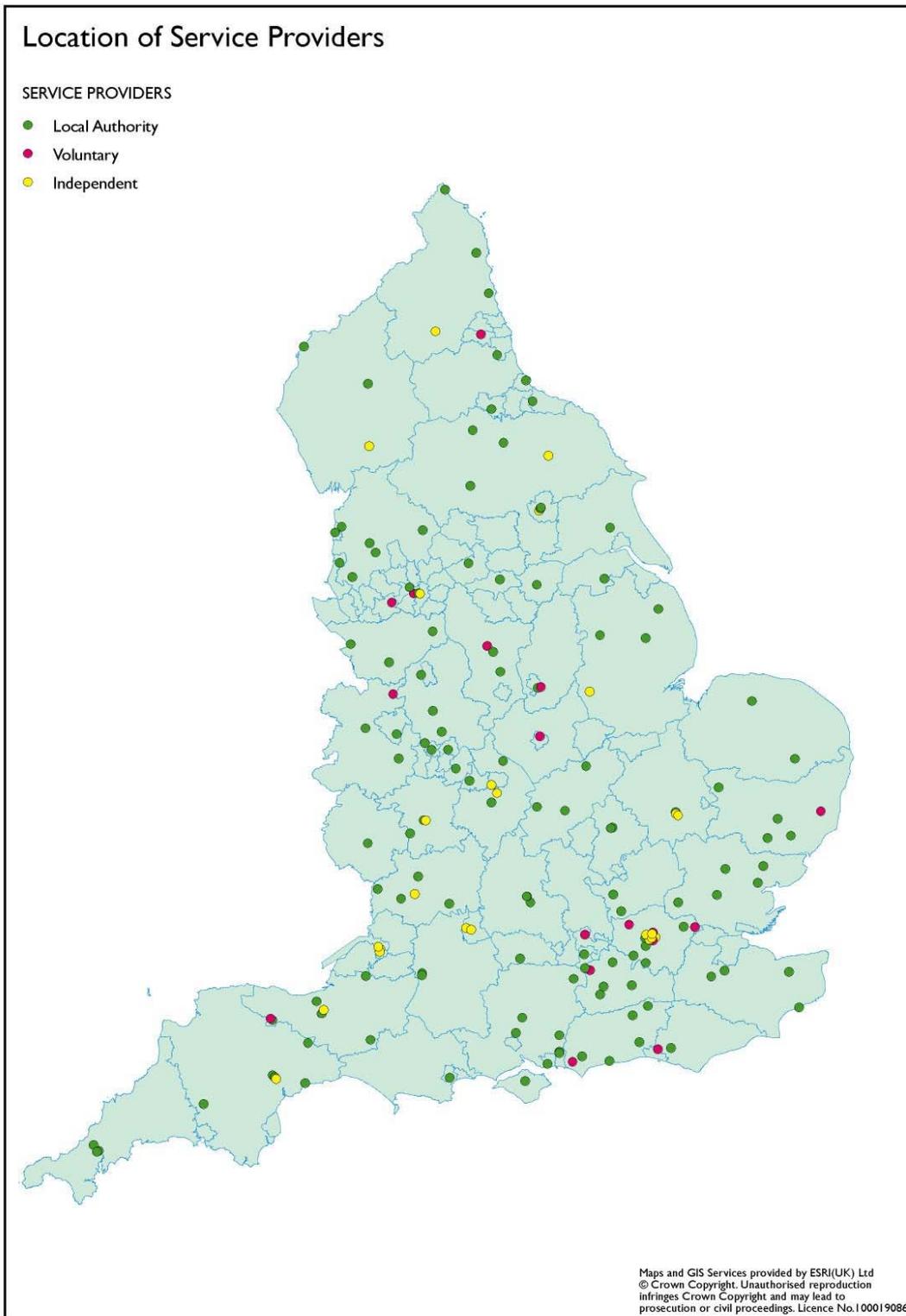
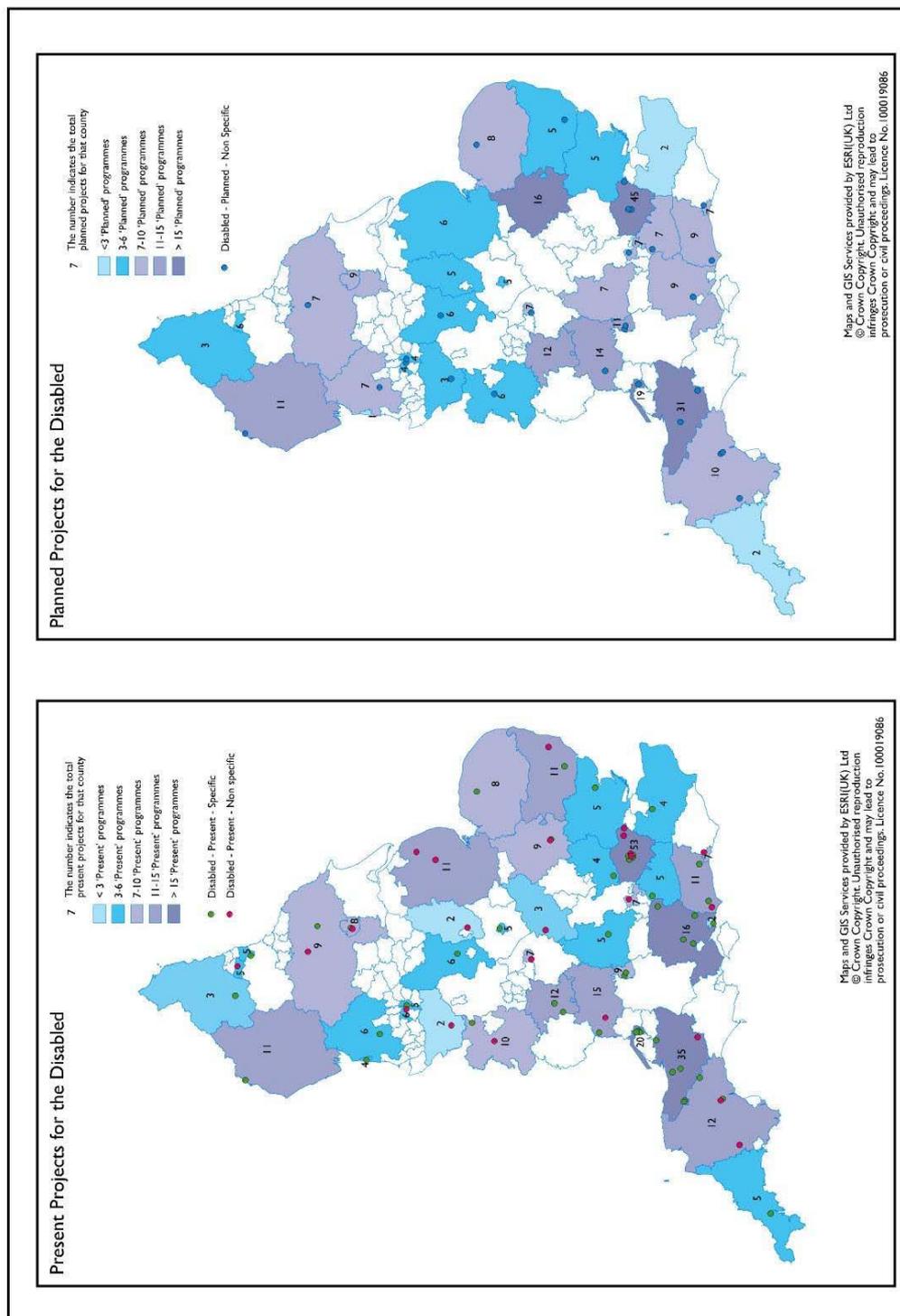*Figure 6.2 Map showing the location of service providers responding to the postal survey.*

Fig 6.3.Maps showing Planned and Existing Projects for Disabled People.
The distribution of points shows the number of projects reported in each county aimed at this under-represented group. It is apparent that the Countryside for All approach is taken by many service providers, especially in planning for the future. It may be that service providers are using this catch all to address their obligations under the DDA rather than target specific needs.

66
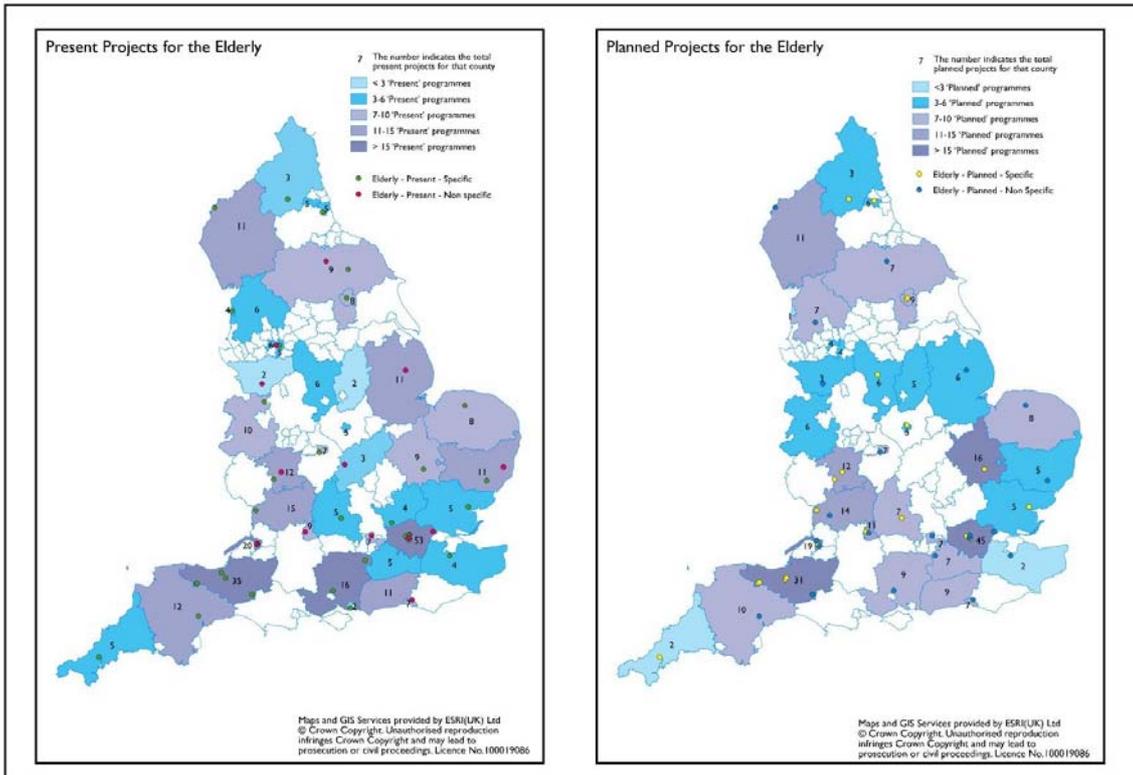
Fig 6.4. Maps showing Planned and Existing Projects for Elderly People
The distribution of points shows the number of projects reported in each county aimed at this under-represented group. Although service providers do not recognise this group as seriously under-represented as visitors, there are a number of projects planned to address their needs. It was often the case that projects for this group were thought also to be applicable to disabled users.
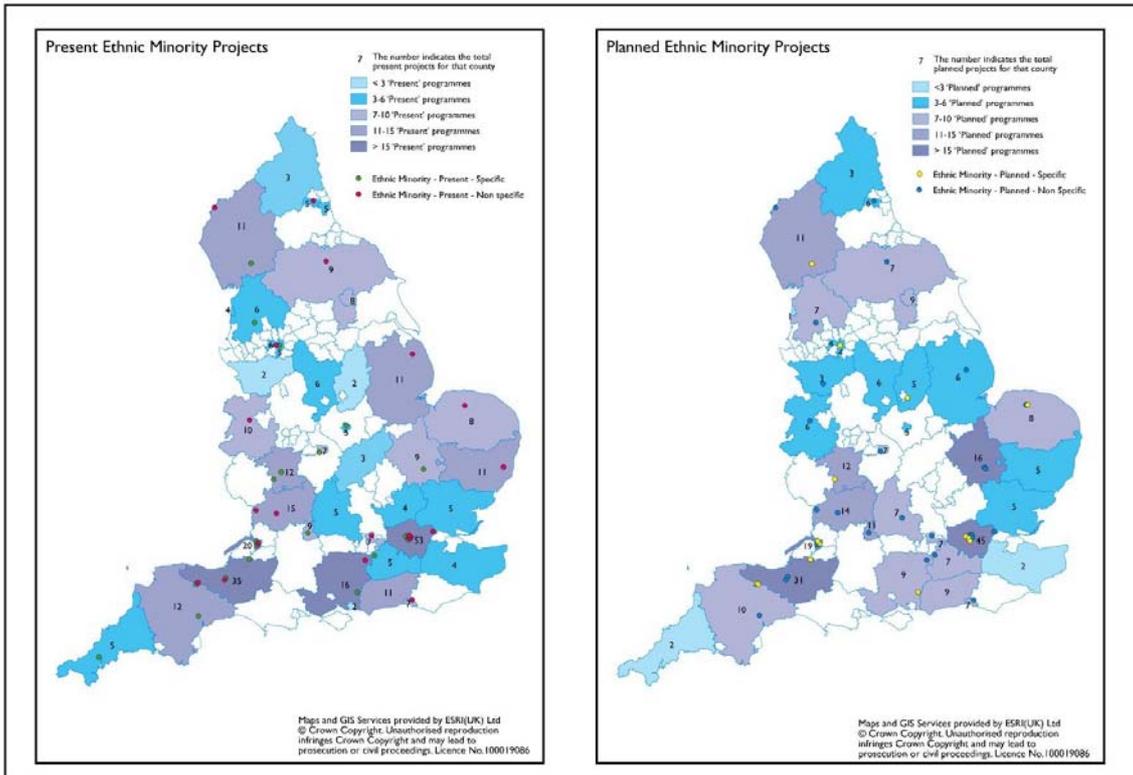
Fig 6.5. Maps showing Planned and Existing Projects for People from BME's.
The distribution of points shows the number of projects reported in each county aimed at this under-represented group. Although service providers agree that this group are seriously under-represented as visitors, few projects either currently exist or are planned aimed specifically at this target audience. This is the case even close to major conurbations with ethnically diverse populations.
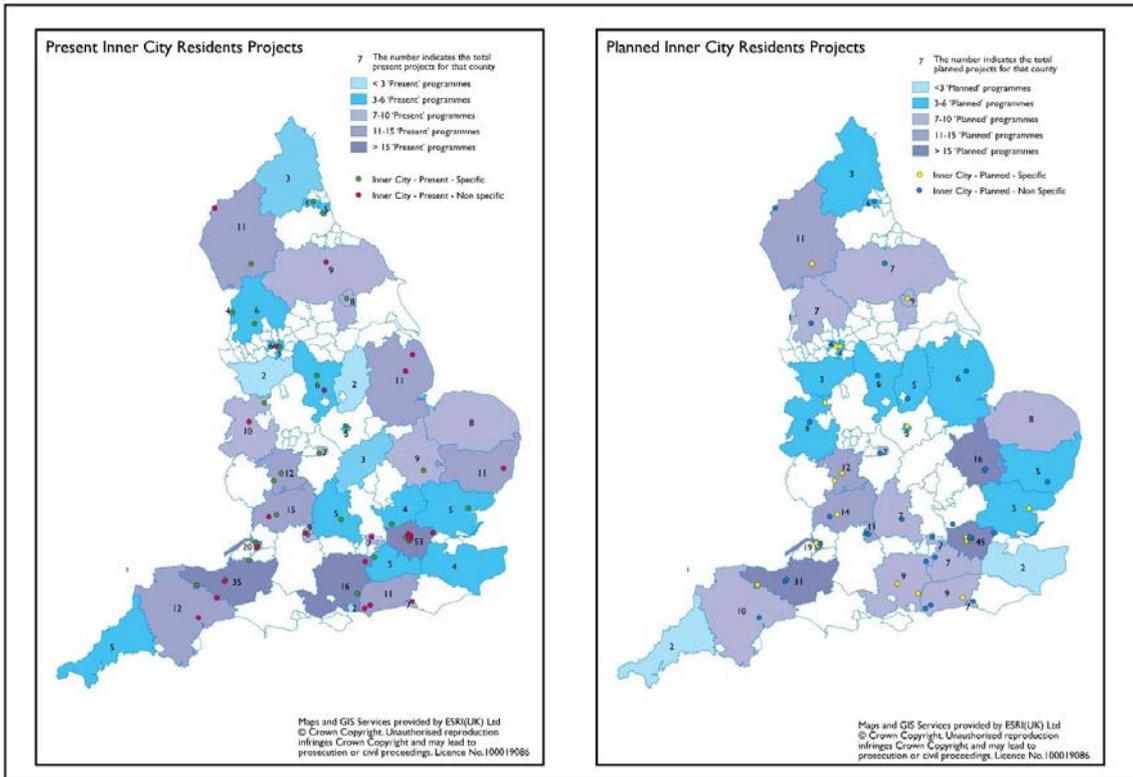
Fig 6.6. Maps showing Planned and Existing Projects for People from Inner City Residents
The distribution of points shows the number of projects reported in each county aimed at this under-represented group. Service providers do recognise this group are seriously under-represented as visitors, and they report a number of projects planned to address their needs. The proximity of these projects is as expected, close to major cities, which would be their primary visitor catchment area.
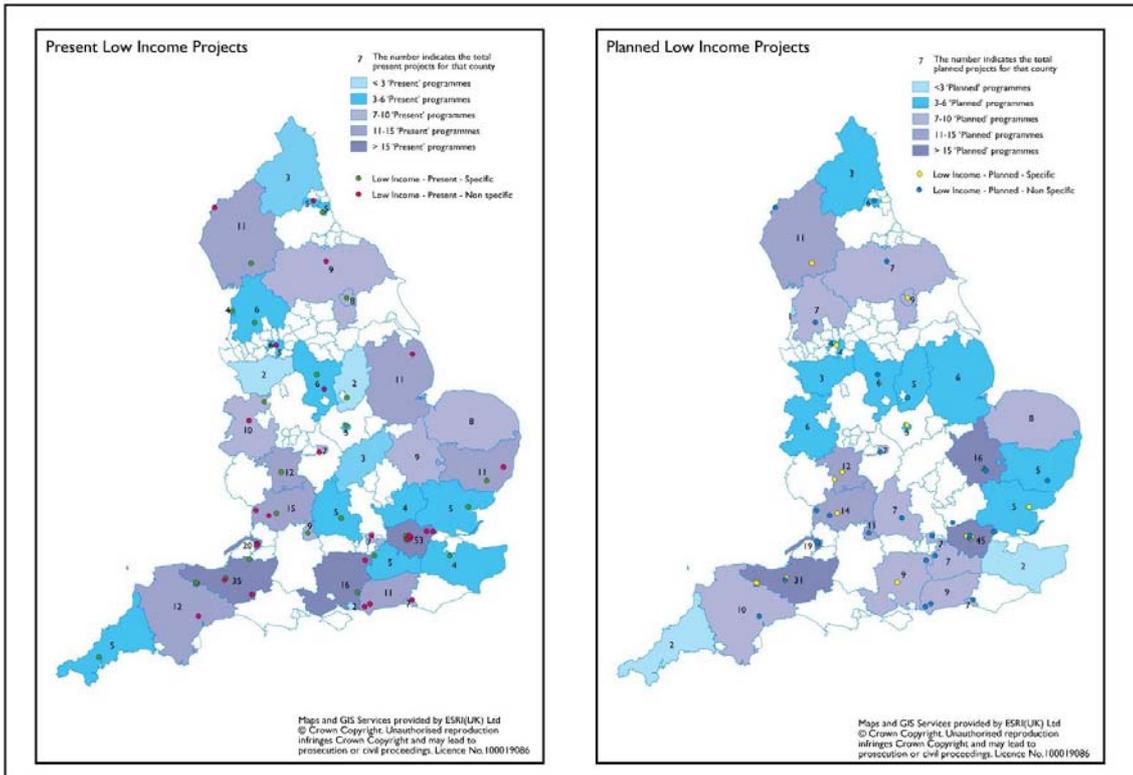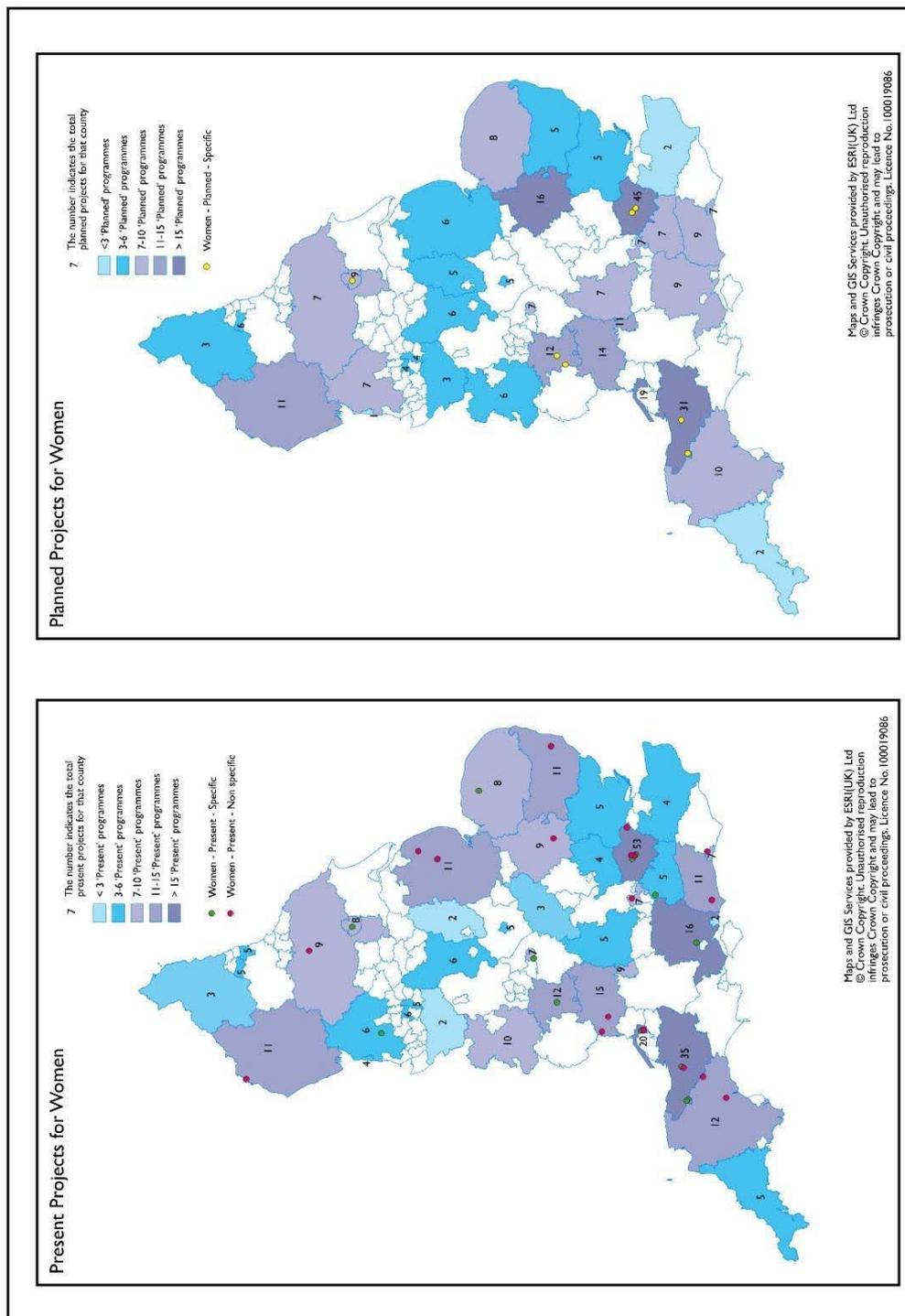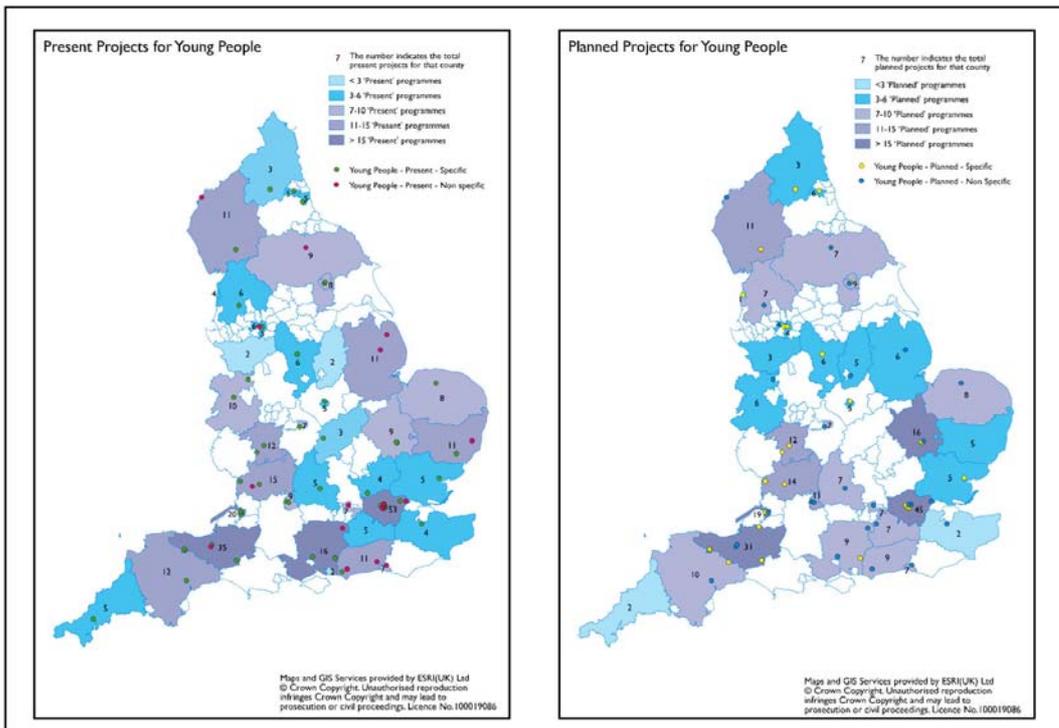
Fig 6.7. Maps showing Planned and Existing Projects for People on Low Incomes.
The distribution of points shows the number of projects reported in each county aimed at this under-represented group. Service providers recognise this group are under-represented as visitors, and have both in place and planned, a number of projects planned to address their needs. The Countryside for All banner was often applied to responses about these groups, as sites and similar provisions are often free.

Fig 6.8. Maps showing Planned and Existing Projects for Women.
The distribution of points shows the number of projects reported in each county aimed at this under-represented group. Service providers do not recognise this group as under-represented in visitor profiles, which is reflected in the limited number of projects planned or present aimed to attract this group.

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Fig 6.9. Maps showing Planned and Existing Projects for Yougn People.
The distribution of points shows the number of projects reported in each county aimed at this under-represented group. Service providers have little recognition of young people as an under-represented group. In spite of this they have many projects, both planned and present to encourage young people to visit the countryside.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

Background

The principal objectives of this research were to provide evidence and baseline data about:

- countryside service providers' perception of diversity and awareness of the needs of under-represented groups;
- countryside service providers' interpretation and application of legislation as well as related policies, strategies and practices relevant to under-represented groups;
- how knowledge of diversity issues is transmitted through countryside service providers' organisations;
- how countryside service providers intend to address the problems of increasing access.

We have identified four key areas that need to be addressed if countryside service providers are to significantly improve their awareness of the needs of under-represented groups, and at the same time devise strategies and practices that meet both statutory obligations as well as issues of equity in encouraging and facilitating better access:

1. Clarification and confidence in using the language of diversity
2. The need for a specific person to champion diversity issues in the context of access to recreation
3. Improved dissemination and communication of diversity information and best practice
4. Monitoring, evaluation and the encouragement of diversity through the use of performance indicators

Within each of these recommendations there are a number of issues that require separate consideration. Where a recommendation is especially directed towards a specific department, agency or service provider sector we have indicated this at the appropriate place[9]. It will be important to synthesize these recommendations with those of the sister research into the needs and perceptions of under-represented groups so that an overall strategy can be developed, combining the needs of countryside service providers with the expectations and preferences of under-represented groups.

What is the 'countryside'?

Central to the entire debate is a key question, and one that will help to shape the next step: what exactly is the *countryside*?

For many, the answer may seem self-evident. However, attracting individuals and groups to the countryside assumes that everyone agrees what or even where the countryside is – and we know that this is not the case. For some groups, such as

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[9] Key to department, agency or service provider sector: CGD = central government departments, e.g. DEFRA
A & C = Agencies and Commissions, e.g. Natural England; LAs & SPs = local authorities and service providers

inner city populations, an urban fringe 'country park' is the countryside; but for those who live in the countryside such areas are seen as little more than recreational parks for an urban population and bear no relation to day-to-day life in rural areas. Different groups have widely differing perceptions of the 'countryside', and it's unwise to assume that there is a consensus even amongst service providers as to what is the countryside, how it should appear and how should it be managed. Some participants in the research seminars suggested that the countryside should be made more 'urban' (e.g. provide more facilities), whereas others like the countryside precisely because it is wild and natural and does not include these features. We need to discover how both service providers and the different under-represented groups conceptualise the countryside; what sort of countryside under-represented groups would like to visit; and what are the implications of these different conceptualisations for its management? The research carried out in parallel to this project should provide some of the answers - see 'Representation of the countryside and factors restricting use among under-represented groups' (Ethnos report).

CONCLUSION 1: THERE IS A LACK OF CONFIDENCE WITH, AND COMFORT IN USING, THE EXISTING LANGUAGE OF DIVERSITY

There is ambiguity, confusion and even exclusion in the day-to-day language we all use to talk about under-represented groups. Instead of engaging directly with under-represented communities, service providers hide under the umbrella of 'Countryside for All.' For instance, it's unclear to a white, male, middle class site manager how they should talk about a black person. If they call a Pakistani person Indian will this cause offence? Can we assume that all those who are categorised as black and minority ethnic see themselves as black, a minority or ethnic? Should one just say 'Asian' – but, if so, does this include Chinese people? The BBC Asian Network is almost entirely dominated by programming related to the Indian sub-continent, while there is little or no representation of the Japanese, Chinese, or Thai communities.

Language is dynamic, of course, and the meaning and use of words alter as our understanding and approach to issues change. For example, people are not *disabled* – people have a *disability*. But there again, a social model of disability suggests that it is not people that have a disability, but rather it's the environment which is disabling for certain groups of people.

Without the appropriate terms to describe the people who are under-represented, as well as a lack of confidence in using them, it is difficult to see how countryside service providers can begin to understand the needs and expectations of these potential visitors, let alone communicate and interact with them.

It is recommended that:
- the language relating to under-represented groups needs clarifying and reinforcing.

Using inappropriate names and categories can cause misunderstanding, confusion, embarrassment, offence and inaction. There needs to be guidance so that not only service providers but the public, too, know what terms are respectful and will not lead to misunderstanding. It may be about words or it may be about the confidence to use words. Natural England need to address this issue, as language is the starting point for dialogue between communities and the glue that holds groups together. While the

ODPM may be the most appropriate government department to take a lead on this, the involvement and collaboration of agencies such as the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) will be essential. It may be that these organisations claim that such an agreed language exists already; if it does then it needs to be communicated more effectively, as there is significant confusion amongst service providers as well as the public.

It is recommended that:
- Natural England[10], in consultation with the CRE and DRC, issue guidelines to service providers in order to encourage confidence and remove ambiguity in the use of the language of diversity. (A&C)

There is uncertainty amongst service providers at senior levels when talking about under-represented groups, due to the sensitivity that surrounds these issues. They are cautious with what seems to be an ever-changing language, and choosing acceptable terms to refer to minority groups without causing offence (e.g. disabled, people with disabilities, handicapped; black, ethnic minority, black and ethnic minority, non-white).

It is recommended that:
- an accepted and accessible terminology be developed to describe the activities and spaces referred to in policy documents;
- successful projects will require an increased dialogue between on the ground workers and senior management. (LAs & SPs)

It was very apparent from our research that senior staff use a great deal of jargon in discussing diversity issues, partly as a means of obscuring their lack of understanding of the needs of under-represented groups. For example, it is clear that although those in senior positions are responsible for establishing policies, they often lack practical knowledge of the needs of specific groups and projects. Some on-the-ground workers demonstrated frustration that their positive steps require constant intervention and approval from senior members.

It is recommended that:
- senior management regularly swap positions with on-the-ground workers in order to experience dealing with under-represented groups of society. A meeting in a neutral environment to discuss the implications for leisure planning and management should follow this. (LAs & SPs)

It is clear that service providers who work on the ground are often more sensitive to the needs of under-represented groups, purely because as part of their day-to-day work they are required to interact with these groups. Headquarters-based service providers demonstrate a general reluctance to distinguish between certain under-represented groups (e.g. by promoting 'Countryside for All'). Their reluctance to do

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[10] Following publication of the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill in February, English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division are working towards integration as a single body: Natural England. It will work for people, places and nature with responsibility for enhancing biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promoting access, recreation and public wellbeing, and contributing to the way natural resources are managed – so they can be enjoyed now and for future generations.

so is related to issues of political correctness, lack of awareness, lack of training and the fact that they are not in regular contact with these groups.

It is recommended that:
- service providers need equity awareness training so that they are more sensitive to the language they use to describe groups; this will serve to frame their thinking and management actions; (LAs & SPs)
- a training programme is instigated to understand the terminologies appropriate to describe the activities and spaces referred to in policy documents and the various agencies; (LAs & SPs)
- leadership and cultural change takes place amongst professionals, members and volunteers through training.

There is a tendency to place groups in particular boxes. For example, describing an individual as a 'disabled' person suggests that the *whole* person is disabled, rather than seeing them as a 'person with disabilities'. Likewise, labelling an individual as a disabled person attributes the disability to the individual, whereas a social model of disability (rather than medical) suggests that it is the environment in which they live and work which is disabling. Inappropriately categorising under-represented groups affects our understanding of such groups, and influences what action needs to be taken to improve their countryside experience.

CONCLUSION 2: THERE IS THE NEED FOR A CHAMPION FOR DIVERSIFYING ACCESS TO RECREATION

Few service providers have a specific person responsible for equal access, and this problem is compounded because many issues are crosscutting and no single person has a responsibility for initiating or co-ordinating work. Within local authorities, there is scope for involving elected members; at a minimum, they should be ensuring action, but they also ought to be in a useful position to encourage and facilitate community consultation, engagement and responsiveness. Within private sector or charitable organisations, a board member or trustee should take on responsibility for championing these issues, if only to ensure that legislative requirements and obligations are met. Similarly at an inter-organisational level, there is no single organisation that champions this work; this needs to be addressed urgently.

It is recommended that:
- an individual in the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights is made responsible for recreation and access to recreational opportunities; (CGD; A&C)
- a simple but comprehensive monitoring of current human rights and equality legislation is developed, with provision for regular updating.   (CGD)

Currently three Commissions and one Unit oversee human rights protection and promotion. Research for ODPM (2003) has already recommended a single body to represent the Government's agenda; and the White Paper on the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, 2004, specifies key policies and duties for such a body. We recommend that an individual in the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights should be appointed to be responsible for access to recreational opportunities.

This should be further extended by the appointment of local authority officers, and would also provide a communication and information point to private and independent countryside service providers.

It is recommended that:
- Natural England, as well as service providers, will need effective coordination in order to identify what barriers and opportunities exist across groups. The current shortcomings in treating diversity and equity issues as cross-cutting reinforces the need to avoid having different sections dealing with black and minority ethnic, disability, gender, etc. (A&C)

A further problem with labelling groups, as disabled 'or' ethnic minority is that it fails to recognise that people often fall into more than one category. It is not unusual – in fact highly likely – that one might find an ethnic minority person who is also young and living in the inner city. Likewise, someone with disabilities may be in a low socio-economic group. Addressing these issues as single category phenomena fails to take into account the potential impact of multiple deprivations and may lead to inappropriate or ineffective strategies.

It is recommended that:
- The 'Choosing Activity: a physical action plan' targets within outdoor recreation provision be placed in the mainstream to ensure continuity across policy arenas and Government departments. (CGD)

There are ambitious targets for increasing activity under this policy. By explicitly stating to countryside service providers that these targets apply to countryside activities, the overall message will be clearer, more supportive and less fragmented.

It is recommended that:
- an integrated approach to the development of Community Strategies is encouraged, to ensure that the outdoor access and recreational needs of the local community are addressed, and that there is co-ordination between the strategies, Rights of Way Improvement Plans, Local Transport Plans and land use planning. This approach should address the agenda set out in Modernising Rural Delivery and the new Rural Strategy. (LAs & SPs)
- boundaries and potential overlaps and inconsistencies of local strategic planning should be identified and addressed. (LAs & SPs)

It is recommended that:
- a dedicated unit within local authorities is established to ensure that diversity and equality is championed beyond equal employment opportunities to encompass countryside and all other services.

There is an urgent need for a designated officer and/or unit to be made responsible for diversity issues in each local authority and service provider. At present, responsibility is split between many departments, with the result that it has become the responsibility of everyone and no one. Furthermore, we found that while an equity officer may have a brief to oversee equity/discrimination issues, they may not be aware or see their responsibility extending to countryside access.

It is recommended that:

- service providers need to be pro-active in seeking out information on fulfilling their statutory responsibilities with regards to equity and diversity issues and acquiring good practice.

Although, typically, the concept of anticipatory duties has been applied to provision for the disabled, it can equally be used to meet the needs of other under-represented groups. This may become a statutory requirement, in any case, once the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights comes into being, with a streamlining and integration of equality legislation in which equal opportunities, disability and race relations will look very similar in terms of their philosophy, precepts, requirements, etc.

CONCLUSION 3: THE OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Where the emphasis is on compliance with legislation, the inevitable result is that diversity and equity is seen as a duty rather than an opportunity for progress. A recent report for the ODPM (2003b) suggests that there is both a public service business case, as well as a moral responsibility, to promote equality and diversity. There is clearly a need for awareness-raising, legislative briefings, training and the exchange of best practice for all service provider staff, many of who feel (and often are) ill informed and unsupported. Although service providers are expected to keep abreast of relevant policies, in reality this is mainly achieved through informal word of mouth, so that the quality of the information inevitably declines as it is disseminated. Perhaps an annual event, such as local 'roadshows', could publicise research, policies and guidelines, as well as provide a forum for discussion? We found little evidence that the training of frontline staff was taken seriously, and instead it was assumed that they would seek out the appropriate knowledge.

It is recommended that:
- Service providers should be made aware of the benefits of enhancing accessibility for under-represented groups. (A&C)

The benefits are (i) economic – for example, it has been estimated that the disability pound is worth £15bn; and (ii) professional/career satisfaction – it became apparent in our research that local authority and service provider staff gained a great deal of job satisfaction from working with under-represented groups.

It is recommended that:
- Service providers are encouraged and shown how to think positively, e.g. we *shall* strive to create a working environment based on good relations between people with and without disabilities; and we will use diverse images in all published material that demonstrates a positive and inclusive ethos (rather than negatively and risk aversive, i.e. we *shall not* discriminate). (A&C)

There is a need to move away from the minimalist position currently held by many service providers, for whom improving access for minority or under-represented groups is seen as an obligation to be met, rather than a challenge or opportunity that could provide a better experience for visitors. We have the impression that many organisations begin with the question, 'what is the least we can do in order to fulfil our statutory requirements?', rather than 'what imaginative initiatives can we put into

place that will encourage under-represented groups into the countryside and enhance the experience of those who come already?'

It is recommended that:
- the full potential of the Diversity Review action research programme be explored to ensure that it provides the type of integrated learning platform required to address under-representation.

It is recommended that:
- guidance should be developed and disseminated, working with the Learning and Skills Council, LANTRA, SkillsActive, the relevant advisory bodies and other experts in the field (e.g. universities) to develop suitable education and training programmes for the members of local access forums and strategic partnerships. (CGD)

This guidance should:
(i) inform open space owners and managers of their duties and legislation
(ii) assist local access forums on the implementation of human rights legislation and the types of initiative required to help local stakeholders engage with this agenda
(iii) enable local access forums to be in a position to ensure that human rights are mainstreamed in the forthcoming Rights of Way Improvement Plans
(iv) ensure that there is active and innovative consideration of human rights and people's quality of life in the next round of Local Transport Plan accessibility planning.

It is recommended that:
- the extent to which the focus and remit of local access forums could be related explicitly to championing access for all be explored; (A&C)
- the National Access Database includes specific information on access for all, and the dissemination of this database be maximised, explaining specific information on diversity issues.

It is recommended that:
- service providers are given information on how to create a more diverse visitor base, and respond to particular social groups rather than instructions simply to do it;
- guidance is provided for service providers relating to visitor surveys, catchment surveys and identifying gaps in visitor profiles.

Service providers find information, recommendations and examples of good practice more helpful than prescriptive guidelines. They regard legislation and policies aimed at increasing diversity akin to 'red tape', which serve to hinder rather than enhance any attempts to implement projects.

It is recommended that:
- Defra ensure that service providers are made aware that equality and diversity policies and actions apply to people visiting the countryside. (CGD)

There is a tendency for organisations to think of equity policies simply in terms of their employment obligations, i.e. local authorities should ensure that black and minority ethnic groups are represented in their staffing.

It is recommended that:
- service providers devise regular and systematic monitoring and evaluation exercises, in order to identify the needs and preferences of under-represented groups. Active dissemination such as annual 'roadshows' disseminating the results of research would be useful.
- as with the Heritage Lottery Fund, monitoring should be a funding pre-requirement for projects; funding agencies should specify a percentage of any award for monitoring projects. In this way, projects will not be started if there are insufficient funds to monitor and evaluate.

It is recommended that:
- senior officers are sensitive to and informed about the specific needs and preferences of under-represented groups, so that they are better able to formulate policies.

It is quite clear that the majority of service providers know very little about under-represented groups. Indeed, senior members of organisations tend to encourage visits from the general population rather than focus on group-specific projects, whilst those who are responsible for implementing policies and guidelines recognise the inherent difficulties involved in providing projects that reflect the specific needs of under-represented groups. There is obvious conflict between inclusive approaches ('Access/Countryside for All') and targeted approaches to meet the needs of specific groups.

It is recommended that:
- senior staff need to develop strategies that extend their working role to encompass both the resource and visitors.

Countryside providers fall into two categories – those who see their job primarily as one of supporting the environment and resource protection, and those who view their role as encouraging and supporting people and enhancing their countryside experience. This is not to say that one group is oblivious or inattentive to the needs and demands of the other, rather that their priorities lean in one specific direction and consequently the needs of under-represented groups may get overlooked.

It is recommended that:
- service providers should consider enhancing access not in terms of starting new initiatives but embedding good practice, so diversity provision becomes part of the mainstream.

Extra encouragement will be necessary for specific under-represented groups, e.g. publicity, outreach, special promotions to inform and facilitate visits. A strategic approach is necessary in order that best practice can be identified, developed and disseminated. This could be achieved through the Beacon council scheme, which identifies excellence and innovation in local government and shares good practice, so that best value authorities can learn from each other and deliver high quality services to all.

It is recommended that:
- service providers are shown examples of good practice in order to develop their own strategies and action plans; (A&C)
- local authorities with Beacon status are promoted to provide exemplars of good practice.

It is recommended that:
- service providers are encouraged to undertake evaluation and monitoring studies; it may be a requirement if recent changes to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act are applied across the equity area. Central government or Natural England may need to provide support in the form of finance and expertise.
- Natural England commission a research team to devise a package of instruments that can be used by service providers to monitor progress in increasing under-representative participation, e.g. visitor and catchment surveys. (A&C)
- Natural England commission guidance notes for distribution to service providers on best practice. These should be based on research evidence from the present studies (University of Surrey and Ethnos), past experience and advice from expert bodies, as well as evidence derived from the Action Based Research Project Evaluation. (A&C)

It is recommended that:
- Natural England, as well as service providers, needs to think laterally so that lessons learnt in one area of under-representation can be tried, tested and applied to others.

Proposals for attracting under-represented groups into the countryside that might be relevant for one group are not necessarily viewed as appropriate for another. But is not a programme of awareness raising and attitude-change desirable for all groups, directed either at the target groups or the providing agencies? Many initiatives do not require a significant financial expenditure – they simply necessitate doing things differently, such as networking with sympathetic organisations and using volunteers, and consulting and involving the targeted groups so that there is a better understanding of their needs. Very few service providers suggested linkages across the groups.

It is recommended that:
- partnerships encouraging visitor diversity should incorporate not only various departments within local authorities, but also link with independent and voluntary bodies to increase the profile of diversity issues in all areas. (LAs & SPs)

While it is recognised that local authorities have a responsibility to promote the well being of their own population, there are a number who, for example, may be exclusively city-located or have very few outdoor spaces where greater diversity can be encouraged. In this case, we recommend that local authorities look for partnerships with private/voluntary sector organisations to provide their residents with the opportunity to enjoy the countryside and outdoors. 'Farms for Schools' have already worked towards this aim, partnering education authorities and providing visits and training for teachers. There are often seasonal opportunities in farm work that

could be incorporated into work experience schemes, while at the same time encouraging young people to access the countryside. With funding from the Australian Tourist Board and a National Training Programme, the 'Working Holiday Maker Scheme' in Australia provides young people with accommodation and an allowance for working in rural areas.

CONCLUSION 4: ENCOURAGING VISITOR DIVERSITY THROUGH PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

This study has found that the majority of service providers have a long way to go before they can confidently argue that either their policies, or practices, are meeting government targets concerning equality and diversity in the provision of countryside access.

There are various drivers and instruments which can be employed to encourage, as well as enforce, compliance with legislation and policy, e.g. laws and regulations, financial incentives (positive and negative), training, information and education. Evaluation and monitoring can also be used as part of any of these strategies, and should be considered an essential prerequisite for the funding of projects. Only when this takes place will it be possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of policies and actions, and at the same time assess change. Catchment area surveys are required to measure needs and take current visitor information forwards. There is a compelling case for initiating Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets to encourage change, as well as permit transparency and public scrutiny. The financial support that follows PSA targets being achieved and exceeded will answer countryside service providers concerns that monitoring, evaluation and other data gathering uses funding which could be otherwise spent on actual implementation.

Such targets are voluntary, but they complement Best Value Performance Indicators that must be collected under the Local Government Act, 1999, and so provide greater opportunity to encourage change. We recommend that one or more Public Service Agreement targets be constructed to monitor progress with increasing diversity in the countryside, in order to enable local authorities to measure the success of their strategies and learn from good practice. Furthermore, local authorities have a duty under the Local Government Act, 2000, to produce a Community Strategy. The Audit Commission published a set of Quality of Life Indicators in September 2003 that is designed to help local authorities and their partners in Local Strategic Partnerships to monitor their community strategies. They cover economic, social and environmental well being and are also intended to complement best value performance indicators.

It is recommended that:
- PSA targets, Best Value Performance Indicators and Quality of Life Indicators should be used by local authorities to measure progress in increasing diversity of countryside visitors; (CGD)
- inspection, regulation and sanction should be used to encourage culture change. Natural England should commission research to identify appropriate indicators that can be used in a national auditing exercise.

Although Quality of Life Indicators are voluntary, they complement Best Value Performance Indicators and show changes to quality of life over time. There are two main performance indicators that could encompass diversity requirements:

1. Percentage of a local authority's parks and open spaces accredited with a Green Flag Award. For this award, there must be management and provision of green space for community. It is recommended that the qualifications for achieving a Green Flag Award include the implementation of outreach projects, combined with evidence of which groups are under-represented through visitor surveys compared to local population statistics.
2. Area of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population. Local Nature Reserves are defined as an 'Accessible Natural Greenspace less than 300m in a straight line from home' and 'for informal enjoyment of nature by the public'. There is a Quality of Life Indicator under development (K7) that relates to access to local green space and which is already linked to this Best Value Performance Indicator. One reason for their existence is to provide an opportunity for people to become involved in the management of their local environment.

This research programme has recognised that there are many perspectives held by different groups that together explain under-representation. There are the responses of the under-represented groups themselves, as well as central government and government agencies, plus decision-makers and frontline staff within the direct service providers. It is the combination of all these perspectives that will provide the basis for an ever more diverse visitor profile in countryside and outdoor locations.

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