The Countryside Agency

Capturing Richness

Countryside visits by black and ethnic minority communities

BEN
Black
Environment
Network

Working for people and places in rural England

The Countryside Agency

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to make:

- **the quality of life better for people in the countryside;**
- **the quality of the countryside better for everyone.**

The Countryside Agency will help to achieve the following outcomes:

- **empowered, active and inclusive communities;**
- **high standards of rural services;**
- **vibrant local economies;**
- **all countryside managed sustainably;**
- **recreation opportunities for all;**
- **realising the potential of the urban fringe.**

We summarise our role as:

- **statutory champion and watchdog;**
- **influencing and inspiring solutions through our know how and show how;**
- **delivering where we are best placed to add value.**

The Countryside Agency is funded by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. Defra is a major customer for our work.

To find out more about our work and for information about the countryside, visit our website: **www.countryside.gov.uk**

Front cover photograph: MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

Contents

Preface

There has long been an assumption that Britons from black and ethnic minorities have no interest in the countryside. With quiet forcefulness, the stories collated and told in Capturing Richness by the Black Environment Network (BEN), show this assumption to be wholly wrong.

It is no longer acceptable to ignore the needs and wishes of those groups of people who are under-represented in the data collected on visits to the countryside. The programme of work that the Countryside Agency has embarked on for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to review the diversity of visitors to the countryside represents a major step in the right direction.

The provision of opportunities for visits to the countryside is a key to the fulfilment of the socio-cultural and environmental agenda. Many people from ethnic communities lead hard lives. The 44 most deprived areas in England contain four times more people from ethnic communities than other areas; whilst people from ethnic minority backgrounds experience more health problems compared to the population as a whole. Access to the countryside impacts immensely on their quality of life.

Through the diversity review, we hope to give tangible proof of how increasing people's access to the countryside can improve their quality of life, in addition to bringing real benefits to rural communities and their economies. The countryside has unleashed an unexpected richness of cultural association, shared knowledge and experiences for individuals and community groups and, indeed, for society as a whole.

1 Introduction

Capturing Richness is a collection of human stories about the work of the Black Environment Network (BEN). Among its many activities, BEN provides opportunities for city dwelling groups of black and minority ethnic people to go out into green, open spaces. As a result, many have been able to access the enjoyment of the countryside and this has had a significant impact on their quality of life. After tasting what the countryside has to offer, some of these people have been inspired to become involved in environmental projects.

BEN

Among its many activities, BEN provides opportunities for city dwelling groups of black and minority ethnic people to go out into green, open spaces.

In January 2003, the Countryside Agency commissioned BEN and journalist Robin Brookes to create 'Capturing Richness'. The purpose was "...to enable the stories which are held in the collective memory of the Black Environment Network to be recorded... so that they can be published as a collection."

The facts and figures about how many people from black and minority ethnic communities visit the countryside and how often they do so are available elsewhere from such sources as the Great Britain Day Visit Survey. But Capturing Richness isn't about hard data. Instead its focus is the human response to being in the countryside, the happiness, sense of freedom, pleasure and inspiration that people from the black and minority ethnic communities feel when they experience open space.

For many of them the experience is new, as Judy Ling Wong, the Director of BEN, pointed out: "Many new arrivals from different countries of origin, who we have notionally accepted as full members of our communities, are given so little support that they remain lost within the new culture of the country which is now their home. They are often urban bound and have little or no opportunity to be in touch with nature at large. Many have never seen the British countryside. They do not know where to go, and their children will remain city bound."

BEN is working to change that. The stories found here were gathered by meetings with BEN staff members and the interviews took place during February 2003. More information was gleaned at the BEN Network Conference at Aston University, Birmingham in March 2003.

After tasting what the countryside has to offer, some of these people have been inspired to become involved in environmental projects.

BEN staff who were interviewed included Judy Ling Wong OBE - Director of BEN, Henry Adomako - Policy and Partnership Officer (Edinburgh), Mike Cherry - Development Worker (Swansea), Siobham Hayward - South Wales Project Leader, Jessica Nar - Officer for the Mosaic Project, which is a partnership run jointly by BEN and the Council for National Parks, Saleem Oppal - Development Worker (Manchester and Liverpool) and James Friel - Development Worker (Birmingham). Their contact details appear at the end of this publication. Information about the specific groups they work with and which are mentioned in this text may be obtained from them.

The stories brought together here embrace a number of themes that present different strands of richness, such as:

- The exchange of cultural richness.
- The inspiration of landscape.
- New activities enrich lives.
- The revelation of richness in what the countryside can offer.
- Creating new heritage.
- The fulfillment of working on the land.

2 About the Black Environment Network

BEN is a UK charity, a countrywide network of over 600 members, which works to bring about ethnic participation in the environment and, by doing so, enhances the lives of those who take part. Some of its projects are small in scale and modest in ambition, such as simply enabling an inner city group to experience the green space on its doorstep for an hour or two. Other initiatives are considerably greater in scope, an example being Mosaic, which is a three year project that seeks to introduce everything that National Parks have to offer to people of all ages from the black and minority ethnic communities.

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

BEN is supported by the Association of National Park Authorities; Baring Foundation; Charities Aid Foundation; Community Fund; Council for National Parks; Countryside Agency; Countryside Council for Wales; Courtyard Farm Trust; SGP/DTLR; EAF/DEFRA; Environment Wales; English Nature; Environment Law Foundation; Esmee Fairnairn Charitable Trust; Field Studies Council; FOE; Gateway Project; Greenpeace Environmental Trust; HLF; Lloyds TSB; Lyndhurst Settlement; NAfW; National Park Societies; M&S; WISS; WDA; YHA.

Building trust and understanding took time, but eventually the idea that BEN wanted to facilitate trips into the countryside with no strings attached was accepted.

When BEN was founded in the late 1980s, black and minority ethnic groups were at best puzzled, at worst suspicious of being befriended by an environmental organisation offering them free days out. Winning trust took time, as Siobhan Hayward, BEN's first development worker in Wales, explained. Siobhan began from scratch in 1998 and her initial efforts to make contact with black and minority ethnic groups sometimes resulted in their bemusement:

"I remember going to see the Samaj Community Centre, which is in a former warehouse in Cardiff's Grangetown district" said Siobhan. "At first they couldn't understand why I was talking about environmental issues and offering to help them develop ideas for projects, as they had never been approached by an environmental organisation before. "Building trust and understanding took time, but eventually the idea that BEN wanted to facilitate trips into the countryside with no strings attached was accepted."

When Mike Cherry began his work with black and minority ethnic communities in Swansea, he also encountered suspicion from some quarters:

"We'd arranged to take some Bangladeshi mothers and children from Hafod to a botanical gardens. The members of the group had been told all about it and they seemed quite enthusiastic, but when the mini bus arrived as arranged, very few were waiting to be picked up," he explained.

"This was a bit strange. But after talking to a few people it became clear that a rumour had gone round that this trip might be some sort of conspiracy to take young Bangladeshi people from their roots and Christianise them. Anyway, when one of the group went door to door to reinform the women about the details of the trip they confidently got into the minibus. Building trust takes time".

2.1 The countryside isn't for me

Few people from the black and minority ethnic communities who take part in BEN's activities are familiar with what goes on beyond the urban boundary, although many are from a rural background in their country of origin. Some have never been into the UK countryside before. There are many reasons for this. Economic circumstances, language barriers and lack of transport all play their part. But another important reason is the widespread feeling among people from the black and minority ethnic communities that they have no entitlement to be in the countryside.

Judy Ling Wong gave the example of a group of Cambodian refugees in London who asked if BEN could make it possible for them to visit

Scotland. "They'd heard how beautiful a country it was, but couldn't imagine a way for them to see it for themselves" said Judy. "So many black and minority ethnic people never believe they will go anywhere in the UK, away from the urban surroundings where they live. A map is unreal for them and they have no idea of what the countryside really is."

So many black and minority ethnic people never believe they will go anywhere in the UK, away from the urban surroundings where they live. A map is unreal for them and they have no idea of what the countryside really is.

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

One initiative designed to change this is the Mosaic Project, a partnership between BEN and the Council for National Parks that is supported by various funders and agencies, including the Countryside Agency. Jessica Nar, who manages the three year project, said that its aim "is to enable black and minority ethnic groups to engage with National Parks in England and Wales and all they have to offer".

At the start of the project, Jessica contacted groups who had already taken part in BEN taster days into the countryside. "For the sake of practicality, most of the groups contacted lived within an hour's drive of a National Park" said Jessica. "But despite living that close, we discovered that very few members of the groups knew what a National Park was, or even that they existed. Even those who did know about National Parks felt that such places were not meant for them."

3 The exchange of cultural richness

"They plainly took pleasure in being able to tell the botanical experts about the way these plants were used in traditional Bangladeshi cooking. It was a learning experience both for the women and for the guides".

Siobhan Hayward (BEN)

In 2002 Saleem Oppal, the BEN Development Worker in North West England, took a group of 30 elderly Chinese women from the Wai Yin Community Centre in Manchester to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. They made the journey in two mini buses and arrived at the Youth Hostel where they had arranged to stay overnight.

"The women practised Tai Chi in the grounds and invited the warden and guides of the hostel to join them" recalled Saleem. "When they were talking afterwards, the Chinese women explained that people practising Tai Chi is a common early morning sight in the parks of Chinese cities. Tai Chi is an expression of feeling at one with nature, so to be able to do it together in such an unspoilt setting was a very satisfying experience for them. They also said that Tai Chi was not possible in an inner city park in this country, because they felt conspicuous and were afraid that people would stare and disturb them."

Tai Chi is an expression of feeling at one with nature, so to be able to do it together in such an unspoilt setting was a very satisfying experience for them.

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

BEN

It came as a real surprise to them to learn that the destination for their day out was within walking distance of their homes.

Saleem Oppal explained that this weekend promoted multicultural exchanges in other ways. "The women had brought various ingredients for the evening meal with them and worked alongside the white Christian chefs at the hostel to create a fusion of Chinese and British food, which everyone ate together and enjoyed."

On the second day of their stay, the Wai Yin group members were taken on a guided walk. Along the way they passed Stainforth Falls, prompting thoughts of China which they swapped with one another and shared with the guides. Some of the women had chosen to wear traditional Chinese costume, including large straw hats of the kind they would have worn in the countryside at home.

The costumes aroused the interest of some young campers back at the youth hostel and another lively dialogue took place comparing the clothing each group felt appropriate to wear when in the countryside.

A lack of knowledge about facilities that are available locally by some members of black and minority ethnic communities was illustrated by a group of middle aged Bangladeshi women who Siobhan Hayward arranged to take on a trip to Plantasia in the centre of Swansea.

"Many of the women had lived in the Hafod area of the city for some years, yet they had never heard of Plantasia, which is a botanical garden" reported Siobhan. "It came as a real surprise to them to learn that the destination for their day out was within walking distance of their homes."

A lack of confidence in English did not prevent the women from communicating their enthusiasm. "Speaking through their community-development worker the group explained to the Plantasia staff that they recognised many of the plants from Bangladesh" said Siobhan. "They plainly took pleasure in being able to share with the guides their knowledge about the plants' natural habitats and how they need to be cared for. They also talked about the way these plants were used in traditional Bangladeshi cooking. Others were used for therapeutic purposes, or to make henna. It was a learning experience both for the women and for the guides."

BEN's Saleem Oppal recalled a similar exchange of learning. The Black Health Forum is a day centre in North Manchester attended mostly by elderly Pakistani women. Working with the local Social Services, Saleem arranged to take a group from the centre, with their carers, on a trip into the countryside. For ease of access (especially as one or two of the women were in wheelchairs), Withenshaw Park was chosen as the destination and transport arrangements were made.

"When we got there a guide from the park introduced the group of women to the collection of wild flowers and told them about how the plants had been used for medicinal purposes in the past" said Saleem.

"After this chat we went to see the glasshouse collection of tropical and exotic plants. A lot of these were familiar to the women because

they knew them from Pakistan. They were able to tell the guide what they knew about caring for and using these plants and herbs for cooking and medicine."

Most of the women came from rural parts of Pakistan and had memories of bananas and oranges growing by the roadside in their home country. "They thought it was strange seeing these familiar fruits in a greenhouse and that got them talking. Some of them got a bit excited and wanted to pick the fruits, as it seemed a natural thing to do" recalled Saleem. "So I had to explain, as diplomatically as I could, that these oranges were to look at, not to eat - which itself was a strange concept for people who were used to living off the land.

It turned out that the plants in this so called typically British garden came from as many different countries as the women present. They found this a unifying thought and it became a fruitful topic of conversation.

"The women had brought their own food with them and when lunchtime came they unselfconsciously sat themselves down on the grass among other visitors to the park. If they'd been in ones and twos they probably wouldn't have had the courage to set up a picnic, but being in a larger group gave them a feeling of security."

In the conversations that flowed as they ate, Saleem learned "that for most of the women, this was the first time they'd ever been into greenspace since arriving in Britain, in some cases many years before". Plants also provided a shared point of reference for a group of 20 women asylum seekers, who, at the end of their 12 week educational course in Cardiff learning English, maths and being introduced to British culture, were invited on a trip to Dyffryn Gardens on the outskirts of the city. Ethnically they represented a diverse group and came from Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Egypt, Chile, China, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

"At Dyffryn the women were given a guided tour by one of the gardeners who spoke about the display" said Siobhan Hayward. "It turned out that the plants in this so called typically British garden came from as many different countries as the women present. They found this a unifying thought and it became a fruitful topic of conversation.

"They put blankets on the ground, sat down and spoke about plants from their native countries and what they used them for. Many of the women came from rural communities back home and they continued the theme by describing the countryside and way of life they'd grown up with."

In another BEN initiative it wasn't plantlife but bicycles that built bridges between communities. Transport problems for asylum seekers who had arrived in Swansea led to BEN's development worker Mike Cherry setting up the Recycling Bike Scheme, which began in February 2002.

"We started with emails sent out by the local council and university asking anyone with an unwanted bicycle to contact us, or take their bikes to the Welsh Refugee Council Offices" recalled Mike. "This wasn't the ideal premises as the room we had was up three flights of stairs, but

at that time we didn't have anywhere else to go and it got the scheme rolling."

Bikes brought to this base were overhauled by centre volunteers and the asylum seekers themselves. Then, with funding provided by the Home Office, the scheme found a new home at a community centre in Swansea High Street and more bikes were bought at local police auctions.

The bikes enabled asylum seekers to get about the city more easily and allowed them to reach nearby green space and countryside.

"Ironically, many of the bikes we got from the police and other places were soon stolen" said Mike. "A lot of the asylum seekers come from Muslim countries, where stealing is not as much of a problem as it is in Swansea and they weren't really aware of the need to guard against theft. Of the first 35 bikes that went out to asylum seekers, half were stolen within days. So then we had to find a way to provide a lock with each bike. This was a problem, because the locks were going to cost us more than the bikes, but eventually we got funding from the Home Office and every bike went out with a lock and key from then on."

The bikes enabled asylum seekers to get about the city more easily and allowed them to reach nearby green space and countryside. BEN has run projects promoting access to the countryside using sustainable transport, including buses and bikes, but the Recycling Bike Scheme did more than address a transport issue. It also built a bridge between asylum seekers and the local community, when people who had donated bikes were invited to the community centre to see the scheme in action.

The scheme is now well established, as Mike explained. "Over the past year 120 bicycles have been put back on the road and it means that people who would otherwise be city bound can get around more easily and explore further afield. In future the plan is for the Police and City council to donate bikes that have been dumped directly to the scheme."

4 The inspiration of landscape

"To be surrounded by so much green - and plentiful water - after the dust and desert they'd left behind was like a fantasy for them". Mike Cherry

Landscapes in Britain can sometimes bring to mind landscapes elsewhere and by doing so spark a spontaneous response. Judy Ling Wong recalled that "a Turkish group was taken to Margate where the cliffs reminded them of Cappadocia in their home country."

BEN

"The result was that they danced and sang folk songs from Turkey, told stories and shared reminiscences. This was probably the first time the children in the group had experienced their families behaving as they would have done at home."

Siobhan Hayward recalled that a group of 20 Pakistani women and their children from Swansea were similarly inspired by the landscape. "It was on a trip to Craig-y-nos country park in the Brecon Beacons. Being surrounded by mountains and cascading streams reminded the women of their own upbringing in rural regions and started them talking about their relatives who still live there."

Prior to this trip, the majority of the group had been urban bound. "Many of the women were surprised to realise that open countryside was just half an hour away from the city centre" Siobhan recalled.

BEN

To be surrounded by so much green - and plentiful water - after the dust and desert they'd left behind was like a fantasy for them.

"None of them had ventured this far out of Swansea before. Another surprise for them was the sight of hikers. In their home country many of these women had to walk a long way to fetch water a number of times each day, so they associated walking with heavy work. It's hardly surprisingly that this made the concept of walking for pleasure difficult for them to grasp.

"For these women going into the countryside was a social event, and that's quite different to the usual British view of green space as a pleasure to enjoy on your own or maybe with a dog" said Siobhan. "They put out rugs and sat down for a picnic, which was a perfectly natural thing for them to do, chatting and telling stories. The children didn't really know what to do at first, because being in the countryside was completely new to them. But after a while they wound down and the fact that it made an impression on them was borne out by the way they talked about their day in the countryside when I saw them afterwards. Their lives were enriched by the experience."

The same was true of a young Somali girl asylum seeker who, after following the Waterfalls Walk in the Brecon Beacons National Park, said simply "This is the best day of my life."

Landscape can inspire wonder, elation and sometimes sadness. May 2002 came at the end of an unusually long period of wet weather, even for Wales. Consequently the Brecon Beacons National Park was especially lush and its tumbling streams over brimming.

It was a sight that dumbfounded a group of young men from Afghanistan, a country not only brought to its knees by war, but also by three years of drought. "They kept saying 'This is like paradise. This is what we dream of' "remembered Mike Cherry, who accompanied the group. "To be surrounded by so much green - and plentiful water - after the dust and desert they'd left behind was like a fantasy for them."

A comparison with their homeland was made a little later when the young men saw sheep being brought down from the hills. "A few of them talked about helping their fathers find animals, usually goats rather than sheep, that had wandered into the hills. One of the young men added that this was something he'd never do again, as his father had been killed in the war."

Judy Ling Wong told the story of a refugee from Eastern Europe who, after a day planting trees in the Great North Forest, surveyed his work and said "This is just like Bosnia." Perhaps he meant that the experience of working outside on the land was a reminder of how life used to be, or perhaps he meant it literally. Either way, landscape can powerfully evoke thoughts of home. Individual plants and trees can too, when black and minority ethnic groups venture into the unfamiliar territory of green space.

Numerous species considered essentially British were in fact introduced from all corners of the world by private and commercial

collectors, particularly in Victorian times. So plants and trees can provide common reference points between a person's country of origin and country of adoption. However, it can come as a surprise for some people to learn that a flower which grows wild in the country they've left is given superstar, exotic specimen status in Britain.

The largest collection of Chinese plants found outside China can be seen at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh. Plants from this collection have been used to create a Chinese hillside and the one hectare mini ecosystem is a place treated by Western horticulturalists with academic reverence.

However, it can come as a surprise for some people to learn that a flower which grows wild in the country they've left is given superstar, exotic specimen status in Britain

However, visiting members of Scotland's Chinese community responded to the experience quite differently. At the sight of so many old friends, recognised from their country of origin, they chatted animatedly to each other and shared memories of the landscape and lifestyle in China.

They recognised plants and shrubs that have everyday uses in traditional Chinese medicine, or that are cooked as vegetables. They were amused - and perhaps a little bemused - to learn that visitors came from far and wide to examine plants in Edinburgh's Royal Botanical Gardens that in Hong Kong would be on the menu.

BEN

5 New activities enrich lives

"When we started doing things with BEN we didn't know one another. Now it's great. We get out and do things we wouldn't normally do".

Ethan, a member of the Riverside Warehouse Youth Club, Cardiff.

A concern common to black and minority ethnic groups in Cardiff, Siobhan Hayward discovered, was the health of their young people. More specifically, the worry was voiced that teenagers rarely took exercise because they lived in built up urban areas and did not have access to green space.

In response, BEN worked with Storey Arms Outdoor Education Centre, which is just an hour by road from the Welsh capital, to provide taster days for young people. "The simple aim was to show them what the wider countryside looked like" said Siobhan. "Three groups from different minority ethnic backgrounds took part, each of about 20 people. They came from the Samaj Community Centre, The Yemeni Association in Butetown and the Riverside Warehouse Youth Group."

BEN

On the taster days the young people explored a mountain gorge and tried their hand at such activities as caving, abseiling and climbing. "The trips took place in April 1999 and it rained pretty well all the time, so even those who didn't fall in the river got very wet and that was a new experience in itself" said Siobhan. "In the city centre when it rains you stay indoors."

The initial response of the participants was summed up by one of the youth workers who said "They never knew anywhere so beautiful existed in Wales". The group comprised 10 to 14 year olds and the girls proved to be more willing daredevils than the boys when it came to jumping through a waterfall into the river at a point nicknamed Loony's Leap.

Drenched in the experience they'd enjoyed so much, the young people spread the word to their friends that the countryside was (a) not far away and (b) a fun place to find yourself. Some of them also inspired their families to make trips into green spaces beyond the city.

"A few months after the taster trips, we arranged a series of residential visits over three weekends for young people from different

Siobhan Hayward, BEN

The highspot of the whole project was a boat trip to Flatholm island in the Bristol Channel.

black and minority ethnic backgrounds" said Siobhan. "They were accompanied by rangers and followed the course of the Nant Fawr River from its source in the mountains, through Cefn Onn Country Park."

It was here on another occasion that one young Somalian boy, who was part of a women and children's group of asylum seekers and refugees, saw a splendidly proportioned Koi carp in a lake and asked with surprise "Do goldfish grow that big?"

Along the way, the group learned that many of the trees that are considered typically British are actually native to other parts of the world, which perhaps inspired the young people to begin thinking about the countryside in a different way.

"The highspot of the whole project was a boat trip to Flatholm island in the Bristol Channel, where the young people stayed overnight" explained Siobhan. Exploring the abandoned Victorian barracks, isolation hospital and farmhouse aroused curiosity among group members in the island's history.

"They loved the beach and the rock pools" said Siobhan. "But building dens really fired their imagination. It gave them a sense of freedom they hadn't known before."

Another new sensation awaited them when night fell. "The group gathered at the abandoned barracks in the evening, which was a very atmospheric place to be. As dusk turned to dark they told ghost stories until 10pm when the generator at the farmhouse shut down.

"Being in the middle of the Bristol Channel and away from sources of light pollution meant that everything suddenly went pitch black, you literally couldn't see your hand in front of your face. But rather than being frightened by the complete darkness, the group members were fascinated. They were all used to living in the city and experiencing total darkness was new to them."

This new-found interest in the countryside was plainly enriching for the individuals who took part. As a result, some teenage members of the Riverside Warehouse Youth Club embarked upon the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. But familiarity with the countryside as part of a group brought another kind of richness too, as Siobhan explained. "The local schools told us that after their trips and weekends away, members of the different ethnic groups mixed more and made new friendships. A 12 year old boy from Riverside Warehouse, called Ethan, said to me 'When we started doing things with BEN we didn't know one another. Now it's great. We get out and do things we wouldn't normally do."

Many more people of all ages are discovering new activities thanks to the Mosaic project, whose organising officer is Jessica Nar. "The first visit was in April 2002 when we took a group of 21 children - 8 to 15 year olds - from a Hindu group called Shree Prajapati in the Greet area

of Birmingham to the Peak District National Park. Four of their mums came along to help out" explained Jessica.

Accommodation was provided by the Edel Youth Hostel and activities centre, where staff introduced the young people to rock climbing, canoeing, horseriding, caving and more besides. "It was certainly an intensive programme of activities" said Jessica. "The kids were learning new things all the time and they loved it, even though they were pretty well shattered by the end of the second day."

Back home in Birmingham the group made a storyboard of their adventures, which was put on display at the local community centre. "After the trip, when I spoke to Hasmuk Mystri, the leader of Shree Prajapati, he told me that all the young people were keen to take part again in the outdoor activities they'd tried" said Jessica.

"He said he could see that all the young people who'd been on the trip had gained in confidence, particularly one young boy whose parents had separated and who was usually quite introverted, but had come out of his shell and was planning to go to a rock climbing club in the city with the friends he'd made on the trip."

BEN's trips enable young (and not so young) people to take part in new activities they didn't imagine they'd have the opportunity to experience. "We never thought we'd be able to ride a horse" said one delighted member of an Asian group of youngsters from Butetown, Cardiff who went with Siobhan Hayward and Mike Cherry to the Brecon Beacons.

Until this weekend few of the children had seen a horse in the flesh before, but, since this initial visit, the children have taken every opportunity to go riding again when trips can be arranged.

Until this weekend few of the children had seen a horse in the flesh before, but, since this initial visit, the children have taken every opportunity to go riding again when trips can be arranged.

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

Rivers, lakes, the seaside and canals provide almost limitless opportunities for leisure activities. In Western culture water is not only essential to life, it's a source of pleasure, but for some black and minority ethnic groups it can be deeply threatening.

When an older group of asylum seekers from Somalia went horse riding, Siobhan Hayward could see that one man was plainly no stranger to the saddle and asked if he'd ridden often in his home country. "No I've never been on one of these before' he replied. "But I've ridden the fastest water buffalo in our village."

Sometimes the pleasure of being in the countryside can encourage flights of fantasy. After being given time to run about and let off steam at a nature reserve during a BEN outing, a young boy from Morocco hobbled up to the ranger and said he'd sprained his ankle. When asked what happened he replied "I was riding my camel down hill, he tripped and I fell off".

Rivers, lakes, the seaside and canals provide almost limitless opportunities for leisure activities. In Western culture water is not only essential to life, it's a source of pleasure, but for some black and minority ethnic groups it can be deeply threatening. "Many African people instinctively steer clear of rivers and don't feel happy about being near water, let alone in it" said Judy Ling Wong. "This is not surprising when you think that rivers in their home countries can represent danger, either because of crocodiles and snakes, or because of disease."

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

Other black and minority ethnic groups are apprehensive about water too, but for different reasons, as Judy explained. "Vietnamese youngsters often have a fear of water instilled in them by their parents who escaped as boat people during the long years of war."

To try and begin a healing process and show them that water can be fun, BEN worked in partnership with the Ocean Youth Club in London to enable Vietnamese children to have sailing and canoe lessons on canals in the city.

The youth club arranged for the children to take a boat trip on the Thames and the next step was a trip across the channel to France by sailing boat. "These activities were linked to an art project and the children staged an exhibition of their own paintings on the theme of water, which was all part of the healing process" said Judy.

Water sports enriched lives and helped to break down barriers in a shared initiative between the Thameside Youth Service and BEN. Saleem Oppal worked with young Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys between the ages of 11 and 15 who were members of the Holy Trinity Asian Youth Club in Ashton-under-Lyme.

"We wanted to try and address interaction issues between the two groups of boys - and equally importantly, we wanted them to have a fun time and introduce them to a new activity, something they hadn't had the opportunity to try before" explained Saleem.

"Although all the boys were born in the UK, the prejudices and tensions of their parents' generation have been passed down to them. Despite the fact that people from Pakistan and Bangladesh are both Muslim - and used to be part of the same country - the older generations can be suspicious of one another."

Saleem organised a canoe trip adventure for the boys. "The Mersey Basin Trust gave us the OK to use a stretch of the canal and the Thameside Youth Service provided the canoes, instructors and equipment, so we went ahead and arranged an evening session" explained Saleem.

They enjoyed the activity and it was a fun way to give them an experience of the environmental sector, because besides the canoeing, we were able to get them thinking about the plants and animals found on and around the waterside. It built bridges between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys too.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't kind. "It was cold and wet and to be honest I had doubts that the boys would come, but they did. None of them had brought towels or a change of clothes, but we were able to beg and borrow what they needed from the canoe club. "

Despite having turned up, the boys remained unenthusiastic about sitting in canoes for the first time in their lives and being launched into a Manchester canal on a cold, wet evening in September 2002.

"There's no denying they were a bit reluctant" said Saleem. "But once they were on the water that changed. We got a game of canoe football going to warm ourselves up and during this one boy fell in by accident. The others thought this was great and before long they were all falling in - 'by accident', of course."

So how would Saleem gauge the success of the water adventure? "The boys all said they wanted to do it again, so that speaks for itself. Now they know that water can be fun. They enjoyed the activity and it was a fun way to give them an experience of the environmental sector, because besides the canoeing, we were able to get them thinking about the plants and animals found on and around the waterside. It built bridges between the Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys too."

Few people in mainstream white society will be surprised to learn than these young Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys enjoyed their canoe adventure. The real surprise is learning that so many members of minority ethnic communities never have the opportunity to experience new activities that bring them into contact with the environment.

Judy Ling Wong pointed out that "Most of the black and white ethnic communities across the UK lead deprived and city bound lives,

divorced from contact with nature at large. BEN has worked with them to establish opportunities for them to be in touch with plants and with the landscape."

Simply learning that the countryside is only a short distance away is quite an eye opener for many people of all ages from black and minority ethnic communities.

Simply learning that the countryside is only a short distance away is quite an eye opener for many people of all ages from black and minority ethnic communities.

"We wanted to show that you don't have to hire a coach or wait for a bus to reach green space" said Siobhan Hayward. "So, helped by the Riverside Warehouse Youth Group and the Samaj Community Centre, BEN came up with the idea of taking young people on trips to green spaces that are almost on their doorsteps."

Visits to places within easy walking distance, such as Bute Park and Sophia Gardens, were arranged, along with others a little further afield on hired bikes to the Taff Gorge Countryside Centre and Forest Farm.

BEN

The isolation of some ethnic groups is no short-term phenomenon. It stretches back generations.

During the Summer of 2001 over 80 children aged between 8 and 12 took part. "We played games, explored caves, identified trees, did some pond dipping and the children also helped British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BCTV) put up bat boxes" reported Siobhan.

"Very few of the children had been involved in any kind of environmental project before and it was a real adventure for them doing so many new things. One of them said it had been a perfect day and they all wanted to know when we could do it again."

The isolation of some ethnic groups is no short-term phenomenon. It stretches back generations. Cardiff's Yemeni population has been in the city for over a century. The connection is historical, dating back to the days of steam ships, when coal from South Wales was taken from

Cardiff to Aden (as Yemen was called in colonial days), a coaling station for ships bound for the Far East.

Eskander is in his late 20s and his family, originally from Aden in what is now South Yemen, has been in the Butetown area of the city for four generations. Yet, when he accompanied Mike Cherry on a bike trip up the Taff Trail, what he found was a revelation.

This fear of the unknown can be overcome simply by enabling people to visit places where they are surrounded by fields instead of concrete and proving that nothing horrible happens.

"Eskander couldn't believe that open countryside was just 15 minutes from the centre of Cardiff" said Mike. "He looked at sheep and cows as though they were something out of a film. I think Eskander is quite typical of people from his community. Their lives are led within a small area of the city where anonymity gives them a feeling of security. Being a member of a minority ethnic group, on your own in the countryside makes you highly visible and can be threatening.

"This fear of the unknown can be overcome simply by enabling people to visit places where they are surrounded by fields instead of concrete and proving that nothing horrible happens."

Even well established, mature members of minority ethnic groups, who have lived in Britain for many years, can be complete strangers to the countryside, which Jessica Nar found to be true of a group of Indian and Pakistani elders living in Bolton.

"There were 30 in the group, all members of a community centre, so they knew one another well" said Jessica. "I don't think any of them had been to a National Park before we took them to the Lake District." The group was very organised. "They brought their own chef with them because they liked their food to be just so. And whenever we arranged to meet at a certain time they always arrived 15 minutes early."

Activities undertaken included a boat trip on Lake Windermere, a visit to an aquarium and - most popularly - a ride on a steam train, which many present found a nostalgic reminder of railways in India and Pakistan. "The landscape itself made them think of parts of their own countries" said Jessica. "And the plants did as well. One of the group said to me 'It's strange that we have to come to a special park in this country to see plants that grow wild in our gardens at home'."

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

A similar sentiment inspired a group of Sikhs from Radford, Nottingham to organise a trip for themselves to the Himalayas. "They'd been involved in a number of conservation projects and came on a Mosaic visit to the Peak District" said Jessica. "This gave them the idea of arranging a visit to the Himalayas to see plants growing in their native habitat that were brought to Britain and are now thought of by most people as British plants".

Some urban bound members of black and minority ethnic communities are almost unaware that the countryside exists. But many of those who do know there is green space beyond the city often lack the confidence to venture into it. Paradoxically, these same people often

come from farming backgrounds and have rural skills, so might be expected to feel more at home in the country.

Mike Cherry and Siobhan Hayward went with a group of Somali women and their young children to a wetlands reserve at Crymlyn Bog near Swansea. On arrival the women were drawn to a demonstration of basket weaving using reeds that had been harvested from local beds.

"Someone using their hands to make baskets was a familiar sight to these women, because at home in Somalia weaving was an everyday skill they'd learned from their mothers in childhood" said Mike.

"It made them feel at home and a number of the women sat round in a circle and began to weave baskets and of course they were very good at it. So good in fact that they were able to teach new weaving techniques to the person who was giving the basket making demonstration.

"For a time, sitting there chatting and working, they recaptured a little of what life had been like in Somalia, even in the grey drizzle of Swansea."

It made them feel at home and a number of the women sat round in a circle and began to weave baskets and of course they were very good at it. So good in fact that they were able to teach new weaving techniques to the person who was giving the basket making demonstration.

BEN

6 The revelation of richness in what the countryside can offer

"Acorns look much bigger in a book".

Child from Small Heath Community Centre, Birmingham

Being on a working farm and seeing real animals in the fields visibly shocked the children. Some were unsure which were the horses and which were the cows because they'd only seen animals in a book before.

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

For some who take part in BEN trips, the new experience of contrasting urban and rural life manifests itself in a sense of wonder. Judy Ling Wong recalled that, at the end of a trip to Seven Sisters Nature Reserve, near Brighton, a group of Vietnamese who had not been outside London before were asked what they thought of the day.

"They were amazed that in the country you could walk through fields where cows and sheep were grazing" said Judy. "But even more than that, they couldn't believe how different people they met in the country were to their experience of people in the city. One thoughtful young girl said 'In the countryside people open the gate for you when you're walking and say hello.' Then she added 'And they smile at you'.

"Nature in the raw can come as a surprise to children from inner city areas. Jessica Nar took a group of Bradford Bangladeshi and Pakistani mums with their children for a five day residential stay to the Yorkshire Dales National Park in August 2002.

"Being on a working farm and seeing real animals in the fields visibly shocked the children. Some were unsure which were the horses and which were the cows because they'd only seen animals in a book before" said Jessica. "They were completely spellbound by the sheer bulk and size of this huge Aberdeen Angus bull, but with a bit of encouragement one boy stroked it and you could see he felt very pleased with himself for being so brave".

Another young boy showed his concern for animal welfare, when confronted for the first time by cattle. "The cows were waiting to be milked and we were watching them when one put its head through the bars of the pen close to this seven year old boy who turned to his mother he said 'Can I have a tissue to wipe the cow's nose?'."

If your experience of the countryside is virtual, something you've only seen on TV or in books, perceptions can be distorted. To illustrate the point, Judy told of an experience reported to her by Abdul Ghaffar,

a detached youth worker based at Small Heath Community Centre in Birmingham.

"Abdul arranged for a group of kids to take part in a tree project and on reaching the site asked them to search around and find as many acorns as they could. It was Autumn and there were acorns all over the place, so he was surprised when the children returned without a single acorn between them and told him there weren't any to be found.

"He bent down and picked up an acorn that was at his feet and the children were amazed. They thought they were looking for something about the size of a melon. 'But acorns look much bigger in a book' they told him".

The only contact some young people from black and minority ethnic groups have with the countryside is when they go to their parents' country of origin to visit relatives. A Yemeni support worker brought up in Newport had seen mountains and rivers in Yemen, but had no idea that Wales boasted such features.

Judy Ling Wong recalled the story of a group of Vietnamese teenagers, who, while camping in a nature reserve, sat up all night talking in the peaceful and very dark surroundings. "They couldn't understand why a car with its headlights on full beam appeared to be parked just over the brow of the hill behind them" said Judy. "And then to their surprise the moon rose into view and they realised that was where the light was coming from, not a car."

This event turned the topic of conversation to stories told to the teenagers by their parents and grandparents of scholars in villages back home who studied by the light of the moon. "It was a story none of them had really believed before, because they hadn't been out of the city with its light pollution at night" said Judy. "Now they understood that what their elders had told them was true."

The only contact some young people from black and minority ethnic groups have with the countryside is when they go to their parents' country of origin to visit relatives. A Yemeni support worker brought up in Newport had seen mountains and rivers in Yemen, but had no idea that Wales boasted such features. Not until he was an adult involved in an environmental project did he learn otherwise. "I'd no idea Wales was so beautiful" he told Siobhan Hayward.

Being in the countryside of course reveals that nature can be cruel, as well as kind. Judy Ling Wong recalled a group of young people who learned this lesson on a BEN trip.

"They were on a coastal cliff which was covered in holes with spiders' webs, although the spiders were hidden away. The young people were admiring this wonderful work of nature when a fly flew into the web. You can imagine the look on their faces of fascination mixed with horror when the spider shot out of its hiding place and began to suck the living juices from the insect. 'It's just like David Attenborough says' one of the children said".

The experience prompted a lively conversation. "They talked about the cruelty and beauty of nature and asked one another if they thought animals were good or bad."

Simply being in open space for the first time can be daunting for children who have spent all their lives in the city, as Judy Ling Wong explained. "People who have never been into the countryside before can find it a frightening place because it's so unfamiliar. The sheer open space can make them feel uncomfortable. Remember that, if you live on a confined council estate surrounded by tall buildings, you've probably never seen the horizon before.

BEN

"When primary school children from inner city Sheffield were taken on a trip into the countryside and experienced walking on grass for the first time, one of them asked 'What is this? A carpet?' Someone else said 'How do you mow all this?' and was quite unaware of the role of sheep in the landscape.

"On another occasion a child used to urban surroundings was asked if they'd enjoyed their day in the country and replied 'No. There were too many trees'."

The sheer open space can make them feel uncomfortable. Remember that, if you live on a confined council estate surrounded by tall buildings, you've probably never seen the horizon before.

Perceptions of the countryside vary with experience. In the initial stages of arranging a trip for a newly arrived group of asylum seekers from Kosovo, Siobhan Hayward was advised by their social worker "Don't take them anywhere with long grass or they won't be keen to go walking. Where they come from long grass means poisonous snakes."

Judy Ling Wong spoke of a residents' association in Wandsworth, East London whose members were asked where they would like to go for a trip into the countryside. "One of them had been to Richmond Park once and thought that was a truly rural place. For people who have no means of going beyond the urban landscape, a patch of green no bigger than a pocket handkerchief is the countryside".

7 Creating new heritage

"There's no such thing as pure conservation. Projects must recognise the social aspects. It must be people for nature and nature for people".

Judy Ling Wong

"Environmental projects provide a starting point for people to work alongside one another" said Henry Adomako, BEN's Policy and Partnership Officer, who is based in Edinburgh. An example that illustrates his belief is the Cashel Forest project, which was organised by BEN in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

The initial idea was simply to get people out of the tower blocks and into the countryside for fun.

BEN

Started in February 2000 and continuing to the present day, "The initial idea was simply to get people out of the tower blocks and into the countryside for fun" explained Henry. "A group of refugees and asylum seekers living in Glasgow who had taken part in BEN trips found them so inspiring that they said they wanted to give something back" he explained.

"They were introduced to a range of possible conservation activities and ultimately decided they would like to plant trees, so they became involved in helping to create a new forest on a sizable area of land earmarked for the project on the banks of Loch Lomond.

"These people were mostly from Eastern Europe - Bosnia, Albania, Kurdistan - and many of them were farmers who for reasons of conflict had been driven from their homes" said Henry.

The pioneer tree planters named the site of the forest they were creating "Eagle", partly in keeping with other plots at Cashel named after birds and animals, but also as a reference to Armenia's national emblem.

The people involved decided that they would plant each new tree in memory of a fellow countryman killed in conflict, or a relative left behind, which gave it an extra significance.

"Word spread about the project and it captured the imagination of other asylum seekers and refugees who then wanted to join in" said Henry. "The people involved decided that they would plant each new tree in memory of a fellow countryman killed in conflict, or a relative left behind, which gave it an extra significance."

To date, over 300 people have planted trees at Cashel and more return on a regular basis to tend the ground and look after the saplings. "By their work, the Eastern Europeans have made a living memorial in Scotland to loved ones lost and they have also created a heritage site of their own that can be shared by others for generations to come" concluded Henry.

The tree is a symbol of life in many cultures, so it was appropriate that a group of Sikhs in Nottingham decided to create a wood on the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa - the fellowship of those baptised into the religion - in 1999.

A site was chosen in Bestwood Country Park and over 600 people were present at the founding ceremony. The spirit of working as a community continued with hundreds of volunteers coming forward to plant and tend trees. Khalsa Wood is an environmental expression of religious faith and, as it grows, will provide a special space for quiet meditation, along with cultural celebrations. In addition, the wood is a focal point of collective pride for the community.

After planting a tree, one young person said "I am a Sikh. I might be involved with other voluntary organisations, but I want to know more about my own community, my own identity and I want to pass this on to my children."

8 The fulfillment of working on the land

"In their home country they were farmers. They saw the Earth as their mother."

Judy Ling Wong

When they were given the patch of unwanted land to use as an allotment the relationship with the earth that had been broken was re-established. They said what a joy it was to feel their feet in contact with the soil again.

"A passion for the land is felt by many people from the third world where land is life" said Judy Ling Wong. "Once the land they stood on was their land, but this closeness has been eroded by the Western concept of ownership, which has to be proved by records and legal documents."

This close relationship between some black and minority ethnic groups and the earth prompted another example from Judy. "In a joint project between BEN and BTCV [British Trust for Conservation Volunteers] a landowner was found who agreed to let a group of people from Chile adopt a wood.

"This prospect was very exciting for the group who had been peasant farmers at home, but since coming to Britain had been living in urban London. Many ethnic groups over years gravitate to particular parts of a city, so that they can feel they are set within a cultural community, but some groups which are smaller in numbers are sprinkled in tiny numbers across a city.

The Chileans are such a group. "On arrival at the site they could hardly wait for the doors of the coach to open. 'It's our land!' they called to one another. 'We've come to our land!'."

Once they had been reacquainted with working on the land, the former farmers wanted more. "The members of the group made repeated trips to their adopted wood and gained a great deal of pleasure from carrying out conservation work alongside a range of social activities" said Judy.

"Having the notional ownership of this wood provided a psychological base for them" she continued. "They felt it was an important anchor, providing an setting for activities that brought them together. This is all the more important because they remain an unsettled community. Some groups arrive in this country aiming to stay, whereas many people from Latin America are political refugees and are

hugely passionate about their countries. For them their stay is temporary. They want to go home."

Closeness to nature fulfils a deep rooted need for people from other ethnic groups. An elderly Asian man who'd lived in Tottenham for 30 years told Judy Ling Wong "If I could see a cow standing in a field once more before I die, I'd be happy".

Environmental projects can provide a neutral forum for people of different black and minority ethnic groups to come together and work alongside each other. But it's not only in a collective sense that such projects can promote cross-cultural understanding.

The same desire for contact with the earth was revealed by a story Judy Ling Wong told of how a small plot of waste land adjacent to a graveyard in the Kings Cross area of London threw a cultural lifeline to a group of Bangladeshi people.

"In their home country they were farmers. They saw the earth as their mother, like a person who had to be treated with respect and in return would provide for their needs" said Judy Ling Wong.

"When they were given the patch of unwanted land to use as an allotment the relationship with the earth that had been broken was re-established. They said what a joy it was to feel their feet in contact with the soil again."

In the hope of reestablishing lost links with the earth, a Bangladeshi and Pakistani group from the Minority Ethnic Women's Network asked BEN's Mike Cherry to help them arrange a trip to a pick your own farm.

"I have to say that they were quite disappointed when we got there and they realised it meant picking raspberries, the only fruit in season at the time" said Mike. "Most of them came from farming backgrounds and were looking forward to harvesting a variety of crops that would involve doing proper physical work in contact with the earth.

"Some of the women found a field of potatoes and started digging them up with their hands, which fortunately the farmer was OK about, when we explained that the experience had not quite matched the women's expectations.

"Working on the land was obviously something fundamental to these women and they'd missed it since coming to Britain. We suggested to their leaders that they find out about having an allotment."

Environmental projects can provide a neutral forum for people of different black and minority ethnic groups to come together and work alongside each other. But it's not only in a collective sense that such projects can promote cross-cultural understanding.

Individuals who are involved in environmental work are also enriched by the experience. Huda Ashall is a BTCV volunteer who lives in Govan Hill, Glasgow. "When we first came here there was not much to do" she said. "It seemed as though we were sitting at home and waiting."

Huda's life changed when she became involved in tree planting at Cashel Wood.

"The most important thing is socialising and meeting people" said

The experience has made me more aware of my faith and I've discovered the relationship between Islam and the environment. It's brought me closer to my religion and to the community.

Huda. "The experience has made me more aware of my faith and I've discovered the relationship between Islam and the environment. It's brought me closer to my religion and to the community."

Naila Akram of BTCV Scotland pointed out that "Many religions put emphasis on respect for the environment and Islam is very environmental, in fact it forbids cutting down trees for no reason".

Another volunteer, Sybil Wan of the Dixon Hall Community Centre, described how important she feels it is for people living in urban areas to spend time in the countryside. "After the project at Loch Lomond Park Centre children can see for themselves how beautiful trees and the environment are".

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

9 Afterword

When she was working as an interpreter for the National Health Service, Judy Ling Wong took a young Vietnamese boy and his mother to St. James's Park where people were feeding the ducks. Newly arrived in Britain, the mother was incredulous. "You know these English people are really peculiar about animals" she told Judy. "You see these birds flying about? We would have eaten them all."

The anecdote illustrates that different cultures have wildly varied perceptions of nature and the countryside. While Western eyes see rivers and lakes as features that enhance the landscape, they may mean danger and disease to someone from Africa. Walking in the countryside is an enjoyable leisure activity to mainstream white society in the UK, while someone from Somali who has to trudge long distances burdened with a heavy water container every day isn't likely to associate walking with pleasure.

Walking in the countryside is an enjoyable leisure activity to mainstream white society in the UK, while someone from Somali who has to trudge long distances burdened with a heavy water container every day isn't likely to associate walking with pleasure.

BEN's trips into the countryside are helping to foster understanding for all the disparate groups who take part. Thanks to their canoe adventure on a Manchester canal, the young Bangladeshi boys found that water can be fun, just as the white guide at Withenshaw Park learned from the group of elderly Pakistani women how plants in the glasshouse collection could be used for cooking and medicine.

These trips are building trust on all sides. Just as importantly they are enriching lives, widening horizons and giving people fun. It will surely come as a surprise to many in the white mainstream that one reason why black and ethnic groups are so under represented in the British countryside is that they don't know where to find it. Perhaps an even greater cause for concern is the perception among minority ethnic groups that they have no entitlement to be in the countryside.

Common to almost all groups is the positive response to being taken from the confines of urban life into open space. They find the countryside inspiring. Sometimes it evokes comparisons with their country of origin. Youngsters introduced to new activities gain in confidence. Some discover that the countryside can provide a sense of spiritual healing and along with all this come the physical benefits of exercise in the open air.

For those raised in the West, it's not easy to appreciate that the feel of soil under your feet and between your hands can be one of life's essentials. But for people from cultures where this is the case, BEN's trips often open the way to participation in environmental projects (the "starting point for people to work alongside one another" as Henry Adomako put it).

These environmental initiatives are valuable by many definitions, not least because they create new heritage - a heritage in which the minority ethnic groups involved can take pride.

10 And what now?

Capturing Richness is intended to be a first step. The idea is to build on what is here by telling the stories of people who take part in future trips and environmental projects. It's likely that the response today of black and minority ethnic groups to the countryside will change over time, just as it's hoped steps can be taken to make the countryside more welcoming to them and more embracing for all.

MOSAIC: BEN/CNP

Contacts

Jacqui Stearn
Countryside Agency
Tel 01242 533432
jacqui.stearn@countryside.gov.uk

Henry Adomako
BEN Policy and Partnership Officer
Tel 0131 622 7171
Mobile 07952 535224
henry@ben-network.org.uk

Mike Cherry
BEN Development Worker, Swansea
Tel 01792 462990
Mobile 07949 621443
mike@ben-network.org.uk

Siobham Hayward
BEN South Wales Project Leader
Tel 029 20 470 202
Mobile 07952 535302
siobhan@ben-network.org.uk

Judy Ling Wong OBE
Director BEN
Tel 01286 870 746
Mobile 07931 798279
ukoffice@ben-network.org.uk

Jessica Nar
Mosaic Project Officer
Council for National Parks,
Tel 0207 924 4077 x227
Mobile 07973 415142
jessica@cnp.org.uk

Saleem Oppal
BEN Development Worker
Manchester and Liverpool.
Tel 0161 205 6414
Mobile 07952 062 912
Saleem@ben-network.org.uk

John Dower House, Crescent Place
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 3RA

Telephone 01242 521381
Fax 01242 584270

www.countryside.gov.uk

September 2003