

**Places in Cumbria for
wildlife and people**

English Nature Research Reports

Number 705

Places in Cumbria for wildlife and people

Catherine Findlay and Catharine Ward Thompson

OPENspace Research Centre

You may reproduce as many additional copies of this report as you like for non-commercial purposes, provided such copies stipulate that copyright remains with English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA. However, if you wish to use all or part of this report for commercial purposes, including publishing, you will need to apply for a licence by contacting the Enquiry Service at the above address. Please note this report may also contain third party copyright material.

ISSN 0967-876X

© Copyright English Nature 2006

Project officer	Erica Donnison, Cumbria Team
Contractor(s)	Catherine Findlay and Catharine Ward Thompson OPENspace Research Centre

The views in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of English Nature

This report should be cited as:

FINDLAY, C. & WARD THOMPSON, C. 2006. Places in Cumbria for wildlife and people.
English Nature Research Reports, No 705.

Acknowledgements

This research was carried out by Catherine Findlay, for OPENspace research centre, with the assistance of Anne Boyle, Anna Orme, Elizabeth Payne, Jenny Roe, Sucharita Srirangam and Takemi Sugiyama and under the overall direction of Catharine Ward Thompson. The project manager at English Nature was Erica Donnison.

Executive summary

This study was carried out on behalf of English Nature to consider how people in Cumbria perceive local green spaces and nature reserves and their expectations of Local Nature Reserves. Its aim was also to inform consideration of increasing the provision of Local Nature Reserves in Cumbria. The policy context was English Nature's 'People and Nature' Programme, which aimed to reconnect people and nature by emphasising the benefits from nature in terms of health, wealth and well-being, and also the Public Involvement and Awareness Plan within the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP).

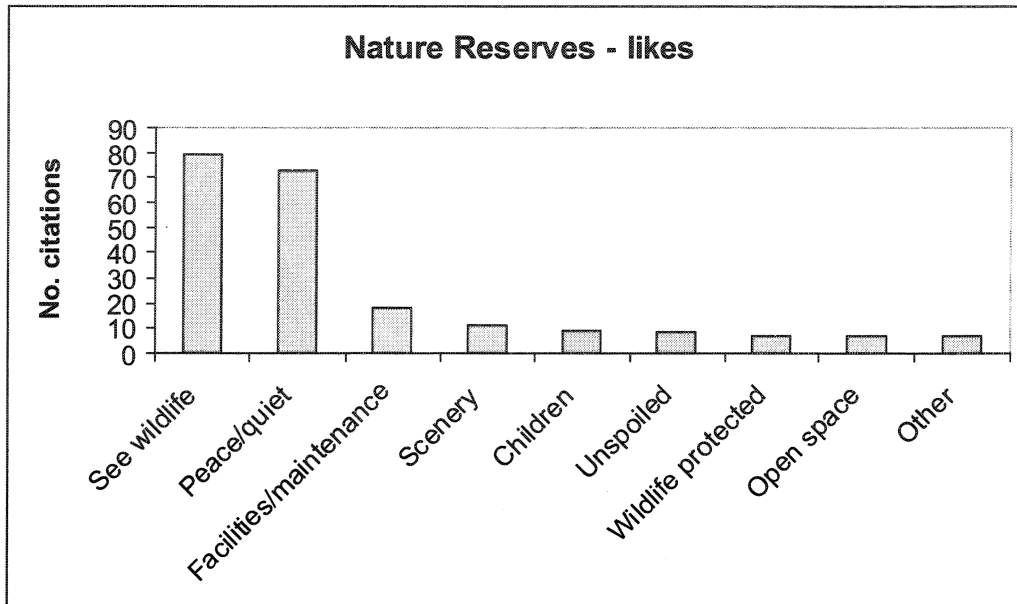
The study comprised a scoping forum with key stakeholders, and a series of questionnaires and interviews with local people in Cumbria, health professionals, local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria, representatives of local strategic partnerships and environmental organisations, representatives of businesses in Cumbria, and local schools and youth organisations.

Key points

- Green spaces and nature reserves in Cumbria are highly valued for their contribution to health and well-being, enjoyment and relaxation, as well as opportunities to interact with wildlife.
- Cumbria's natural heritage attracts 15 million visitors per year, contributing to the local economy, as well as attracting companies and professionals to relocate in the area.
- Many people perceive that Cumbria is well served with nature reserves through the National Parks and National Nature Reserves; however the majority of Local Nature Reserves are located away from urban areas where most people live.
- Local Nature Reserves are recognised as beneficial for people's health and well-being, quality of life, and local communities in general, as well as for wildlife.
- What people value most about nature reserves are the opportunities to see wildlife, and also to experience peace and quiet (see table below).
- People consider that existing sites are poorly publicised and often not welcoming – this could be significantly improved by major promotional efforts and by making sites easier and safer to walk to.
- Better public transport and better physical access for disabled people, families with children, and people from economically disadvantaged areas would also make a difference.
- The ideal is for everyone to have a green space or nature reserve within 10 minutes' walk of home as this appears to be a significant threshold.
- In many cases, the richness and value of open space sites already used by local people should be developed, as an alternative to designating new sites.
- Any new Local Nature Reserves should be designated near urban areas, and particularly around Barrow-in-Furness (which is currently poorly served), taking advantage of old brownfield sites/derelict land.
- Community engagement and local community identity are evidently important aspects of nature reserves. Community involvement in Local Nature Reserves should be

developed and promoted, working in partnership with businesses, schools and land owners as well as local people.

The qualities that people like most about nature reserves



Local people in Cumbria (n=205)

People visit a large variety of outdoor sites in Cumbria, particularly woodlands, footpaths or tracks, and local parks and grassy areas. Most people visit open spaces at least once a week, and nearly 40% spend 30-60 minutes on each visit. Just over half of all these people travel by car, but nearly 40% of people travel by foot. By far the most popular activity is walking, followed by seeing plants and wildlife, walking the dog, relaxing and children's play. People expect sites to be easily accessible to local people, particularly by public transport, free of litter and dog mess, with well-maintained paths. People also expect sites to have good facilities in terms of seating, toilets, café and car parking, and to be well publicised. Lack of awareness about Local and National Nature Reserves was cited as one of the main deterrents to visiting.

Over 90% of people want nature reserves to look natural and wild but 75% want facilities such as toilets, seats and shelters and over 60% want sites with wardens or rangers that are within walking distance of home. Almost all respondents were positive about nature reserves as places where children could learn about nature, where they could see plants and wildlife and where they could go for relaxation or exercise.

Nearly all respondents associate nature reserves with feeling peaceful and close to nature. Over 80% think they are important places for local communities. While 40% of people thought that nature reserves could be places to meet people, over 40% also associate them with getting away from people. While 40% of respondents thought that nature reserves were associated with a sense of community ownership, over 40% thought they were difficult to find out about.

Women feel more strongly than men about the provision of facilities, the presence of rangers and the possibility of children learning about nature. Younger people (under 35) are more likely to visit nature reserves to walk the dog or relax; as people get older, feeling close to nature becomes more important. Community events in nature reserves were most important to unemployed people and least important for retired people. Of the population surveyed, people from Barrow were significantly more likely to consider nature reserves difficult to get to than were people from the other five local authority areas in Cumbria.

Health professionals (n=23)

All respondents recommended outdoor physical activity to their patients, particularly walking, as well as general outdoor sports and exercise. The majority thought the benefit was principally mental health, well-being and relaxation, and nearly half mentioned weight control, cardio-vascular or respiratory health or general fitness. These comments were reflected in the responses to the perceived benefits of access to nature. Risks were mainly seen as falls/accidents, particularly for older people. Most respondents thought a significant barrier is lack of transport, followed by lack of patient motivation.

Local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria (n=14)

Local green spaces and nature reserves are seen as an asset to local people, communities, businesses and tourism, in terms of quality of life, economics and biodiversity. There are concerns about maintenance and its costs, in particular. There is a lack of knowledge about Local Nature Reserves, their location, opening hours and site information and interpretation. Better publicity, welcoming sites, use of the internet and making sites more accessible for disabled people could improve the use of nature reserves. Many thought there was no need to designate further reserves, although some people suggested that more sites were needed near urban areas, and could be developed on former industrial land, brownfield sites, and the decommissioned nuclear station and centre for reprocessing. Barriers to increasing the number of Local Nature Reserves were identified as lack of resources and political will, and local opposition, especially from landowners.

Local Strategic Partnership members and Cumbrian environmental organisations (n=25)

This group valued nature reserves and local green spaces for health and well-being. Barriers to use were identified as lack of knowledge, lack of welcoming sites and lack of reliable/affordable public transport. These barriers could be overcome or mitigated by publicity, education, making sites more welcoming and working with communities. Barriers to designating nature reserves were mentioned by a minority of respondents, and were associated with the attitude of local authorities or landowners, maintenance costs and competing pressures for land, such as for housing.

Business sector (n=6)

For respondents in this sector, access to nature and wildlife was seen as beneficial for quality of life and good for business in terms of image, good environment and community. Some business organisations have strong involvement in local nature/wildlife sites and organisations.

Schools and youth organisations (n=7)

Youth educators and workers see green spaces and nature reserves as a valuable resource in themselves, as well as for education, for learning citizenship and dealing with conflict. Barriers to access and use could be overcome by better transport, more publicity, information and interpretation and removing physical site barriers such as stiles. Most respondents had visited wildlife sites with school children and young people, had heard of the Cumbrian Biodiversity Action Plan and had some involvement in wildlife projects and policies. Issues related to designating new nature reserves included child protection, if on school property, and competing pressures for land development.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

1	Introduction.....	15
1.1	Project objectives.....	15
1.2	Background.....	15
1.3	Project approach.....	16
2	Project methodology	17
2.1	Introduction.....	17
2.2	Forum with key stakeholders	17
2.3	Questionnaire of local people	17
2.4	Questionnaire of healthcare professionals	18
2.5	Local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria.....	18
2.6	Local Strategic Partnership (LSPs) members	18
2.7	Businesses in Cumbria	19
2.8	Schools and youth organisations.....	19
3	Scoping meeting with stakeholders	20
3.1	Introduction.....	20
3.2	Meeting aims.....	20
3.3	Responses to issues	20
3.4	Key points	21
4	Questionnaire of local people in Cumbria	23
4.1	Introduction.....	23
4.2	Use of local green spaces and nature reserves.....	23
4.3	Which sites local people visited.....	24
4.4	What local people like most about nature reserves.....	26
4.5	What people like least about nature reserves.....	28
4.6	How nature reserves could be improved.....	29
4.7	Attitudes towards nature reserves	29
4.8	Key points	33
5	Health care professionals	34
5.1	Introduction.....	34
5.2	Benefits of outdoor activity and access to natural places	34
5.3	Barriers to outdoor activity	36
5.4	Recommended sites	37
5.5	Use of outdoor places by health professionals.....	37
5.6	Key points	38
6	Local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria	38
6.1	Introduction.....	38

6.2	Perceptions about local green spaces and nature reserves.....	39
6.3	Raising awareness of Local Nature Reserves	40
6.4	Involvement in sites and open space strategies.....	40
6.5	Potential for creating new nature reserves.....	42
6.6	Suggestions for new Local Nature Reserves	43
6.7	Key points	43
7	Local strategic partners and environment organisations.....	45
7.1	Involvement in local green spaces and nature reserves	45
7.2	Use of green space and nature reserves	46
7.3	Actions to increase awareness and use of nature sites by local people.....	49
7.4	Potential for new Local Nature Reserves.....	50
7.5	Key points	51
8	Business sector in Cumbria.....	51
8.1	Introduction.....	51
8.2	Awareness of places for people and wildlife/natural landscapes.....	51
8.3	Access to natural spaces and having nature reserves nearby.....	52
8.4	Involvement with the local sites or nature projects	52
8.5	Potential for creating more nature reserves/natural areas.....	53
8.6	Key points	53
9	Schools and youth organisations.....	53
9.1	Introduction.....	53
9.2	Perceptions about green spaces and nature reserves.....	54
9.3	Actions to increasing awareness of green spaces and nature reserves.....	54
9.4	Involvement with sites and policies	54
9.5	Suggestions for new sites.....	55
9.6	Key points	55
10	Meeting the target for Local Nature Reserves	56
10.1	Introduction.....	56
10.2	Action plan.....	57
11	References.....	59
	Appendix 2 Points raised at scoping meeting with stakeholders	63
	Appendix 3. Questionnaire of local people in Cumbria – Summary responses	67
	Appendix 4 Outdoor recreation sites visited by people in Cumbria	71
	Appendix 5 Questionnaire sent to health care professionals	73
	Appendix 6 Respondents from local strategic partnerships and Cumbria environmental groups	77

List of tables

Table 1.1 Local Nature Reserves in Cumbria (2003)	15
Table 4.1 Nature Reserves named by local people in Cumbria	25
Table 4.2 Themes in what people want from nature reserves.....	32
Table 5.1 Perceived benefits access to nature and natural places.....	35
Table 5.2 Potential risks of increased outdoor exercise.....	36
Table 5.3 Outdoor places recommended by health professionals.....	37
Table 5.4 Sites visited by Health Professionals	37
Table 6.1 Involvement in local nature conservation sites in Cumbria.....	41
Table 6.2 Open space strategies.....	41
Table 6.3 Suggestions for new Local Nature Reserves	43
Table 7.1 Involvement of respondents in green spaces and nature reserves.....	45
Table 10.1 Suggested sites for new Local Nature Reserves	58
Table A Physical aspects, activities and perceptions about nature reserves.....	61
Table B Population by local authority boundary	62
Table C Population by gender (all Cumbria).....	62
Table D Questionnaire sample breakdown (by local authority, gender and age group).....	62
Table E Scoping Workshop: what nature reserves mean to people in Cumbria.....	63
Table F Scoping workshop: what people in Cumbria expect from nature reserves	64
Table G Scoping workshop: suggestions for improving the provision of nature reserves in Cumbria	65

List of figures

Figure 4.1 Types of green spaces most likely to be visited	23
Figure 4.2 Mode of transport to site by journey time	24
Figure 4.3 What people like most about nature reserves.....	26
Figure 4.4 Dislikes about nature reserves.....	28
Figure 4.5 Suggested improvements to nature reserves.....	29
Figure 4.6 What people want from nature reserves – physical aspects	30
Figure 4.7 What people want from nature reserves – activities.....	31
Figure 4.8 What people want from nature reserves - perceptions	32
Figure 5.1 Health professionals' views on recommendations for outdoor exercise	34
Figure 5.2 Benefits of outdoor physical activity.....	35
Figure 7.1 Benefits of local green spaces and nature reserves (LSPs)	46
Figure 7.2 Barriers to use of local green sites and nature reserves.....	47
Figure 7.3 Actions to increase awareness and use of nature sites.....	49

Research Information Note

1 Introduction

1.1 Project objectives

This project was commissioned in 2005-6 by English Nature, Cumbria, to explore:

- How people perceive National and Local Nature Reserves in Cumbria, and what they want or expect from them.
- How to progress the issue of meeting the target for the number of Local Nature Reserves (LNR) in Cumbria.

1.2 Background

The policy context of the study was English Nature's 'People and Nature Programme' (English Nature 2003), which aimed to reconnect people and nature by emphasising the benefits from nature in terms of health, wealth and well-being, and also to encourage local English Nature teams to reach out to the community. The project included several objectives from the Public Involvement and Awareness Plan within the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan (CBAP, 2001) to increase awareness and involvement with wildlife conservation.

Local Nature Reserves are sites which are at least of local importance for wildlife, geology, education or enjoyment, are either within, or controlled by, the local authority, and where the main priority is to care for the natural features which make the sites special. English Nature currently recommends a density of one hectare of LNR land per 1000 people. At the time of the study, Cumbria had 8 declared LNRs (out of a total of 1000 LNRs in England), with a total area of 461 hectares, and a population of 487607 (2001 census). However, almost all LNR land is currently within Copeland Borough Council, leaving the urban districts where most local people live below the LNR target level (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Local Nature Reserves in Cumbria (2003)

Local Authority	Site Name	Total LNR area	Population	LNR provision ¹
Allerdale Borough Council	Harrington Reservoir, Siddick Pond	28	93492	0.30 ha
Barrow-in-Furness Borough Council	-	-	71980	0
Carlisle City council	Kingmoor Sidings	18	100739	0.18 ha
Copeland Borough Council	Drigg Dunes and Gullery ² , Millom Iron Works	405	69318	5.84 ha
Eden District Council	Cowcraik Quarry	4.8	49777	0.10
South Lakeland District Council	Holme Park Quarry ³	4.8	102301	0.05

¹ Ha. per 1000 population

² Drigg Dunes and Gullery LNR is administered by the Lake District National Park Authority

³ Holme Park Quarry is under Cumbria County Council as declaring authority

Cumbria's natural heritage attracts 15 million visitors per year, contributing to the local economy as well as providing an attraction for companies and professionals to relocate in the area. One of the aims of the project was to explore how a range of stakeholder

representatives, from health professionals to local businesses and landowners, perceived the value of the natural environment and the need for more local provision of nature reserves.

1.3 Project approach

The project approach was to hold an initial scoping forum with key stakeholders, followed by a series of questionnaires/interviews targeted at local people and at representatives of different sectors with an interest in people's access to nature, ie health professionals, local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria, Local Strategic Partnership members, representatives of the business sector, and people working with children and young people.

2 Project methodology

2.1 Introduction

The methodology comprised:

- A forum with key stakeholders to identify the main issues and to refine strategies for approaching the different sectors.
- A postal questionnaire of local people.
- A postal/email questionnaire of healthcare professionals.
- Email questionnaires/telephone interviews with representatives of local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria, Local Strategic Partnership members and environment organisations in Cumbria, representatives of the business sector in Cumbria, and people working in schools and youth organisations.

2.2 Forum with key stakeholders

A number of stakeholders representing local people and land interests in Cumbria, identified in consultation with the client, were invited to a forum to discuss the nature and scope of the project. The meeting was held at the offices of the Lake District National Park in Kendal. The main of the forum was to explore with stakeholders:

- What nature reserves and green spaces mean to people in Cumbria?
- What do people from Cumbria expect from nature reserves and green spaces?
- What can be done to improve and make a difference to the current provision of nature reserves in Cumbria?

2.3 Questionnaire of local people

A postal questionnaire was used to gather information from people living in Cumbria about their perceptions and expectations from green spaces and nature reserves. The sample was stratified by age and gender for each local authority area, according to the 2001 census data (see Appendix 1 for details of questionnaire design and population sampling).

The questionnaire was designed to provide data on the following:

- The use of local green spaces and nature reserves in Cumbria.
- Which sites people visit.
- What people like and dislike about nature reserves.
- Their attitudes towards green spaces and nature reserves.

2.4 Questionnaire of healthcare professionals

A separate questionnaire was developed for healthcare professionals, which sought to explore their perceptions and recommendations in relation to:

- Outdoor physical activity or visiting outdoor/natural areas (for health reasons).
- Potential health/well-being benefits of increased outdoor physical activity for patients.
- Potential benefit of access to nature and natural places for patients.
- Potential risks of increased outdoor activity for patients.
- The main barriers to increased outdoor activity for patients.
- Outdoor places recommended to patients.
- Health professionals' own use of outdoor places.

2.5 Local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria

Representatives of all the local authorities in Cumbria, National Park Authorities, and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria were contacted and interviewed via email and telephone. The questionnaire was aimed at the person responsible for nature reserves or nature conservation, and was designed to explore perceptions about:

- Local green spaces and nature reserves.
- How English Nature can improve awareness of Local Nature Reserves.
- Involvement in outdoor sites in Cumbria.
- Open space strategies.
- The potential for creating new nature reserves.

2.6 Local Strategic Partnership (LSPs) members

LSPs are non-statutory, non-executive single bodies, operating within local authority boundaries, which bring together different parts of the public and private sectors, business, community and voluntary sectors, and operate strategically to achieve economic, social and physical regeneration. Members of the LSPs are involved in the Cumbrian Biodiversity Action Plan. All members of the LSPs operating within Cumbria were contacted by email and sent a questionnaire which was designed to explore:

- Perceptions about local green spaces and nature reserves.
- Whether such places were considered to be an asset or a problem.
- The barriers to the use of local green spaces and nature reserves
- How English Nature could raise awareness and use of local green spaces and nature reserves.
- Involvement in local green spaces and nature reserves.
- Policies and strategies to do with local green spaces and nature reserves, including involvement in the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan.

- Suggestions for sites which could be designated as LNRs.
- Details of any projects, studies or research into green spaces and nature reserves in Cumbria.

2.7 Businesses in Cumbria

A sample of businesses located in Cumbria was selected to obtain their views on how organisations perceive nature reserves and other green spaces, what this means to local business and industry, and what can be done to improve and make a difference to the current provision of nature reserves in Cumbria. Initial contact was by telephone, where necessary following up with an email version of the questionnaire. The following key issues relating to places for people and wildlife and the benefits of access to natural spaces were raised with participants:

- Awareness of nature and wildlife as an issue.
- Awareness of Local Nature Reserves
- Benefits of access to nature and green spaces.
- Interest in involvement in local sites.
- Potential for more nature reserves.

2.8 Schools and youth organisations

A sample of schools in Cumbria were identified from the Good Schools Guide and approached by email. This did not elicit many responses, and so a sample of teachers identified for their involvement in the Grounds for Wildlife Project with the Cumbria Wildlife Trust were sent postal questionnaires. The Grounds for Wildlife Project was a project which aimed to encourage schools in Cumbria to develop school grounds to create habitats for wildlife, as well as support the Citizen Curriculum. Organizations concerned with young people were identified through the Cumbria Youth Alliance, which has local youth partnerships in each of the local authority areas. The questionnaire was designed to obtain their views about:

- How green spaces and nature reserves were perceived.
- How English Nature could increase awareness/the use of nature sites by children and young people.
- Involvement in sites and wildlife policies.
- Suggestions for new nature reserves.

3 Scoping meeting with stakeholders

3.1 Introduction

The first phase of the project was to hold a scoping meeting with a number of stakeholders representing local people, nature and wildlife interests, and land interests in Cumbria. The primary goal of the meeting was to explore the whole subject area and opinions and perceptions held by these stakeholders, which could be used to define the content of subsequent questionnaires and interviews: A secondary purpose was to engage these groups in the research process and generate contacts with further interested groups of stakeholders. The meeting was held in October 2005 at the offices of the Lake District National Park in Kendal. Attendees represented agencies such as local authorities, local councils, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), wildlife trusts, the Environment Agency, the Lake District National Park, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, The Country Land and Business Association, BTCV, Eden Rivers Trust and community voluntary groups. Over one hundred invitations were issued and 20 people attended the scoping forum.

3.2 Meeting aims

The forum attendees were presented with three questions relating to the key issues of the study as a starting point for discussion:

- What do nature reserves and green spaces mean to people in Cumbria?
- What do people from Cumbria expect from nature reserves and green spaces?
- What can be done to improve and make a difference to the current provision of nature reserves in Cumbria?

Appendix 1 contains the detailed record of points made in the breakout groups of the forum.

3.3 Responses to issues

What do nature reserves and green spaces mean to people in Cumbria?

This highlighted nature reserves as important places to carry out activities such as walking, sport or play, and that nature reserves were 'special places'. Participants expressed a rich range of perceptions and meanings associated with nature reserves and green spaces. Reference was made to many activities associated with outdoor environments in general, such as walking the dog, children playing, leisure and sporting activities, wildlife watching and more passive pursuits such as relaxing. Psychological and sensory connections to the landscape were particularly appreciated. It was acknowledged that the land had an economic purpose as a valued source of jobs in farming and tourism as well as a functional role in flood plain management. Participants also referred to the health benefits of access to green space.

What people from Cumbria expect from nature reserves and green spaces

Stakeholders believed that people in Cumbria expected nature reserves and green spaces to have a nature value, to have some community involvement, that sites would be nearby and easily accessible, that there would be on-site information/interpretation and a certain level of

management – enough to appear looked after, but still appear natural. However participants also considered that local people might be confused as to what constituted a nature reserve, and were unsure of acceptable behaviours, especially with dogs.

Participants indicated that expectations for nature reserves and green spaces were often contradictory. For example, there were expectations in some settings, such as country parks, of a high level of facilities and maintenance, which may be at odds with requirements for biodiversity. However people did not always expect high levels of wildlife. Despite wanting good facilities and well-maintained sites, participants felt that there was often a reluctance to pay for using sites. There was also some confusion about what distinguished a nature reserve from other green spaces, and why these were special places.

There was also an acknowledgement of the value of the landscape as a source of much needed employment in tourism and agriculture but also of the potential for conflict of views between representatives of landowners with a business interest, and those with an ecological interest in the Cumbrian landscape.

How to make a difference to the provision of nature reserves

The discussion highlighted the importance of involving local communities in the management and decision-making processes about Local Nature Reserves, and siting nature reserves near to or easily accessible from the places people live. People agreed that some work may be needed to change the mindset of individuals and organisations towards nature reserves and to address some of the potential barriers and conflicts of interest; there was a need for more information and educational resources about nature reserves. It was important to work together with local communities and promote tolerance between different interests and user groups. One suggestion was to address the fears of landowners that wildlife and public access were incompatible with earning a living from the land. Participants referred to a lack of appreciation by local authorities about the value of nature reserves as a local resource. There was a perception that nature reserves could be better marketed as a broad ‘experience’ not just of wildlife but with a wider sensory appeal. Addressing access issues on many levels was also important – some people were unsure about access rights and wanted sites that were local and easily accessible.

3.4 Key points

The key themes which emerged were:

- **Activities:** nature reserves and green spaces as a setting for various activities such as dog walking, recreation, sport, exercise, play, relaxation and seeing wildlife.
- **Physical attributes** of nature reserves and green spaces: a buffer to industry, bringing the countryside into towns, scenery and fresh air, woodlands and water, sensory aspects, managed for biodiversity.
- **Perceptions** about nature reserves and green spaces: connections to the landscape, a place to feel free.
- **Conflict between:**
 - the land as a source of jobs and livelihoods eg agriculture, tourism, which may be at odds with biodiversity and access;
 - biodiversity and management, preservation and conservation;

- improving access and facilities and fears of litigation, how to meet health and safety concerns.
- **Health benefits** (physical/mental): how to publicise and develop.
- **Community involvement:** importance to management and partnership.
- **Accessibility:** rights, some uncertainty about access rights, being within walking distance.
- **Definitions of nature reserves:** knowledge (or lack of it) about what they are, why any site is designated, where they are and why we need them.
- **Learning:** the role of education, interpretation and visitor information.
- **Funding:** to pay for improvements, should we charge?
- **Barriers and negative perceptions:** fears for personal safety, and perceived lack of relevance - 'not for the likes of us'.

4 Questionnaire of local people in Cumbria

“...you can watch birds and animals closer than you are able to in other everyday surroundings....wildlife you wouldn't see in your normal routine”.

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the main findings of the questionnaire sent out to a sample of local people in Cumbria, which was concerned with the use of local green spaces and nature reserves, the sites people visited, what they liked and disliked about nature reserves and their attitudes to nature reserves. Of 1000 questionnaires sent out, there were 205 replies – a response rate of 20.5%. The full questionnaire and responses are given in Appendix 3.

4.2 Use of local green spaces and nature reserves

Most respondents (98.5%) claimed to visit local green spaces or nature reserves. However, it is possible that there may have been some bias in respondents: non-users may have been less interested in the issue and therefore not so motivated in responding to the questionnaire.

The most likely green spaces to be visited by respondents were woodlands (21.8%), footpaths, bridleways or cycle tracks (19.5%), grassy areas or public playing fields (13.6%), nature reserves (13.0%) or formal parks or gardens (13.0%) (see Figure 4.1).

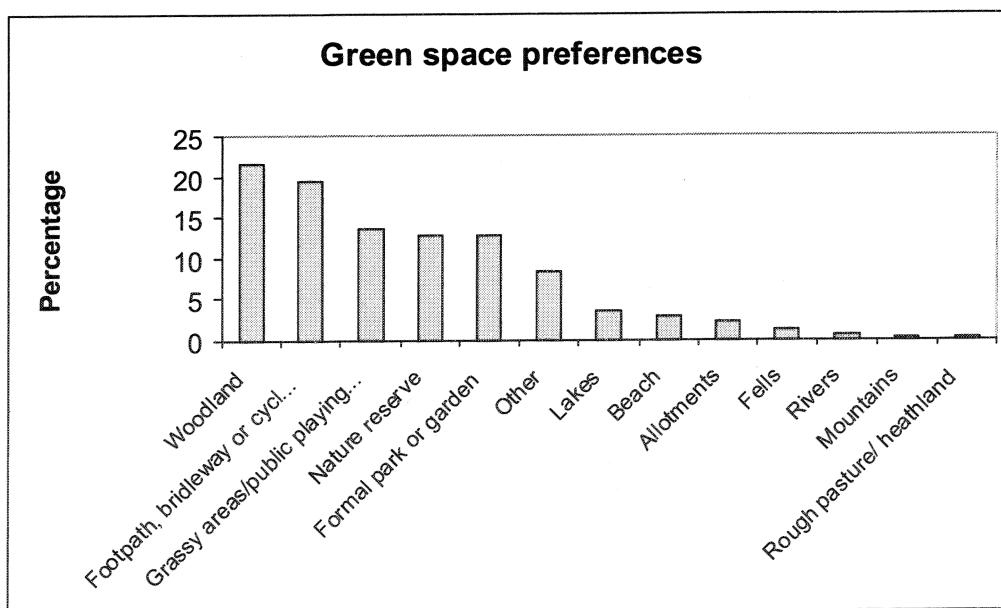


Figure 4.1 Types of green spaces most likely to be visited

Just over 50% of the respondents visited these outdoor places at least once a week, with 13% visiting on a daily basis. The average length of visit was 30-60 minutes, and 68% of visitors for this length of time were less than 10 minutes away from their local site. The most common mode of transport was by car (53.7%) or on foot (38.7%); very few visits were made by public transport (1.5%).

For nearly half of the respondents (44.4%), travel time, whatever mode used, was less than 10 minutes – this seems to indicate a significant threshold for outdoor recreation sites. 75% of people travelling on foot took less than 10 minutes to reach the site and only 5% travelled more than 30 minutes on foot. Just over half of all car journeys to sites took 10 to 30 minutes, although a substantial number (27% of car journeys) took less than 10 minutes. For cyclists and those using public transport, the modal journey time was 10-30 minutes. (See Figure 4.2).

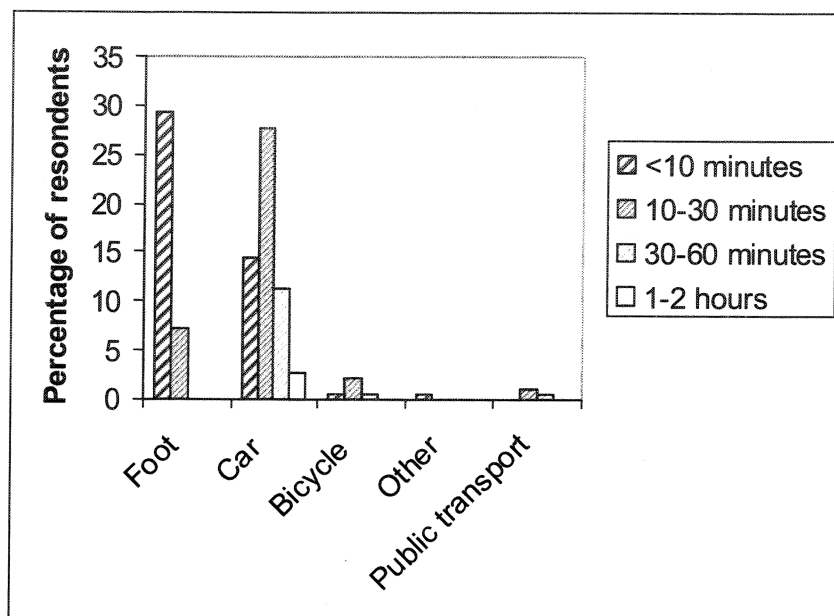


Figure 4.2 Mode of transport to site by journey time

There was a significant association between travel time and frequency of visit, with those less than 10 minutes away constituting almost all of the daily visitors and the majority of those visiting at least once a week. By contrast, all those who visited less frequently than once a month (with one exception) had travel times of 10 minutes or more to their local green space.

The most popular activity carried out in outdoor places was walking (33.8%), followed by looking at plants and wildlife (16.2%) or walking the dog (15.5%). The least popular activity was participating in an event (0.9%). ‘Other’ activities (4%) included fishing, climbing, cycling, horse-riding, picnic or painting. There was a strong association between travel time and activity: most dog walkers (61%) travelled for less than 10 minutes to reach sites. Dog walkers were also more likely to visit outdoor recreation sites on a daily basis (70%).

4.3 Which sites local people visited

Local people in Cumbria visited a wide variety of outdoor recreation sites – ranging from small local parks and playing fields, local woodlands and forest parks, to nature reserves and places in the Lake District or National Park (see Appendix 4 for a complete listing). The most popular sites were ‘the Lake District’ (n=12), Bitts Park, Carlisle (n=7), Borrowdale Fells (n=6) and Grizedale Forest (n=8). Nature reserves included: Bassenthwaite Lake National Nature Reserve (NNR), Clints Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT) Reserve), Harrington Reservoir Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Kingmoor LNR, Leighton Moss (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)) and Smardale Gill (NNR and CWT).

When local people were prompted specifically about nature reserves, a high awareness of different sites was indicated (See Table 4.1). These sites comprised Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs), sites managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT), The National Trust (NT) and the Forestry Commission (FC), as well as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and various miscellaneous outdoor recreation sites. The most well-known and visited nature reserves named by local people were Walney Island (North Walney is an NNR, and South Walney is a CWT Reserve) (mentioned by 39 people), Kingmoor (LNR) (16), Whinlatter Forest (FC) (12) and the Leighton Moss area (RSPB) (15).

Table 4.1 Nature Reserves named by local people in Cumbria

Local Nature Reserves (LNR) Drigg Dunes and Gullery (5), Harrington Reservoir (4), Kingmoor (16), Millom Iron Works, Siddick Ponds (8),
National Nature Reserves (NNR) Asby Scar, Bassenthwaite Lake (LDNP), Drumburgh Moss, Finlandrigg Wood (4), Hallsenna Moor, Roudsea Wood and Mosses (5), Sandscale Haws (NT)(4), Smardale Gill (CWT), Walney Island (North Walney is NNR, South Walney is CWT) (39), Whitbarrow (4)
Sites managed by Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT) Burns Beck Moss, Brown Robin, Clints Quarry (2), Dorothy Farrer's Spring Wood, Eskmeals Dunes, Humphrey Head, Hutton Roof Crags, Latterbarrow
Lake District National Park (LDNP) Brockhole (3), Coniston Water, Derwent Water, Lake District generally (12), Ullswater (2), Windermere,
RSPB Campfield Marsh (2), Geltsdale (7), Haweswater (3), Hodbarrow (5), Leighton Moss, Barrow Scout and Silverdale Moss (15), St Bees Head (5)
Yorkshire Dales National Park Ingleborough (also NNR, not in Cumbria)
National Trust (NT) Fell Foot (3), Langdale Forest, Brotherswater, Tarn Howes (2)
Forestry Commission (FC) Dodd Wood, Grizedale Forest (8), Whinlatter Forest (12)
Country Parks Talkin Tarn Country Park (7),
SSSIs/AONB, Private Reserves Arnside Knott (NT) (3), Bowness Common NR (Campfield Marsh RSPB)(3), Burgh Marsh, Hadrian's Wall Path, Hay Bridge Nature Reserve (The John Strutt Conservation Foundation), Longlands Lake, near Cleator (Managed by Cumbria County Council), Musgrave Church Field (purchased by local trust), Roanhead Beach/Duddon Estuary (6), Rockcliffe Marsh, Silloth sand dunes/Grune Point (2), Solway Coast (4), Watchtree Great Orton Nature Reserve (Private)
Miscellaneous outdoor locations Ambleside, Aydal Hall, Bank Hill, Dallam Tower and Deer Park, Etterby Park, Lowry Hill, Carlisle, Muncaster Castle and Gardens, Silverdale (3), Thalka Beck, Tindale, Bitts Park (Carlisle), Killington Lake, River Eden, Caldbeck, Cleator Moor, Hartsop village, Haverthwaite, Rampside, Ravenglass (4), Haverigg (2), Knocks Wood Wildlife Centre (2), Lakeland Wildlife Oasis (2), Haverbrack Woods, near Storth, Dalton Zoo Park

Note: Numbers in brackets refer to the number of respondents identifying each nature reserve
 Initials in brackets refer to other designations that all or part of the site fall under
 Locations named by respondents are identified to the best of our knowledge but some in the miscellaneous category may have been mis-named or incorrectly identified

4.4 What local people like most about nature reserves

The main qualities that local people valued about nature reserves were the opportunity to see and be near wildlife, mentioned by 79 people (38.5% of the sample), and the peace and quiet offered by nature reserves, mentioned by 73 people (35.6%) (see Figure 4.3). People also valued the facilities, information about wildlife and looked-after appearance of nature reserves (8.8%), and the feeling of freedom/fresh air and getting away (6.8%). They appreciated the beauty of the scenery/views (5.4%), nature reserves as places to go with children (4.4%), and that nature reserves appeared natural and unspoiled (3.9%). Other positive qualities mentioned were that nature reserves were a place for wildlife to be protected, nearby and public places, the feeling of open space, the sense of freedom and discovery, and that nature reserves provided an opportunity to meet people with similar interests and felt 'safe'.

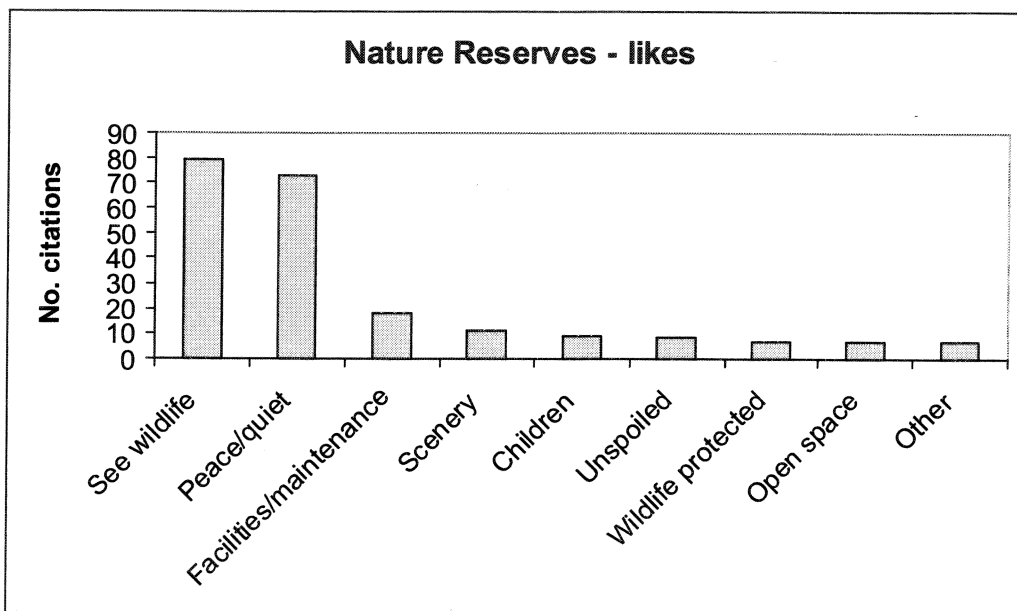


Figure 4.3 What people like most about nature reserves

Seeing wildlife

Seeing wildlife was the most widely appreciated quality of nature reserves:

“...you can see different species of animals and bugs in their own environment”

“...you can watch birds and animals closer than you are able to in other everyday surroundings....wildlife you wouldn't see in your normal routine”.

People mentioned a wide range of wildlife that they had been able to see in a natural “or as near natural as possible” habitat: birds, red squirrels, natterjack toads, plants, flowers, trees, woodpeckers, bugs, insects, butterflies, ducks, swans, fungi, osprey and “the occasional fox”. They enjoyed seeing birds and listening to birdsong:

“...watching the different birds, starlings in their thousands roosting in the reeds”

Peace and quiet

The next most widely cited quality was the peace, quiet and tranquillity offered by nature reserves, as well as getting away from noise, pollution, traffic fumes and crowds:

“...getting away from busy life...a feeling of well being”

“The fact is it is the total opposite of a city - quiet, beautiful”

“...the "away from it all" feeling...they are quiet and away from traffic and people.”

Facilities/well-maintained

There were comments about the appearance and facilities offered by nature reserves:

“They are clean and tidy, very friendly, the places are well looked after”

“...friendly wardens - very informative on guided walks”

People liked the fact that nature reserves appeared to be looked after by someone:

“They are looked after so we and the wildlife can enjoy them and also the plant life can grow safely”

“...the fact that they look after them and encourage the wild life”

Part of these facilities was the information about wildlife:

“The boards give you the points of interest that tell you full information about what and where to look for”

Places to go with children

People also appreciated that nature reserves were places you could take children and grandchildren for something ‘different’:

“...you can introduce grandchildren to new surroundings - to listen- watch and explore”

“...[there’s] space for children”

Nature reserves natural/unspoilt

“...they remain like any other countryside area - natural and unspoilt”

Although, for one person:

“...when I brush shoulders with nature I like to do so alone, so I very rarely visit ‘nature reserves’ as such”

Wildlife protected

Although most people went to nature reserves to be with nature, very few people actually mentioned nature reserves as places to preserve and protect wildlife.

4.5 What people like least about nature reserves

The most frequently mentioned complaints about nature reserves were to do with facilities such as parking, toilets, cafes and paths (9.8%), litter and vandalism (8.3%), dog mess or uncontrolled dogs (6.8%) and maintenance (5.8%). Lack of site information was only mentioned by 4 people (See Figure 4.4). However, 20% of respondents reported that there was nothing they disliked about nature reserves.

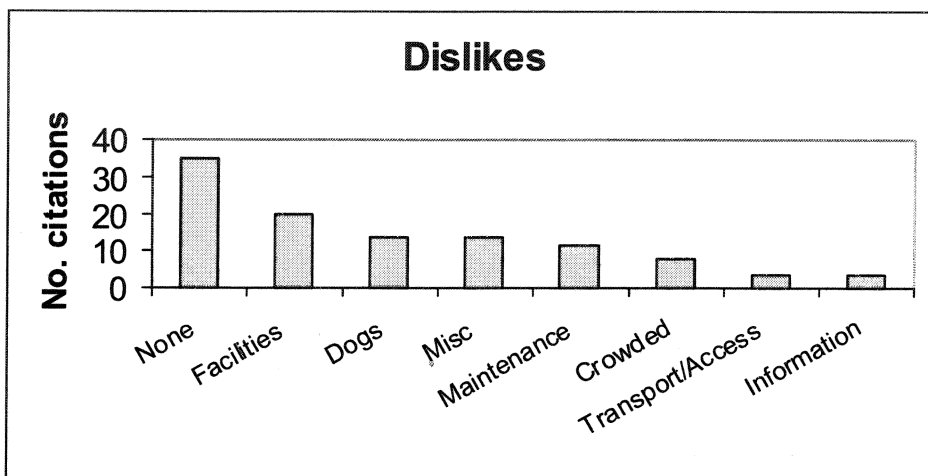


Figure 4.4 Dislikes about nature reserves

Complaints about facilities included: parking charges, poor quality, unsafe or too small car parks, and poor quality paths, toilets or access roads. Complaints about maintenance included both not enough maintenance, particularly of paths and ponds (2.4%), and too much (5.4%), such that nature reserves appeared too ‘manicured’ or ‘regimented,’ which would deter wildlife. Some people complained that nature reserves were ‘too crowded’ and others that there were not enough people about for safety. Access issues included the lack of public transport, particularly to rural sites, that sites were ‘too far away’, and also physical access issues for people with disabilities or push chairs. The lack of information about sites included complaints about information on where they were and poor signage from the road. Miscellaneous items included comments about the smell, that they made you dirty and that the weather tended to be too wet or cold for visits. Other comments were:

“...the sad fact is that we have to ‘reserve’ it in the first place – it’s another sign of the inevitable encroachment of civilization”

“...they tend to be run by snobs, the green welly brigade, townies...”

4.6 How nature reserves could be improved

The majority of suggested improvements were to do with improved publicity and advertising (17.0%), better signs and on-site information (5.8%), path improvements (5.8%), encouraging wildlife (5.8%), and improving facilities such as toilets, café seating and shelters (5.8%). However it was pointed out that, if more people were attracted to sites, this might be detrimental to some plants and wildlife.

Other suggested improvements were: more wardens and rangers on site, more organized events and activities, especially for children, better litter control, improved disabled access and public transport, and also better car parking facilities. Only 3 respondents suggested that there should be more nature sites. The suggested improvements are shown in Figure 4.5.

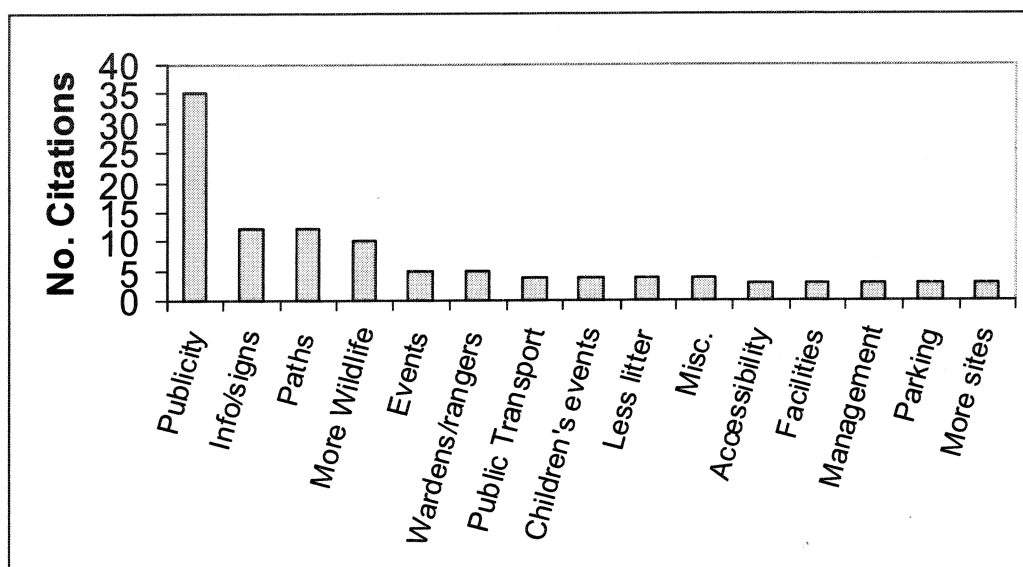


Figure 4.5 Suggested improvements to nature reserves

4.7 Attitudes towards nature reserves

Local people were asked about their attitudes towards nature reserves, in terms of physical features (7 questions), activities (7 questions), and perceptions (10 questions).

Physical aspects of nature reserves

The vast majority of people were positive about nature reserves that looked natural and wild (90.7%), however, most people were also positive about reserves that have facilities such as toilets, seats and shelters (75.3%) and that appear to be 'looked after' (73.1%). People liked reserves that have wardens or rangers (66.9%), and that are within walking distance of home (61.2%). Most people would not visit nature reserves that have entrance or parking charges (38.3%) or that were difficult to get to (38.8% would not visit, 39.9% were neutral on this). (see Figure 4.6).

When these attributes were examined by subgroups, the statistically significant differences were as follows:

- Women tended to have a slightly higher preference for facilities and rangers at nature reserves than men.
- Retired people and those that visited sites several times a week had a higher preference for sites that had rangers.
- People from urban areas had a higher preference (80.9%) for sites with facilities than people from rural areas (60.4%).
- Retired people, parents and carers, preferred sites that appeared to be looked after.
- People from Barrow were more likely to consider nature reserves difficult to find out about

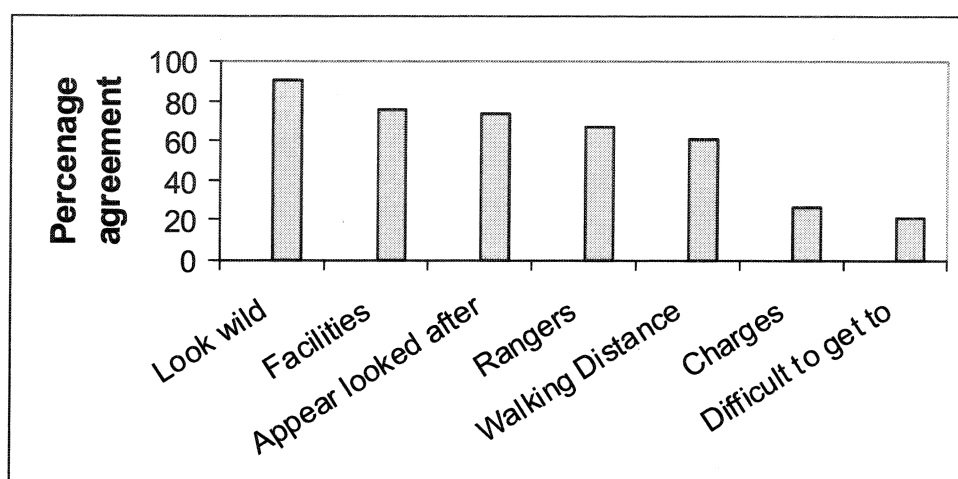


Figure 4.6 What people want from nature reserves – physical aspects

Activities that take place in nature reserves

The vast majority of people thought nature reserves were places where children could learn about nature (95.4%) and that they would visit nature reserves to see plants and wildlife (91.1%), to relax (86.5%), or to exercise (81.5%). People were neutral about visiting nature reserves to meet people (40.45%), take part in community events (39.4%), or take part in conservation work (43.5%). Opinions were fairly evenly divided over visiting nature reserves to walk the dog: 41% disagreed with this but 37% agreed (see Figure 4.7).

When examined by subgroups, the statistically significant differences were as follows:

- More women than men thought nature reserves were important places for children to learn about nature.
- People aged 50-64 were more likely to visit nature reserves to see plants and wildlife than other age groups.
- Younger people (aged 20-34) were more likely to visit nature reserves to relax or walk dogs than older age groups.
- people from Carlisle were more likely to visit nature reserves to walk dogs compared with those from other local areas.

- Parents/carers and retired people were least likely to visit nature reserves to take part in community events compared with those in other occupational categories; unemployed people were most positive about community events in reserves.
- People who visit nature reserves regularly were more positive about visiting nature reserves to take part in community events (48%) than people who did not (26.4%).
- People in professional occupations were least likely to visit nature reserves to meet people compared with those in other categories of occupation.

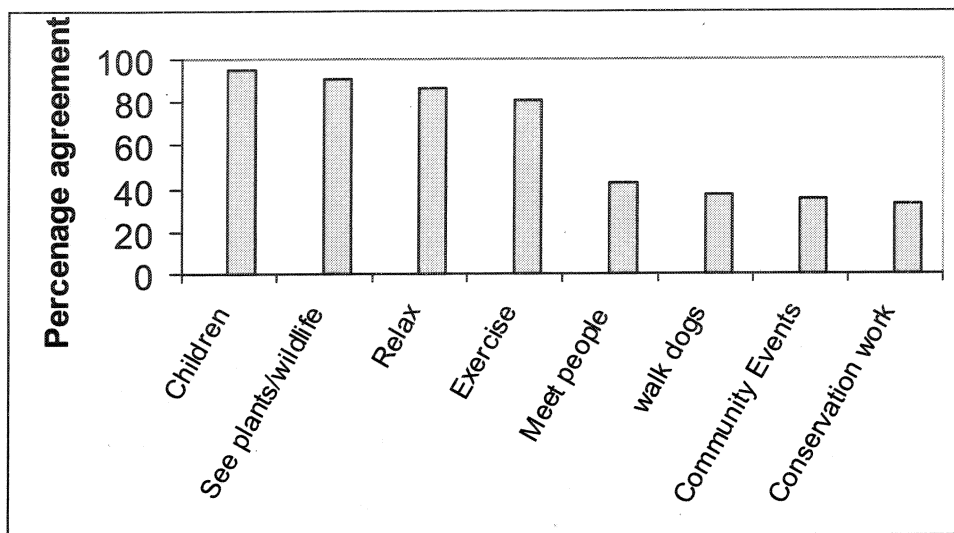


Figure 4.7 What people want from nature reserves – activities

Perceptions about nature reserves

The vast majority of people agreed that nature reserves are important places for plants and wildlife (98.7%), for feeling close to nature (91.7%), for being peaceful (90.6%), and are important places for local communities (83.3%). Fewer people thought that nature reserves are difficult to find out about (47.9%), or are associated with getting away from people (41.3%). People mostly disagreed with the idea that nature reserves are associated with boredom (81.1%) or are irrelevant (81.1%). Many respondents (42.8%) associated nature reserves with a sense of community ownership, although slightly more (43.3%) were neutral about this aspect. (See Figure 4.8).

When examined by subgroups, the statistically significant differences were as follows:

- A positive association between nature reserves and feeling close to nature increased with age, the most positive in this respect being the over 64-year-olds.
- People who spend less than 30 minutes on sites were more likely to agree that they thought nature reserves were difficult to find out about than those who spend longer in such places.
- People who visit nature reserves regularly are more likely to associate nature reserves with a sense of community ownership (55.2%) than those who do not (37%).

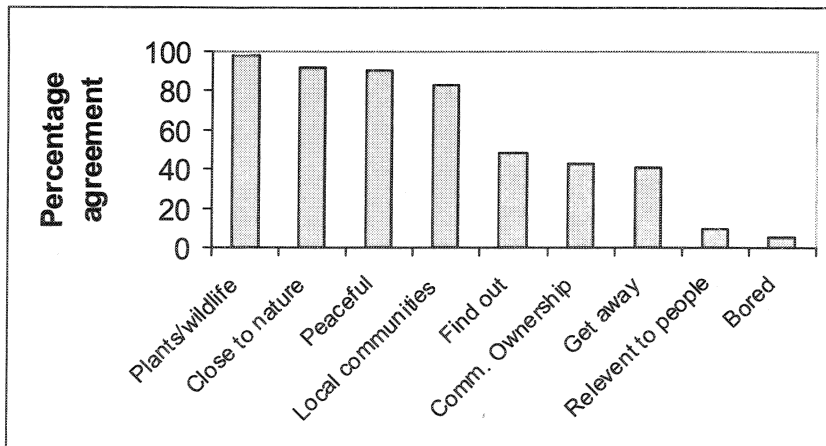


Figure 4.8 What people want from nature reserves - perceptions

Themes

Factor analysis – a data reduction technique which helps reveal underlying themes or ‘factors’ in questionnaire data – was carried out on the attitudinal questions in order to identify the themes which appear to underlie people’s experience of nature reserves. The resulting analysis revealed 8 major themes accounting for 64% of the variance in people’s responses (see Table 4.3). The first 2 factors are probably of most interest to this study: ‘Restorative nature’ and ‘Social value.’

Table 4.2 Themes in what people want from nature reserves

Theme	Variable	R-Value ¹
‘Restorative nature’	To relax	.721
	Feeling peaceful	.715
	To see plants and wildlife	.671
	Feeling close to nature	.645
	That look wild	.637
‘Social value’	To meet people	.756
	Community events	.662
	Important for local communities	.597
	Community ownership	.577
	That have facilities such as toilets, shelters and seats	.555
‘Maintenance/care’	That appear looked after	.827
	Where there are rangers and wardens	.809
‘Importance to learning and plants/wildlife’	Important places where children can learn about nature	.803
	Important places for plants and wildlife	.801
‘Working with nature’	Take part in conservation work	.819
	Getting away from people	.539
‘Information’	Are difficult to get to	.839
	Can be difficult to find out about	.526
‘Walking’	To walk my dog	.766
	For exercise	.608
‘Lack of boredom’	Feeling bored	.798

¹ Factor Loadings refer to correlations between the variables and the factors (or themes). Numbers closer to 1.0 are more highly correlated with the factor/theme

4.8 Key points

- **Use of local green spaces and nature reserves** – at least half of our survey respondents visit such places at least once a week, and nearly 40% spend 30-60 minutes on each visit. Just over half go by car but nearly 40% go by foot. The average journey time was less than 10 minutes, whether by car or on foot or other means, but with those on foot much less likely to spend more than 10 minutes getting to the open space. By far the most popular activity is walking (33%), and walking the dog (16%); many people enjoy looking at plants and wildlife (16%), relaxing and children's play activities (9 or 10% each).
- **Sites visited** - woodlands, footpaths or tracks, local parks and grassy areas, nature reserves and formal parks and gardens were all visited. People named a wide range of outdoor recreation sites, only a few of which related to nature reserves. These sites give an indication of the types of places already popular with local people, and some could perhaps be protected from development and managed more sensitively as nature reserves.
- **Awareness of nature reserves** - people had a reasonable awareness of nature reserves of some kind, mentioning a total of 89 sites. However respondents were not clear about the distinctions between local, national and RSPB nature reserves, and areas of the National Park.
- **What people enjoy about nature reserves** - people are positive about the opportunity to enjoy wildlife, and the qualities of peace and quiet and 'getting away from it all'. There were few dislikes but the most frequent complaints were about the poor quality of facilities, such as toilets, cafes and car parks, and complained about dog mess and uncontrolled dogs. Significantly, given the lack of nature reserves in their local area, people from Barrow thought that sites were difficult to get to, particularly by public transport. Suggested improvements to nature reserves included better advertising and publicity – a significant number of respondents were not aware of nearby sites and what they had to offer. This was tempered by an appreciation that, if certain sites became too popular, this might destroy the very qualities that people valued about nature reserves.
- **Attitudes towards nature reserves** – people had an overwhelming preference for nature reserves which looked 'natural' and wild (over 90%), but which nonetheless had good facilities, had rangers or wardens, and were within walking distance of home. Seeing and learning about wildlife, particularly for children, was an important activity for over 95% of respondents; they also had a high preference for relaxation and getting exercise. Perceptions about nature reserves (over 90%) confirmed that they are indeed important for wildlife and feeling peaceful and close to nature. Most people (over 80%) also associate nature reserves with a sense of community ownership and consider them important for local people. Women feel more strongly than men about the provision of facilities, the presence of rangers and the possibility for children to learn about nature. Middle-aged people were more likely to say that they would visit nature reserves to see wildlife, whereas younger people wanted to relax or walk the dog. As people became older, they increasingly appreciate visiting nature reserves to feel close to nature.
- **The social value of nature reserves** – there was a widespread perception that nature reserves were important places for the local community and contributing to a sense of community ownership.

5 Health care professionals

“People should have the right to access natural beauty, or other outdoor environments, without unreasonable restrictions. It is essential - I believe - for the maintenance and nourishment of their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves.”

5.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings of a questionnaire (see Appendix 5) sent to a sample of health care professionals - 80 General Practitioners, and a wide range of Occupational Therapists and nurses contacted using an email circulated by regional groups; there were 23 responses. All respondents stated that they have recommended outdoor physical activity or visiting outdoor/natural areas for health reasons to their patients. Figure 5.1 shows the range of schemes or recommendations health professionals were aware of or had recommended themselves. Recommendations were for walking (n=19), cycling (n=8), outdoor sport (n=3), horticultural therapy (2) or outdoor play for children (n=1). Specific schemes mentioned by health professionals included: exercise schemes run by the Prince’s Trust or YMCA; health walks in Furness and West Cumbria; the Growing Well Horticulture project and BTCV. Outdoor physical activity was not recommended for patients with unstable cardiovascular conditions, those with significant mobility problems including arthritis (n=3), or severe illnesses. The horticultural therapy unit respondent indicated that they did not accept patients who were an unacceptable risk or who were displaying psychotic symptoms.

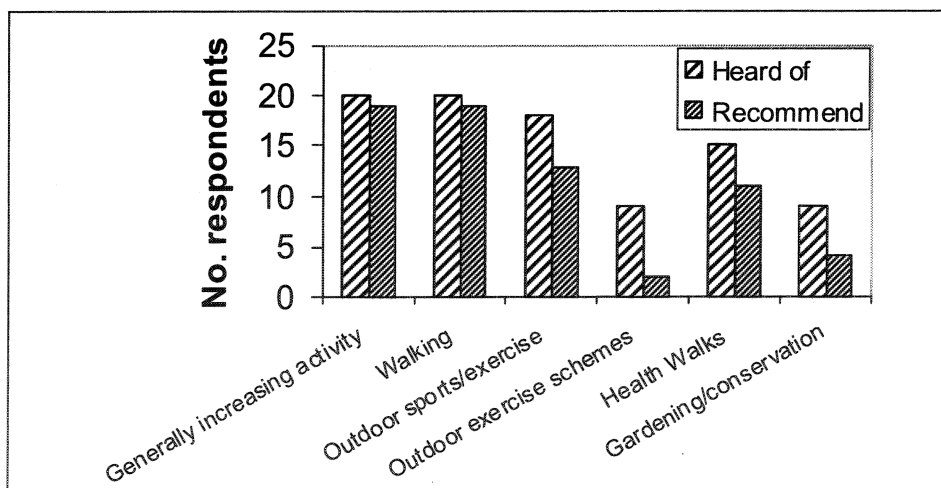


Figure 5.1 Health professionals’ views on recommendations for outdoor exercise

5.2 Benefits of outdoor activity and access to natural places

Outdoor physical activity was associated overwhelmingly with mental health and, to a large degree, with a range of physical health attributes (see Figure 5.2). Benefits mentioned include the way that natural environments encourage people to want to go out and exercise, the innate properties of natural areas and engagement with them, the opportunity for a change away from the stresses of home and work, and children engaging with natural environments rather than watching TV or using play-stations (see Table 5.1).

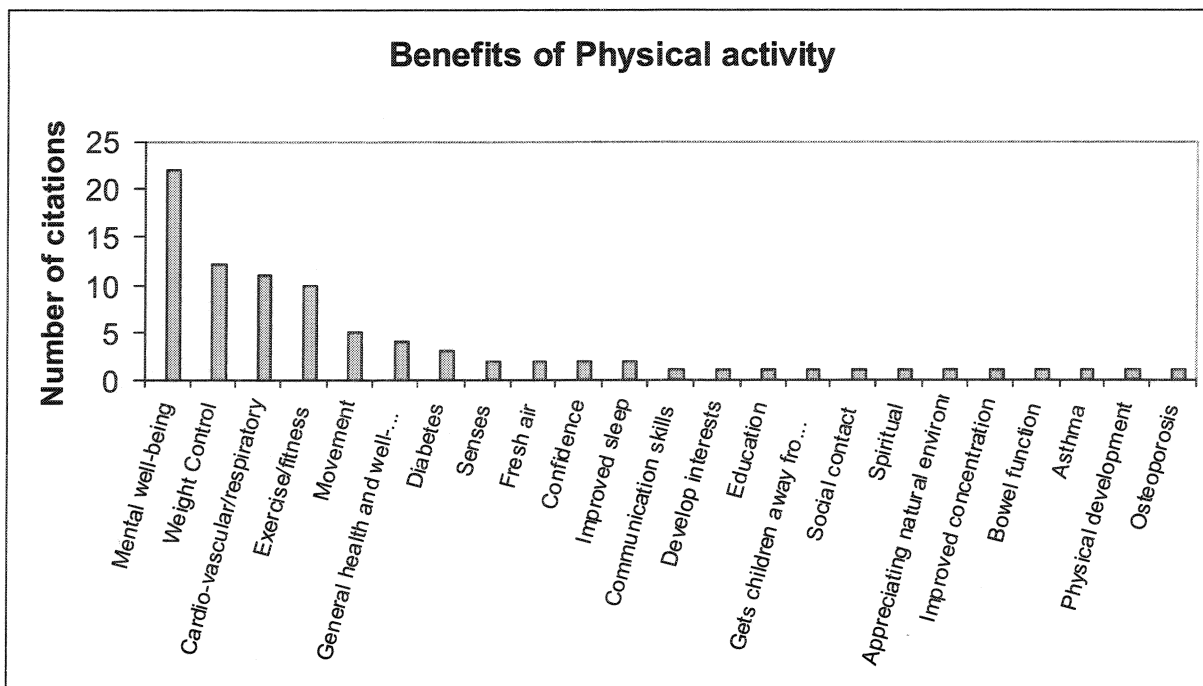


Figure 5.2 Benefits of outdoor physical activity.

Table 5.1 Perceived benefits access to nature and natural places

The beauty of the outdoors encouraging people to get out and exercise (n=8)
“Appreciation of the environment and its maintenance - will encourage more exercise generally”
“Regular exercise and enjoyment of areas, positive mental health exposure”
“...all of the above [benefits of physical activity]...and beautiful...”
“...more enjoyable - likely to want to get out and exercise in fine surroundings”
“...easier to achieve [exercise] and general appreciation of our environment”
Innate properties of beautiful scenery/engagement with nature (n=7)
“They are lovely and make people feel better”
“Spiritual connection, places to reflect in, opportunity to connect with a sense of self that in man-made environments may be difficult, identifying feelings that arise from the perception of something beautiful, wide open spaces”
“...mentally uplifting”
“...well-being - engagement with environment”

Change of environment – distraction from problems at work or home (n=4)
“Patient can experience a totally different environment - distraction from problems at home”
“...space, quiet, thinking time”
“...time away from stressors and strains...clean, fresh air, quiet space - valuable to client if lives in deprived, urban area and on low income which prevents travel due to low income”
For children (n=1):
“Lots of lovely fresh air! Appreciation of nature. Most children I see are from town and it gives them another outlook. They learn respect for the environment”

5.3 Barriers to outdoor activity

The main barriers were considered to be the lack of affordable public transport to outdoor sites and lack of motivation. Reasons for a lack of interest or motivation were:

“For some people, there’s the convenience of using car rather than walking – they just aren’t in the habit of doing it”

Although several GPs felt that there was no excuse not to go out in Cumbria:

“...there should be no excuse not to go outside – given where they live and where I practice. Nobody should live here and not go!”

There was also the risk of falls or other accidents, particularly for older people, environmental dangers, contra-indicated medical conditions, over-exertion when not used to exercise, and anxiety in an unfamiliar environment (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Potential risks of increased outdoor exercise

Falls, trips and other accidents, (n=12) Risks of falls particularly for elderly patients, accidents or muscular-skeletal injuries, cycling accidents.
Environmental risks (n=9) Dangers of the natural environment eg insect bites, ticks, sunstroke, frost-bite, wasps, bees, adders, poisonous plants; lack of awareness of precautions to take in hills eg awareness of weather, wearing suitable clothing and footwear. The risk of accidental injuries (presumably both land and water based) associated with the Lake District were particularly mentioned.
Contra-indicated medical conditions (n=5) Unstable cardio-vascular or respiratory illnesses, orthopaedic problems, risk of heart attacks
Over-doing exercise (n=5) Risk of accident/injury if overdone to begin with, tackling activities which are too strenuous for their health, unfamiliarity with outdoor activities
Anxiety (n=1): eg about unfamiliar environment
Fear of Crime (n=1) eg mugging, attack, rape etc.

5.4 Recommended sites

The most popular sites recommended by health professionals included various named walks/cycle paths (most often cited), local beaches, historic places, and forests or woodlands; the only nature reserve mentioned was Walney Island, a popular National Nature Reserve (See Table 5.3). The reasons for suggesting these particular sites depended on the ability and needs of the patient, accessibility and local transport, the terrain – whether flat or hilly -, presence of other facilities such as seating, refreshments, and the aesthetic/sensory qualities of the site.

Table 5.3 Outdoor places recommended by health professionals

National Nature Reserves (3): Walney Island (North Walney is NNR, South Walney is CWT)
Lake District National Park (2): Red Tarn, the Fells
National Trust (3): Claife Heights, Sandscale Haws (NNR) Tarn Howes
Forest Parks/Woodlands (5): Dodd Wood (FC), Grizedale Forest (FC), Whinlatter Forest (FC), unspecified local woodlands
Country Parks (1): Talkin Tarn Country Park
Walks/cyclepaths (8): Channelside Walk (Barrow Council), Workington and Whitehaven – cycle path, Solway Rural Initiative, Lakeside walks eg Loweswater, Crummock, Britesmere, various Lake District Paths
Historic Places/Stately Homes (6): Furness Abbey (2), Brantwood, Levens Hall, Birkkrigg Stone Circle (Bardsea), Hoad Monument (Ulverston)
Beaches (6): Earnse Bay, N. Walney (2), Grange over Sands Promenade, local beaches (3)
Miscellaneous outdoor locations (14): Angle Tarn, Brentfall, Cartmel Fell, Hampsfell, Lingcove Beck, Rampside path, Sharp Edge, Striding Edge, Westpoint, Boyes Lake, Gummings Howe, Roan Moat, Waterlath, Borrowdale

Note: Locations named by respondents are identified to the best of our knowledge but some in the miscellaneous category may have been mis-named or incorrectly identified

5.5 Use of outdoor places by health professionals

The most popular outdoor activities for health professionals themselves were walking, exercise and sport, and walking the dog. The sites visited by health professionals differed from those that they recommended to their patients in that the sites mentioned tended to be nature reserves (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Sites visited by Health Professionals

Local Nature Reserves -
National Nature Reserves - Bassenthwaite Lake (LDNP), Roudsea Woods and Mosses (2), Sandscale Haws(2), Walney Island (North Walney is NNR, South Walney is CWT) (6) Whitbarrow
Cumbria Wildlife Trust sites - Foulshaw Moss (2), Meathop Moss (2)
Lake District National Park, including Bassenthwaite Lake (NNR), Crummock Water
RSPB - Haweswater
Forestry Commission sites - Whinlatter Forest (2), Grizedale Forest
Miscellaneous sites - Little Barrow, Roanhead, Solway Plain (nr Kirkbride)

Note: Locations named by respondents are identified to the best of our knowledge but some in the miscellaneous category may have been mis-named or incorrectly identified

5.6 Key points

- Health professionals were overwhelmingly in favour of the health benefits of access to outdoor places and nature reserves for activities such as walking, and all had recommended outdoor physical activities to their patients.
- Most health professionals who responded to the questionnaire make good use of green spaces in Cumbria, and this may have been one of their main reasons for choosing to practice and live in Cumbria.
- The most widely cited health benefits of access to natural places were mental well-being and relaxation; half of the health professional respondents also mentioned weight control, improved cardio-respiratory and cardio-vascular health, and general physical fitness.
- The Cumbrian landscape itself is considered to provide additional benefits associated with the beauty of the scenery and opportunities to engage with nature and the environment.

Suggestions for increasing the use of outdoor environments for health were:

- improved (and cheaper) public transport to outdoor sites to improve accessibility for those on low incomes/reliant on public transport;
- more nature reserves and outdoor facilities on the west coast – particularly given the limitations of public transport, and lack of time;
- offering more activities suitable for families with children;
- offering more facilities and walks suitable for older people or patients recovering after operations or long illnesses;
- education to raise awareness about the health benefits and enjoyment of going to outdoor places - for all ages;
- education and awareness-raising about potential sites and the activities or schemes on offer – perhaps targeted at health professionals.

6 Local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria

“Overall they should be places where people can get close to wildlife. They should not be isolated refuges for wildlife amongst a sea of ecologically impoverished countryside”

6.1 Introduction

Out of 17 representatives of local authorities and partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria, 14 replies were received from staff with knowledge of local green spaces and nature reserves, as listed below:

- Local Authorities: South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council, Copeland Borough Council, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Barrow Borough Council, Lake District National Park.

- Partner organisations: RSPB, Arnside-Silverdale AONB, Lake District National Park Local Access Forum, National Trust, CLBA (Country Landowners and Business Association), Forestry Commission, North Pennines AONB Partnership.

6.2 Perceptions about local green spaces and nature reserves

Most respondents agreed that local green spaces and nature reserves were an asset in terms of relaxation/well-being for local people, tourism and its impact on the local economy, protecting wildlife habitats and biodiversity, communities, businesses, schools/education, conservation, heritage, providing a connection to wildlife and also ‘garnering’ support for wildlife conservation’. Within local authorities, the natural environment is appreciated as follows:

“...a high value environment for all [which] places an emphasis on countryside access and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty...and the importance of ‘environmental quality’ to the county’s economy - it is taken as a ‘given’ but there is a realization that it needs to be managed and looked after. Environment equals tourism equals economic income”.

“Local green spaces and nature reserves are an essential part of the Lake District National Park”.

“An asset totally – for local people, communities, businesses and tourism. Biodiversity is the biggest benefit”.

However, several problems were cited by respondents in relation to maintenance costs and provision of car parking, the effects of tourism, and the impact on farming.

Maintenance:

“Nature reserves are seen as an asset but, when it comes to maintenance, open space is seen as a problem – because of costs, that they are non-statutory, and a lack of understanding as to their purpose and function.”

Tourism:

“The ‘dis-benefits’ of mass tourism are rarely considered: 15 million people traveling by car mostly and trampling over sensitive environments and stretching the sewage system to capacity.”

Farming:

“It all depends on where the reserves and spaces are and its effect on neighbouring land, especially farmland, for example bog recreation is done by blocking up ditches and this can then have an impact on adjoining land, making it wetter. It is important to have open space for recreation, but I do feel there is more than enough open space/open access land available to the general public without the need to create more”.

Promotion of inappropriate habitats:

“...the quality of habitats within Cumbria’s green space has been in long-term decline, particularly within the Lake District where the concept of heavily grazed fells is often promoted as desirable... We would argue against this presumption and would promote ecological sustainability as the benchmark for Cumbria’s green spaces”.

6.3 Raising awareness of Local Nature Reserves

Several respondents thought that there was a lack of knowledge about Local Nature Reserves, their location, opening hours and site information and interpretation. Some sites were not perceived as welcoming or relevant to people:

“In many parts of Cumbria there is ‘open space’ but it is almost entirely agricultural, not good for wildlife and not welcoming to people”.

“...[there] may be a lack of knowledge in some parts on where they can go but also I think there is a large portion of the community that is not interested and does not want to go to a nature site. This seems to be a general reflection of society today; nature sites are not viewed as exciting or ‘sexy’ enough to warrant even a second thought”.

It was suggested that these problems could be overcome by a publicity campaign highlighting where the sites are, and what was on offer, welcoming signage, the use of the internet to promote sites, and some ‘face to face work’ by English Nature with visitors. There was also scope for partnership working to promote wildlife awareness with conservation organisations, residents and visitors, public transport providers, the National Park and tourist boards.

Other perceived site barriers related to disabled access, transport or a lack of sites near to where people lived. One respondent also mentioned conflicts over land use:

“I have heard that in the National Park, the freedom to roam is resented because of hunting on estates.”

6.4 Involvement in sites and open space strategies

The organisations which responded were involved with their own nature reserves (RSPB), managed Local Nature Reserves (South Lakeland District Council, Arnsdale-Silverdale AONB), or owned National Nature Reserves (National Trust, Country Landowners and Business Association) (see Table 6.1).

Most of the organisations (n=9) were aware of the Cumbrian Biodiversity Action Plan, although the level of involvement varied from active involvement (RSPB, National Trust) to implementing the policy where appropriate (CLBA, North Pennines AONB, Cumbria County Council, South Lakeland District Council). Other relevant open space policies and strategies mentioned by respondents are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.1 Involvement in local nature conservation sites in Cumbria

<p>RSPB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own 3 reserves in Cumbria: Campfield Marsh (south Solway Mosses), Haweswater (partnership with United Utilities), Geltsdale (North Pennines) and Hodbarrow (also manage St. Bees Head) • Involved in osprey project at Bassenthwaite NNR
<p>South Lakeland District Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managed for wildlife - Kendal Heights, Kettlewell Cragg, and Kendal Castle Hill.
<p>Arnside-Silverdale AONB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Nature Reserves - Trowbarrow and Warton Cragg
<p>National Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Nature Reserve - Sandscale Haws (NNR) • Fell Foot Country Park, Windermere. • Own 60 SSSIs in Cumbria, but only Sandscale Haws promoted as a nature reserve.
<p>Country Landowners and Business Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Reserve – Currently own Hale Moss Nature Reserve
<p>Forestry Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest Parks in Cumbria - Dodd Wood, Grizedale Forest, Whinlatter Forest • Lease Dalton Craggs from a private landowner (Dalton Craggs is in Clitheroe, Lancashire)

Note: Locations named by respondents are identified to the best of our knowledge

Table 6.2 Open space strategies

<p>RSPB</p> <p>Various local and national policies. Corporate strategy “Future directions 3” – which each department/ region uses to develop local strategy.</p>
<p>Lake District National Park</p> <p>Lake District National Park Management Plans</p>
<p>Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority</p> <p>National Park Management Plans</p>
<p>Arnside-Silverdale AONB, North Pennines AONB Partnership</p> <p>AONB Management Plans</p>
<p>National Trust</p> <p>National and Regional nature conservation strategies Access and interpretation policies/strategies.</p>
<p>CLBA</p> <p>Represented on various AONB, Lake District National Park and Cumbria Wildlife Trust Committees where policies for biodiversity, access and trail management are discussed and formalized.</p>
<p>Copeland Borough Council</p> <p>Have plans for 2006 new phase of Openspace and Recreation</p>
<p>Barrow Borough Council</p> <p>Several projects looking at nature reserves.</p>
<p>Forestry Commission, South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council</p> <p>None Mentioned</p>

6.5 Potential for creating new nature reserves

There were mixed opinions about the potential for new Local Nature Reserves in Cumbria. Several respondents thought that there was already good provision on nature reserves in Cumbria:

“...given Cumbria’s unique environment you could argue that the existence of 2 national parks, 3 AONBs and a stretch of heritage coast within the county makes the idea of nature reserves a bit redundant. Currently there approx. 18 National Nature Reserves covering 7,134 hectares, 230 SSSIs covering 178,534 hectares and 5 Local Nature Reserves covering 457 hectares. This adds up to a lot of greenspace.”

“Already adequate provision through the CROW Act - which allows the freedom to roam in upland lake district, and prime sites for biodiversity in the NP are already being managed”

“Limited [potential] in the National Park area as don't need them”.

“The National Park is not actively looking for any more land”.

“Most sites are already open to the public. But it is a small area [the local authority] and they are already handling about as much as they are able right now”.

Despite this, some respondents considered that there was some potential for new site nearer to where people live or to form wildlife corridors:

“Even Cumbria could benefit from additional nature reserves adjacent to or adjoining urban areas”.

“There should be more scattered out to form wildlife corridors”.

There were suggestions that former industrial land, brownfield sites, and the decommissioned nuclear station and centre for reprocessing might be suitable sites for new Local Nature Reserves.

The barriers to new sites being designated were considered to be: financial, lack of staff resources from statutory bodies and local authorities, lack of political priority, the capacity of English Nature to deliver, and local opposition, especially from landowners. These were summed up by one respondent:

“Lack of funding, lack of staff resources and the general assumption that the national parks represent Cumbria’s nature interest and anything additional outside these areas is unnecessary. I guess nature reserves are not high on the political agenda and are dwarfed by other issues like unemployment”.

The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority considered that further LNRs were not necessary because:

“We manage a tiny piece of Cumbria and feel that the farmers are doing a good job in the other areas”.

A further point was that people might not understand the definition and purpose of Local Nature Reserves:

“A better explanation of what benefits are brought by designation would be a good start. Local Nature Reserves look a bit like a toothless tiger to me”.

6.6 Suggestions for new Local Nature Reserves

Table 6.3 shows sites suggested for new Local Nature Reserves. Although there are several projects looking at the provision of nature reserves, no new sites were identified in Barrow-in-Furness, which currently has no LNRs.

Table 6.3 Suggestions for new Local Nature Reserves

Suggested by	Site
Arnside-Silverdale AONB	Various sites in Ambleside: Fairy Steps, Underlaid Wood, Major Wood, Marble Quarry
National Trust	A site east of Kendal, SD537933
North Pennines AONB	Identified a number of sites of local geological interest - see Geodiversity Audit: http://www.northpennines.org.uk
South Lakeland District Council	Kendal Heights (fringe of golf course), Stockghyll Woods and Force, Ambleside.
Cumbria County Council	Maryport coastal park area.
Copeland Borough Council	Sellafield nuclear station/centre for reprocessing - due to be decommissioned in 10-15 years time

6.7 Key points

- Local green space and nature reserves are seen as an asset to local people, tourism, local business and the local economy, as well as to wildlife conservation, by local authorities and partner organizations.
- Problems with local green space and nature reserves are related to maintenance costs, and the possibly adverse effects of mass tourism on the environment, which attracts visitors and tourists in the first place.
- There is perceived to be a lack of knowledge about nature reserves, their location, opening hours and interpretation facilities. Nature reserves do not always appear welcoming or relevant to people; this could to some extent be overcome by publicity, education (including use of the internet) and partnership working.
- Nature reserves tend to be difficult to get to by public transport, have poor access for people with certain disabilities, and are not located in the urban areas where most people live.
- There were mixed reactions to the idea of creating new Local Nature Reserves. Some organisations perceived that Cumbria was already well-supplied with nature reserves through the National Parks, SSSIs and AONBs. Lack of resources and political will, as well as local opposition from landowners, are also seen as barriers. Brownfield sites and the decommissioned nuclear station and processing site were suggested as possible new sites.

- Cumbria is perceived by local authorities and partner organizations as having a lot of open space, but with much of it farmland, managed for livelihoods, rather than specifically for wildlife or public access, or else comprised of hilly, comparatively inaccessible landscapes.

7 Local strategic partners and environment organisations

“...there’s a ‘preciousness’ that goes with the designation of a nature reserve – that is ‘reserved for nature’ rather than reserved for nature including human beings”

7.1 Involvement in local green spaces and nature reserves

There were 25 respondents from Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) members and Cumbrian environment organisations (see Appendix 5). Of these, 14 organisations had some direct involvement in local sites or nature reserves, 5 organisations had direct involvement with the Cumbrian Biodiversity Partnership, and 4 organisations had environmental strategies or policies (see Table 7.1). Millom Ironworks was the only Local Nature Reserve named as one in which respondents had involvement.

Table 7.1 Involvement of respondents in green spaces and nature reserves

<p>1. Specific sites Acorn Bank, Camerton Brickworks, Cleator Moor, Clints Quarry near Egremont, Ennerdale, Frizington rugby pitch, Great Asby Scar, Gulley Flats play area, Hesket Newmarket, Hutton Roof Crags NNR (Yorkshire Dales NP), Millom Ironworks LNR, Kendal (local woodland), Mill Hill play area, Millom Moor House (?William Moorhouse), Mungrisdale, Roudsea Wood NNR, Rusland Valley beech trees, Upper Teasdale (N. Yorkshire), Urswick, Wath Brow play area, Witherslack Mosses (SSSI or CWT reserve)</p>
<p>2. Types of involvement</p> <p>a) Open space strategies and policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eden Local Agenda 21 (advice on sustainability and nature conservation, work with schools on flora and fauna project) - Cumbria Local Access Forum – advises County Council on improving access to the countryside - Cumbria Strategic Partnership - Environment and Heritage Thematic Partnership - Cumbria Wildlife Trust - part of the Biodiversity Partnership ‘Wealth of Wildlife’ <p>b) Projects mentioned: Local Agenda 21, ‘Open Space Green Space’, Flora and Fauna Project and other projects with local schools, various local and small scale community projects, major regeneration projects in the Derwent Valley and Broughton Moor, project to improve the assets and wildlife of Camerton village.</p> <p>c) Events: local walking events and health walks, litter picking days, ‘Beech party’ to raise awareness of veteran beech trees, tree planting in Kendal, Bowness Bean Pole Festival,</p> <p>d) Local environmental issues: promoting access to disused churchyards (Churches Together in Cumbria), promoting local site as LNR (Camerton Parish Council)</p> <p>e) Assistance: providing small grants and support youth schemes, bursaries for young people to become involved in conservation activities, maintaining several areas of open space throughout Wetheral Parish, helping create public access facilities, supporting projects and schemes at Local Nature Reserves/green spaces, giving advice to LNR officer, attending meetings and assisting on local parks/millennium greens,</p>

Note: Locations named by respondents are identified to the best of our knowledge but some in the miscellaneous category may have been mis-named or incorrectly identified

7.2 Use of green space and nature reserves

All respondents considered that local green spaces and nature reserves were an asset:

“...a natural asset – one of county’s most significant and precious assets”

“Local green spaces are essential – not just to wildlife as connecting corridors to the protected nature reserves, but as an essential amenity for human beings”

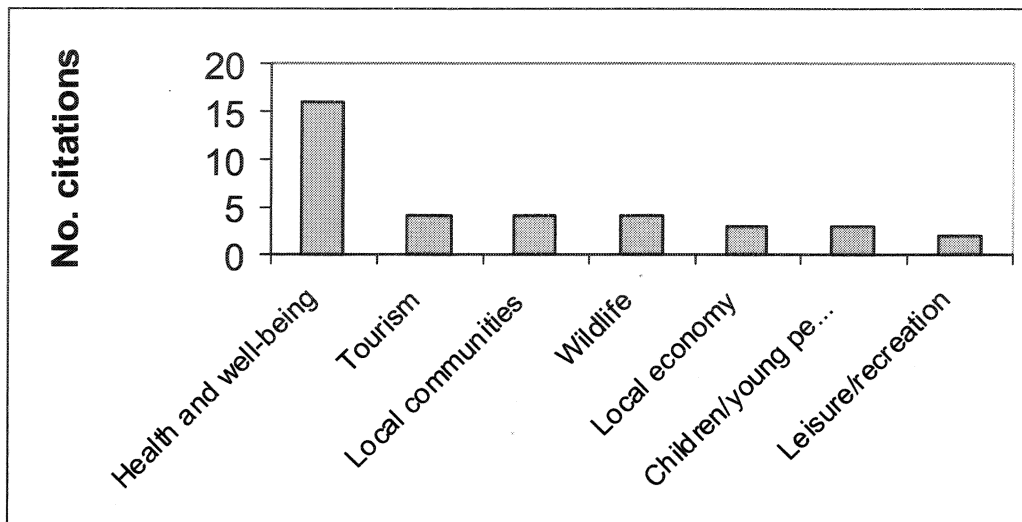


Figure 7.1 Benefits of local green spaces and nature reserves (LSPs)

Figure 7.1 shows the benefits identified by more than one LSP or environmental organisation respondent. Health and well-being was the benefit cited by most:

“...there’s a basic human need to experience nature for our own well being”

Other benefits identified by several respondents included tourism, local communities and wildlife. It was also beneficial to have ‘wild areas and nature’ near children and young people in urban areas so that they have safe areas to play in and also learn how to respect nature.

“Children can play more freely on land that is not ‘valued’ as a designated nature reserve”.

Barriers to the use of local sites identified by respondents are shown in Figure 7.2.

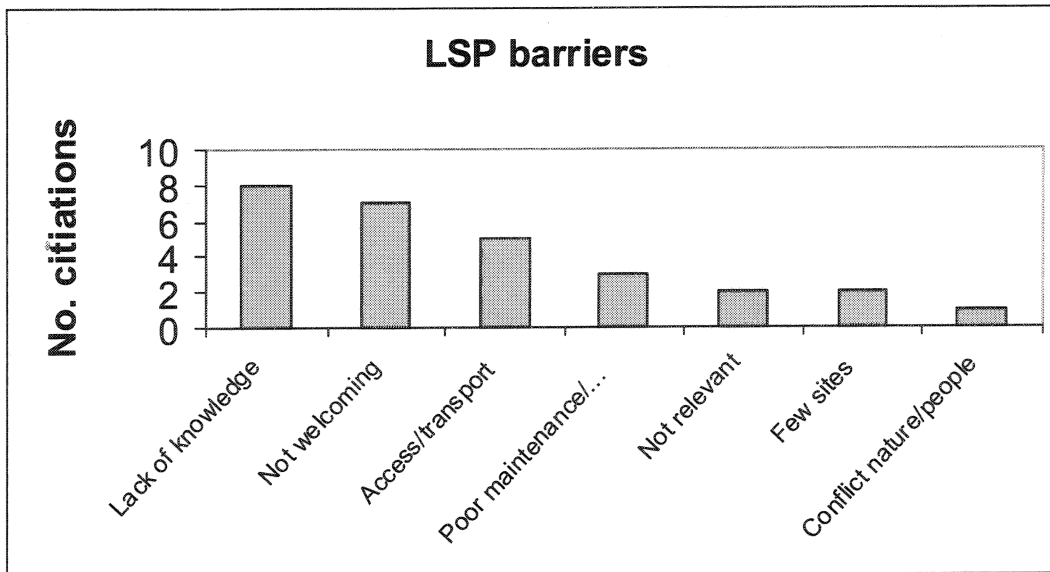


Figure 7.2 Barriers to use of local green sites and nature reserves

Lack of knowledge about local sites was the most widely cited barrier. It was suggested that many people are not aware of where the sites are, or that the sites exist in the first place, and there is uncertainty about who owns the land, and also whether people are allowed on the site:

“Many people are not aware of their existence or of what they are allowed to do there”

There were reports of conflict between different user groups and interests:

“There can be a tendency among wildlife groups to want to over-protect”

“...[there is] an age old conflict between canoeists and anglers...the anglers pay large sums to fish, and the canoeists have almost prohibitive access, although there needn't be animosity between these groups who are often neighbours: they use the river at different times of year”

“It can be a bit of a fight with tourists trying to get to these sites at certain times of year”

“Many of the resources in Cumbria are accessed by those outside and more needs to be done to ensure that our young people have equal access to these facilities”

There were conflicts identified between nature conservation and land for affordable housing:

“Although it is important to treat local green spaces as something to protect and enhance, there are areas where, with careful thought and consideration, the issues of today such as affordable housing must be reflected”

The next most cited barrier was to do with accessibility – in terms of both physical access for people with mobility impairments, and a lack of affordable public transport in many areas. This was compounded in areas like North Cumbria, where there are high levels of deprivation:

“...low income and poor health. Getting out of the local environment becomes a barrier.”

“...the barriers have been lack of funding to take young people out into the local environment and take part in local activities”

“...the gates are too narrow – children must be unloaded from back packs, and pushchairs must be lifted over – it takes time and for some people it’s too hard to do.”

Negative perceptions were also cited:

“Local people may see some local reserves as dangerous or inhospitable because of vandalism or rubbish”

People may not feel welcome on some sites:

“Limits on usage, permits and signs listing all the activities which are prohibited, are barriers that will prevent people using sites. One of the keys to successful site management is to enable access whilst ensuring that wildlife is not harmed”

“Barriers to usage are ‘preciousness’ that goes with the designation of nature reserve – reserved for nature rather than reserved for nature including human beings”

Going to local sites may not be seen as relevant to some people, particularly those with more sedentary lifestyles:

“They do not impinge greatly on the lives of the local people, who do not know and are not involved with the management of these spaces,”

There were also perceptions of conflict between local people and site managers:

“Historically, I have experienced English Nature having a rather ‘excluding’ attitude, implying that wildlife can only be protected if people are kept out...however I am aware that this situation has changed now.”

7.3 Actions to increase awareness and use of nature sites by local people

Figure 7.3 shows the different categories of suggestions by respondents for increasing awareness of local sites.

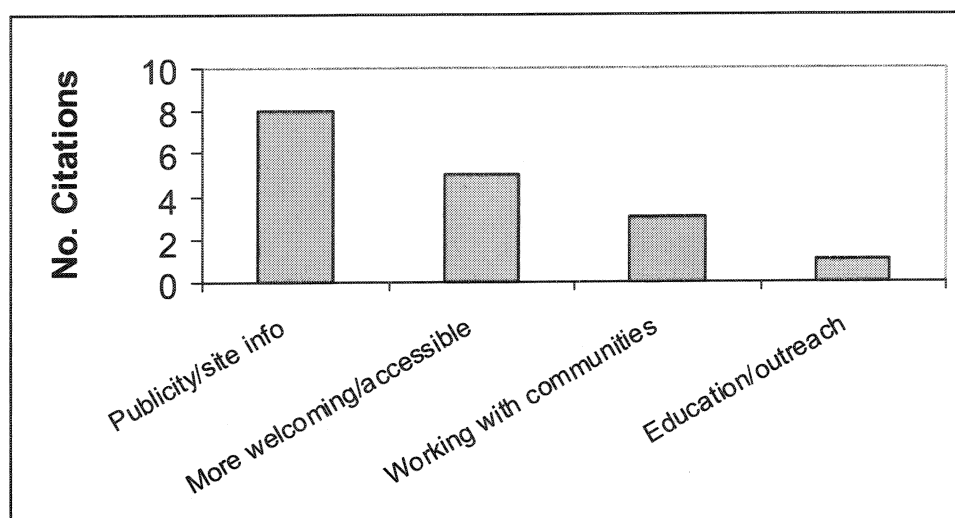


Figure 7.3 Actions to increase awareness and use of nature sites

Publicity and site information

Suggested publicity included the use of existing resources such as parish council magazines, local newspapers and radio/TV, as well as agencies where local people are likely to be waiting, such as GP's surgeries, Citizens Advice Bureaux and local libraries, rather than just Tourist Information Centres. Talks to local schools and Women's Institutes, and also educational events/open days, could raise awareness and also provide an opportunity to invite people to local sites.

Making sites appear more welcoming and accessible

Sites could be made more welcoming by good signage and visitor information about what could be done (rather than what could *not*) as well as wildlife interpretation boards:

“...friendly signposting which emphasises access without too much forbidding stuff about prohibitions. Folks should be encouraged to share in treasuring and protecting rather than feeling that they are excluded”

Working with communities

It was suggested that nature organisations (such as English Nature) could empower local communities by partnership work to provide community support and set up local groups and develop sites, particularly in deprived areas which are not normally targeted. Established community groups and organisations such as the Community Empowerment Network, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Voluntary Action Cumbria could be used to help engage local communities. Local churches also had access to a wide network in the community, which may help raise awareness and use of sites, particularly those on disused churchyards which could be developed for biodiversity programmes and local access.

Organisations such as the John Muir Trust offered bursaries to enable young people to become involved in conservation activities. One respondent considered that community involvement was the only way forward, and that many local people want to become involved but don't know how:

“There really is only one sustainable choice – to encourage and foster community involvement. Get them to guide walks for other community groups, to interpret the area for other groups. We, as a trust, are frequently asked by community volunteer groups for activities for them to engage in. They are out there – they want something to do!”

Education/outreach

One respondent considered that there should be more education programmes aimed at children:

“Teach them to be more environmentally minded – learn about wildlife and appreciating the rural landscape, and they will ultimately value it more when they become adults”.

7.4 Potential for new Local Nature Reserves

Seven of the respondents thought that there was potential for new Local Nature Reserves, and suggested sites in Holme Head, Cleator Moor, Waberthwaite, Camerton Brickworks, North Solway Dunes, as well as various wetlands and school grounds

The main barriers to designating new LNRs were land owners/local authority attitudes (cited by 5 respondents), costs for maintenance, particularly in economically deprived areas, and land availability/pressure on land for development (each cited by 4 respondents), as well as access issues, perceptions that LNRs are for wildlife and not people, and apathy from local people.

Attitudinal barriers from local authorities/land owners were summed up as:

“...local authorities aren't interested - they don't see them as vote catchers.”

“...there's a lack of vision about how nature reserves could be managed”

“...there's a lack of strategic future planning for use of the sites, balancing general environmental well-being with the socio-economic needs of the area”

“...partnerships with landowners tend to become strained when the issue of upkeep is raised”

There were also rigid perceptions about the role of Local Nature Reserves:

“...[there's] a narrowness of the 'nature reserves' approach as against a more inclusive 'green spaces' view”

7.5 Key points

- Local green spaces and nature reserves are considered an asset to Cumbria principally in terms of health and well-being; other possible benefits include value for tourism, local communities, wildlife, the local economy, children/young people, and as a focus for leisure/recreational activities.
- Although there was some support for new LNRs in Cumbria, there are a number of attitudinal and financial barriers, principally to do with land owners/local authority attitudes and competing pressure on land for housing or industry
- Barriers to use of existing green spaces and nature reserves were considered to be lack of knowledge, unwelcoming sites and poor access and transport
- There is also a perception that some sites were ‘over-protected for wildlife’ at the expense of the needs of local people
- Working with communities to increase publicity for sites, make them more welcoming and accessible, and to extend educational outreach is seen as a vital way forward.
- There are concerns about the funding required to set up and maintain new sites.

8 Business sector in Cumbria

“Cumbria offers advantages to living here and attracting investment into the County. It is...a balance of developing an economic benefit and preserving what we have.”

8.1 Introduction

Telephone interviews were conducted with businesses in Cumbria to obtain their views on how organisations perceive nature reserves and other green spaces, what this means to local business and industry, and what can be done to improve and make a difference to the current provision of nature reserves in Cumbria. A list of businesses to contact was compiled from companies listed in the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), those listed in Kingmoor Park industrial estate, and suggestions from the client. Of the telephone calls made (n=27), seven interviews were conducted and five were successfully completed from a range of small to medium sized and larger companies. Of the emails sent out (n=10) only one was completed and returned, giving a total sample of 6. Those that did respond may represent a sample biased towards people who are interested in the natural environment and/or who are well informed about their business’s policy towards the environment and green spaces.

8.2 Awareness of places for people and wildlife/natural landscapes

A large proportion of the respondents interviewed said that their organisation was ‘fairly aware’ or ‘very aware’ of natural landscapes, and mentioned the following green spaces and nature reserves:

Kingmoor LNR (2 mentions), Millom Iron Works LNR, Whitbarrow NNR, various parks in Carlisle, Glasson Moss NNR, a local river behind the office, various sites in Penrith, and “various nature reserves” on the West Coast and Solway.

8.3 Access to natural spaces and having nature reserves nearby

Respondents were generally positive, citing the advantages of access to nature and green spaces in terms of an improved quality of life, and benefits to businesses and local communities.

Quality of life:

“...a way of being able to break away from the hustle and bustle of daily life”

“You can look out of your window in Appleby and see people enjoying the countryside”

“I love to have access to the countryside....couldn't live in a better area”

“Nature is part of us and Cumbria. We take it for granted....I think it is important to keep the greenbelt areas”

Benefits to businesses and local communities - attracting staff to live in the area:

“...beneficial to local communities and business communities locally...it enhances businesses and encourages good investment inside and outside of Cumbria and business relocation”

“[We have]...taken a responsible role in our local communities and environments for many years now...We believe that vibrant, healthy, well-educated communities make for more satisfied customers and a strong pool of talent from which we draw employees”

“Cumbria offers advantages to living here and attracting investment into the County. It is...a balance of developing an economic benefit and preserving what we have”

8.4 Involvement with the local sites or nature projects

Two interviewees were able to confirm a high level of involvement in local sites or nature projects, saying that their organisation had:

“...involvement with voluntary organisations, agriculture and wildlife advisory groups”

“We are Gold Members of the Wildlife Trust, and are involved in many conservation projects. We are also involved with Business in the Community, The Prince's Trust, Groundwork, Young Enterprise, Visual and Sensory impaired projects, the Mersey Basin Campaign, RSPB and Thorn Cross Young Offenders Institute. We also have an Environmental Education Programme through which over 10,000 children a year learn about water and energy”

Others saw this as an individual pursuit or were unsure of their organisation's stance.

8.5 Potential for creating more nature reserves/natural areas

Half of the interviewees felt there was potential for creating more natural areas but had difficulty identifying specific sites to suggest:

“Willaholme area, upland areas outside the city, rivers where wetland reserves could be created”

“Quite a few in the county that I could identify but cannot divulge locations at this stage”

“Better areas but couldn’t nominate one”

“Possibilities – a lot around the area. RSPB site in the Solway which could be open as a nature reserve”

8.6 Key points

- Most people who responded were very positive about the benefits of living and working in Cumbria, and the role of natural settings in enhancing the quality of life; however, some individuals were reluctant to speak on behalf of their company.
- Nature and wildlife in Cumbria are seen as good for business in terms of image, attracting inward investment and staff, and enhancing the community.
- There was limited specific knowledge about locations of nature reserves, although most people had an idea of their existence.
- There is a need to take advantage of Cumbria’s countryside and natural settings, while at the same time preserving those qualities which attracted businesses and staff to move to the area in the first place.

9 Schools and youth organisations

“...they are a great learning environment for all age groups. Teaching can be extended to an outdoor facility and students can be engaged in 'hands-on' practical work within a natural learning environment”.

9.1 Introduction

There was a disappointing response to the questionnaire sent out to 46 schools and youth organisations: only 7 responses were obtained after follow-up contact by letter. Because teachers and youth workers tend to be unavailable during office hours, telephone interviews were not feasible. If this sector were to be contacted again, a different recruitment strategy would need to be considered. Despite the low response rate, some useful information was obtained. The final sample comprised:

- representatives of the Eden Youth Work Partnership, Cumbria Child Care Centre, and John Muir Award staff.
- teachers from Cockermouth Primary School, St Bernard's Catholic High School, Brampton Junior School and Storth C.E. Primary School.

9.2 Perceptions about green spaces and nature reserves

In general the schools who responded considered green spaces and nature reserves to be an asset in terms of environmental benefits ‘...the lungs of the planet’ as well as an educational/curricular resource:

“A valuable resource to enhance the curriculum - through science, art, observation, identification, a sense of wonder, citizenship.”

However, although one youth worker personally appreciated the value of green spaces and nature reserves, she did not think this would be the case for many of the young people she worked with and their families:

“I don’t feel that young people, or most of the time their parents either, see them that way. They do not see the possibilities, especially when they have other issues on their doorstep which to them are more important such as conflict in the community, I however, see that green spaces can be used as an opportunity to tackle these other issues”.

9.3 Actions to increasing awareness of green spaces and nature reserves

Several barriers to the use of green spaces and nature reserves were identified. These included the cost and availability of transport to sites, the need for young people to be accompanied on some sites, lack of information and interpretation and some physical barriers. There were also issues of restricted access, and some sites only being ‘...attainable to specific groups’. It was suggested that these barriers could be overcome by:

“Develop[ing] a publicity strategy and plan to promote access and increase awareness of open spaces. Reduce physical barriers such as gates, stiles, increase access for all, install welcome signs and interpretation boards of species and wildlife. Encourage dog walking, but have poo bags available”

School liaison, publicity and the provision of educational resources were also mentioned:

“More direct involvement with schools, work experience opportunities/ placements with schools, apprenticeships for school leavers. Child-friendly identification charts/poster, information boards, [address problems of] litter, broken glass and dog mess”.

“More publicity through direct contact with individual schools, [information on how] to accommodate multiple age groups, and possibly a greater understanding of how to relate it to the curriculum”

9.4 Involvement with sites and policies

The youth workers had some involvement with nature sites through the John Muir Awards – an environmental award scheme which focuses on wild places and encourages ‘...discovery and conservation in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration’. They considered that these awards could be used to overcome financial barriers for young people.

Schools were involved with:

- planting a wildlife area, meadow and trees in the school grounds
- a full day scientific and geographical event at Sandscale Haws NNR (and NT)
- visiting local farms, Gelt Woods, the River Irthing (2), Birdoswald Roman Fort (all in Brampton)
- visiting Leighton Moss RSPB reserve, Arnside-Silverdale AONB, Ash Landing at Windermere (National Trust)
- Millennium woodland (Cockermouth School).

Only two of the respondents (from Eden Youth Project and one school teacher from Cockermouth School) had heard of the Cumbrian Biodiversity Action Plan. Three of the four schools (St Bernard's Catholic High School, Brampton Junior School and Storth C.E. Primary School) were directly involved with the Cumbria Wildlife Trust 'School Grounds for Wildlife Project'.

9.5 Suggestions for new sites

Several suggestions were made for new nature reserves. These were all on the west coast:

- Prospect Wood, Distington.
- A small area of woodland within the school (Brampton Junior School).
- A pond on the back road to St Bees to Nethington:

“...a lovely pond which often has lots of wildlife and birds. There is a gate on the left which leads to a river and fields full of daffodils, bluebells...”

Barriers to designating these sites were child protection issues on school sites, and pressure on land for housing.

9.6 Key points

- Youth workers and educators see green spaces and nature reserves as a valuable resource for the children and young people of Cumbria
- Respondents believed green spaces and nature reserves in Cumbria can make an important contribution to the school curriculum and to education in general, including learning citizenship and dealing with conflict.
- Several schools have developed part of their grounds through the CWT Grounds for Wildlife Project.
- Barriers to a wider use of green spaces and nature reserves by children and young people are the cost of transport, physical access issues and lack of information about sites.
- Nature conservation may not be a priority for some young people; addressing barriers will require more direct involvement with schools, developing opportunities and experiences for different ages including school leavers, and generally making sites more child-friendly.

- Issues related to designating new nature reserves (for which there was some enthusiasm) include child safety and competing pressures for land development.

10 Meeting the target for Local Nature Reserves

“Outstanding views, fresh air, wildlife, flowers, trees, broad skies, peace and quiet, reflection - a chance to recharge your batteries and de-stress!”

10.1 Introduction

This study has revealed some of the rich value people place on the outdoor environment, green spaces and nature reserves of Cumbria, which can be managed for the benefit of both people and wildlife in Cumbria.

English Nature currently recommends a density of one hectare of LNR land per 1000 people, and, although this figure has nearly been achieved for Cumbria as a whole, most local authority areas in Cumbria fail to reach this level. Barrow-in-Furness at present has no LNRs (see Table 1.1.). However, for many of the respondents in this study, the issue is not the need for more nature reserves but, rather, the need to be better informed about the ones that already exist and to be able to have good access to them. The survey finding that a travel time of less than 10 minutes is a significant threshold for access to outdoor recreation sites, whatever the mode of travel but particularly for pedestrians, reinforces the recommendations of the ANGSt (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards) model (Box and Harrison 1993). This not only recommends one hectare of LNR per 1000 population but also the provision of natural green space (at least 2 hectare in size) within 5 minutes' walk of everyone's home, deemed to be a maximum distance of 300m (Handley and others 2003). It is likely that the travel time category of less than 10 minutes in the current study has captured the importance of a threshold for 'nearby' access that lies somewhere between 5 and 9 minutes' travel time. It is worth noting that virtually all daily visitors to local green spaces were less than 10 minutes away from their site, while virtually all who did not visit at least once a month had travel times of 10 minutes or more.

In this study, concerns were expressed about conflicting demands on land, recognising demand for sites for development, particularly for much-needed jobs or affordable housing. There is a perception that Cumbria already has enough nature sites, through the National Parks, National Nature Reserves and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which bring in millions of visitors to the area every year. However, the reality is that many of these sites are not readily accessible for people without cars, people with disabilities and people on fixed incomes.

A number of potential sites which could be designated as LNRs were suggested (see Table 10.1): many sites were small areas with some wildlife value, or else were already Local Nature Reserves or in the process of designation as Local Nature Reserves. This suggests that there is a lack of clarity over the purpose of Local Nature Reserves, as well as a lack of awareness about already existing sites.

All of the sites suggested, bar one, are in Copeland and many are located around the Whitehaven area. This is a locality within the top 20% of Index of Multiple Deprivation Statistics and one that the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership (WCSP) has identified as

suffering from poor access to local services and a declining physical environment. The WCSP aim to improve the environment and residential areas of Whitehaven can benefit from English Nature/Natural England collaboration to improve access to Local Nature Reserves as part of wider community development and contributions to the Copeland Economic Strategy. Similarly, working with the local community to address the lack of Local Nature Reserves in Barrow-in-Furness can contribute to the Furness Partnership's commitment to delivering a more pleasant environment to live in and narrowing the gap between quality of life for the poorest people and the average.

The plan of action recommended below takes into account the need to enhance knowledge of, access to and use of existing nature reserves as well as opportunities to designate new reserves, especially where there are none close to urban areas at present.

10.2 Action plan

The proposed action plan should include the following.

- Greater publicity for existing sites, using a variety of media and pre-existing community resources, such as local papers and newsletters, GPs surgeries, libraries, etc.
- Enhance the identity of Local Nature Reserves, create a welcoming and positive character (rather than emphasising what is prohibited), and improve accessibility for disabled people.
- Improve public transport to existing nature reserves, especially from disadvantaged areas.
- Develop 'local' sites which can be accessed by foot in less than 10 minutes from people's homes – people in Cumbria are already visiting a large number of local sites which could be enhanced and developed for wildlife as well as people; sites near urban areas (including brownfield sites) should be the priority.
- The Barrow-in-Furness area should be targeted for promoting access to existing nature sites and developing new ones, perhaps on brownfield/derelict land.
- Use the evidence provided in this report on the benefits for health and well-being, quality of life, education, business and the community in general to support investment in management and maintenance of sites; target budget holders in local authorities, business and tourism organisations.
- Follow up the interest shown by health professionals in developing more health-linked activities and providing more information for local people on existing natural areas and green spaces.
- Develop outreach and education work with local schools, youth organisations and communities to encourage more positive behaviours in green spaces, and combat the issues of litter, vandalism and dog mess which deter many people from using green spaces.
- Develop a fresh dialogue between different interest groups – land owners, statutory bodies and representatives of user groups to overcome longstanding stereotypes and negative perceptions.
- Build on the importance of natural areas to community and local identity (as identified in this report) to involve people with the management of local sites or local

conservation organisations - perhaps targeting schools, parish councils, voluntary organisations, and stressing the value of outdoor conservation work to health and well-being and local communities.

Table 10.1 Suggested sites for new Local Nature Reserves

Sites by Name	Sellafield Nuclear Reprocessing Station	Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass
Local Authority Area	Copeland Borough Council	Copeland Borough Council
Area - size	Several sites and pond	70 + acre Estate
Grid reference	NY205042	SD086964
Ownership	BNFL/NIREX	Private
Access	Restricted	
Value to local people	Healthier natural environment	Tourist Destination
Educational Use	Visitors' Centre	History
Wildlife/geological interest		Owl Centre
Present Designation	Nuclear Recovery Project	Private Ownership

Sites by Name	Fairy Steps/Underlaid Wood/ Major Wood/ Marble Quarry	Prospect Works, Distington
Local Authority Area	South Lakeland District Council	Copeland Borough Council
Area - size		unknown
Grid reference	SD476806	NY007234
Ownership	Dallam Tower Estate	unknown
Access		unknown
Value to local people		
Educational Use		
Wildlife/geological interest	wildlife value is high	Wood
Present Designation		

Sites by Name	St Bees to Nethington	Camerton Brickworks
Local Authority Area	Copeland Borough Council	Allerdale Borough Council
Area - size	unknown	4-5 acres
Grid reference	NX971116	NY037312
Ownership	unknown	
Access	unknown	Existing public access
Value to local people	Habitat	Green space
Educational Use		World War Two historic value
Wildlife/geological interest	pond	Red squirrel and other wildlife
Present Designation		

11 References

- BOX, J. & HARRISON, C. 1993. Natural spaces in urban places. *Town and Country Planning*, 62(9), 231-235
- CANTER, D. 1977. *The Psychology of Place*. London: Architectural Press.
- Census Data. Available from: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001>
- Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan. 2001. Available from: <http://www.wildlifeincumbria.org.uk/>
- CUMBRIA WILDLIFE TRUST. Available from: <http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk>
- EDEN RIVERS TRUST. 2003. *Restoring Eden: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment*. Final report for The Eden Rivers Trust. Mackay Consultants.
- EDEN RIVERS TRUST. 2004. *An educational experience for all: audience development plan and project proposal*.
- ENGLISH NATURE. 2003. *Reconnecting People and Nature – Strategic Direction*. GC PO3 35. Available from: www.english-nature.org.uk. Accessed 20/07/05.
- FRIENDS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT. 2005. *Open Spaces, Green Places* project by Friends of the Lake District, Cumbria County Council and Voluntary Action Cumbria. Available from: <http://www.fld.org.uk/info/openspaces.htm>
- HANDLEY, J. and others. 2003. Accessible natural green space standards in towns and cities: a review and toolkit for their implementation. *English Nature Research Reports*, No. 526.
- OPENspace. 2005. Nature for People: The Importance of Green Spaces to East Midlands Communities. *English Nature Research Reports*, No 567, Executive Summary and Research Information Note. Available from: <http://www.english-nature.org.uk/pubs/publication/PDF/567.pdf>
- WARD THOMPSON, C., and others. 2004. *Open space and social inclusion: local woodland use in Central Scotland*. Edinburgh: Forestry Commission

Appendix 1 Questionnaire design and population sampling

A facet approach was used to structure the main body of the questionnaire. Facet Theory provides a systematic way of structuring data and theories about data. It provides a method of formally defining a research area and thus makes explicit the scope and central issues of the research. In this study, the starting point was to explore the key issues in consultation with the client, reviewing previous research and the main findings of the scoping forum with stakeholders.

The structure of the facets, or central issues, was guided by Canter's constituents of place (Canter, 1977), which classified places into three categories as follows:

- The physical aspects of places
- The activities that people engage in related to places – their behaviour
- The perceptions that people have about places – their conceptualisations.

The central issues around which the questionnaire was constructed were derived from reviewing previous research studies concerned with green space (English Nature 2003; Ward Thompson and others 2004), and also the findings of the scoping forum, in consultation with the client. The issues identified were grounded in research to elicit responses about nature reserves and natural areas from a range of local communities in different UK contexts. The key, frequently recurring or significant issues were extracted and used as the basis for the questionnaire. The main issues are listed below in Table A, each issue being placed into one of the categories which constitute people's engagement with place.

Table A Physical aspects, activities and perceptions about nature reserves

Physical aspects (n=7)	Activities (n=8)	Perceptions (n=9)
Easy or difficult to get to Whether within walking distance of home Whether it appears to be looked after by someone Presence of rangers and wardens Whether it looks natural and wild Facilities such as toilets, seats and shelters Entrance/parking charges	Children learn about nature Take part in conservation work Take part in community events Relax For exercise See plants and wildlife Walk the dog To meet people	Importance for local communities Relevance to people Importance for plants and wildlife Feeling close to nature Feeling bored Feeling peaceful Feeling sense of community ownership Getting away from people Easy or difficult to find out about

The 2001 population census (National Census, 2001) was used to calculate the proportion of respondents to be selected for the questionnaire mailing by local authority boundary, age group and gender (See Table B, C and D). Local people in Cumbria were identified for the sample from a database purchased from a commercial market research company. To maximise responses to the questionnaire, a Freepost Envelope, colour questionnaire, and a small honorarium in the form of a £5 Boots voucher were used.

Table B Population by local authority boundary

Local authority	Population	%	Sample
Allerdale	93492	19.17	192
Barrow	71980	14.76	148
Carlisle	100739	20.66	206
Copeland	69318	14.22	142
Eden	49777	10.21	102
South Lakes	102301	20.98	210
Total for Cumbria	487607	100	1000

Table C Population by gender (all Cumbria)

Age group	Total Population	Male	%	Male (sample)	Female	%	Female (sample)
20-34	82996	41154	22.96	111	41842	21.54	111
35-49	104337	52091	29.06	140	52246	26.90	140
50-64	96822	48470	27.04	129	48352	24.89	129
>65	89330	37511	20.93	100	51819	26.68	140
Total adult popn	373485	179226	100	480	194259	100	520
Total popn	487607	237915			249692		

Table D Questionnaire sample breakdown (by local authority, gender and age group)

Local Authority	20-34		35-49		50-64		>64	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Allerdale	21	21	27	27	25	25	19	27
Barrow	16	16	21	21	19	19	15	21
Carlisle	22	22	29	29	27	27	21	29
Copeland	16	16	20	20	18	18	14	20
Eden	12	12	14	14	13	13	10	14
South Lakeland	24	24	29	29	27	27	21	29
Total	111	111	140	140	129	129	100	140

Appendix 2 Points raised at scoping meeting with stakeholders

The tables below are a more-or-less verbatim record of points raised by key stakeholders at the scoping workshop in October 2005. After each session, there was an opportunity for participants to vote for the issues they thought most important: numbers of votes are shown in brackets.

Table E Scoping Workshop: what nature reserves mean to people in Cumbria

<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - function/day to day activities – dog walking, walking to work, recreation, sport and exercise (4) - play (3) - observing/learning for yourself about wildlife in a natural setting (3) - Health – both mental (ie relaxation) and physical (walking way to health initiatives) - tradition of getting out of the house <p>Physical qualities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - space to relax - green spaces bring country into town - buffer/protection against industry - fresh air - scenery - senses – sight, smell, sounds - presence of water – texture, habitat/environment - woodlands - links/linear spaces – cycle paths, canal boats – all create/link linear space cheaply - water - views across countryside/estuary - feel ‘natural’ ie no noise, tranquil, no speedboats, but may expect some noise eg children’s play, trains etc which reflect environment - facilities – toilets, café, ice cream etc (all sources of income) <p>Wildlife:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presence of wildlife adds a positive experience even if at a subconscious level - nature – as habitat, flora and fauna preservation/conservation – natural/cultural heritage - learning and understanding - wildlife - opportunities to enjoy wildlife - structured interpretation of wildlife - privilege if you have nature reserve on your doorstep 	<p>Perceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special places (3) - fun - different sectors of the community will see areas differently - exploration/involvement – being there, experience of something different - peaceful - take nature for granted in Cumbria as expect it to be there - freedom - nature aspect is an individual taste - fear of open spaces - aspects of Media, especially TV should not focus so much on negative portrayal of open spaces and nature reserves’ - can have negative meanings – scary - ‘reserve’ refers to a bounded space (c.f. freer experience of nature) - connection/being part of something bigger/different: knowing – psychologically/familiarity, oral history and memories - presence of open areas creates a local character or atmosphere - ‘no entry’ <p>Other functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - jobs on land - agriculture plus other livelihoods - community potential (or not) - managing for nature conservation as priority - visitor attraction/tourism - leisure opportunity - tourism - flood plain – water management
--	--

Table F Scoping workshop: what people in Cumbria expect from nature reserves

<p>Wildlife/biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doesn't have to be more species or 'ancient' site (6) - to be told that place has nature value therefore expect to see wildlife - chance to see 'moving nature' ie mammal or bird <p>Community involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community 'ownership' vs being a trespasser (6) - local space for local people to walk dog etc – local green patch (2) - gardens/community areas (1) <p>Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - right of access to site (3) - access vs remoteness – rights, easy to get to/convenient, safety as nearby eg for children (does this relate more to country parks than nature reserves?) (1) - good to have open space close to home (1) - not everyone wants to visit a nearby site - need a car <p>Nature reserves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what distinguishes nature reserves from other green spaces - something 'special' in NR - nature reserves should not be seen as places for 'experts' – access should include realising new audiences and inviting them along - not sure where they are or what there is to see 	<p>Information, education, interpretation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - education (2) - 'signposts' to what you can see, when – interpretation (signs, leaflets, people) (1) - information/interpretation - information along through routes to show people what is there - important to know reserve is there even if don't visit - how much interpretation should there be in the countryside <p>Management/maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not to change – preserve/conserve (1) - visitor safety and wildlife – is there a contradiction? - priority for nature conservation in management - money issues – people expect places to be free, not always able to see what money is for - controlled/managed environment - cleanliness/managed/maintained appearance – can be more important than biodiversity <p>Behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dogs – able to let off lead - constraints on behaviour
--	--

Table G Scoping workshop: suggestions for improving the provision of nature reserves in Cumbria

Community

- community management – must be linked for long-term effect (7)
- community – plans/ownership rather than just for recreation
- community – see a presence on nature reserves – action, maintenance
- if it works for the community – it works for nature
- community needs must be met
- value of what local people/groups of people can do with an area of land

Sites

- access to nature within walking distance of home (wherever home is) (5)
- improving access to nature reserves (1)
- more places/NRS
- may not know where/what NR is (raise interest)
- nature reserves can result in reduced access to sites
- terminology – nature reserve/park – what are they?
- improving quality of experience on access to/between NR green spaces
- wider countryside environment becomes richer in wildlife so no longer need nature reserves (or become less intensely used)
- wider support needed from society if more nature reserves to be created/funded/managed
- integration of farmland/working land and nature
- nature reserves on farms as a diversification opportunity

Attitudes – individual and organisations

- fundamental lack of appreciation within Local Authorities that Local Nature Reserves are important resources for local people (5)
- respect for land/land manager/stock etc (2)
- is there a ‘them and us’ perception – ie Not for us/only for us – how to change perceptions
- tolerance and consideration – working together and cooperation – different interest groups
- long term vision for management from funders/local authorities
- public and officials both need persuading of above
- link biodiversity agenda with other economic/funding agenda
- official mechanisms need to be as supportive of biodiversity as the person on the street

Education/marketing

- united voice promoting concept of ‘biodiversity as a part of quality of life’ – marketing needed (4)
- provide experiences – appeal to all senses – not just the wildlife you can see – broader use of interpretation (1)
- make better use of existing reserves/resources eg through people interpreting what’s there (1)
- education/information – 2-way – and needs to be updated regularly/appropriate to season
- different ways of interpreting nature (eg world wide web)
- change for children’s agenda – encourage use of nature reserves
- education – importance of respecting – funding issue – Local Nature Reserves – local schools can go and experience outdoors safely

Barriers

- fear of landowners that all land will be open and won’t be possible to make a living from it (1)
- conflict – landowners/jobs – perhaps overcome with education (1)
- fear of litigation – especially if start to improve facilities, health and safety issues – may put people off making changes

- address negative aspects – barriers/unknown fears
- Resources/money – always assume that there is none but expect a certain level of facilities/standards but don't expect to pay eg Community green space. More money is not always necessary if better targeted – can help with guidance for local plans. May not be using the resources we have to greatest effect eg Education/use by schools
- creating an experience safely

Other

- nature or eco-tourism – get an economic price put on nature – ‘putting a value on nature is fine (if difficult) but mustn't lose sight of the fact that nature's value is generally beyond price’
- walking way to health project can be educational (leaflets/specialist walks)
- collaboration and partnership working between different sectors is an effective way of achieving multiple outcomes ie health and education, improvement of local environment
- more joined up thinking

Appendix 3. Questionnaire of local people in Cumbria – Summary responses

Response rate

Out of 1000 questionnaires, there were 205 respondents – a response rate of 20.5%.

Area	Male	Female	Total	Total sent	Response rate
Allerdale	21	24	45	192	23.4%
Barrow	8	17	25	148	16.9%
Carlisle	19	26	45	206	21.8%
Copeland	11	13	24	142	16.9%
Eden	9	10	19	102	18.6%
South Lakeland	23	24	47	210	22.4%
Total	91	114	205	1000	20.5%

Q1. Do you on occasion **visit outdoor places** such as parks, playing fields, woodlands, lakesides, beaches, rough ground or nature reserves?

Yes	No	If no, please go to Q.7
202 (98.5%)	3 (1.5%)	

Q2. What type of outdoor place are you most likely to visit?

Grassy area/public playing field	65 (32.2% ¹)	Woodlands	104 (51.5%)
Formal park or garden	62 (30.7%)	Allotments	10 (5.0%)
Footpath, bridleway or cycle track	93 (46.04%)	Other (please specify)	40 (19.8%)
Nature reserve	62 (30.7%)		

¹N.B total greater than 100% as respondents selected more than one option

Which outdoor place do you visit most often? (please give a name and/or location for the place)
(See Appendix 3 for responses)

Q3. How often do you visit this place? (Please tick one answer)

Daily	More than once a week	Weekly	More than once a month	Monthly	Once in three months or less
12.9%	14.9%	22.3%	22.8%	14.9%	12.4%

Q4. How long does it take to get to this place?

<10 minutes	11-30 minutes	31-60 minutes	>61 minutes
44.4%	38.4%	16.6%	2.5%

How do you get there?

Foot	Bicycle	public transport	Car	Other
38.7%	3.5%	1.5%	55.3%	1.0%

Q5. How long do you normally spend at this place? (Please tick one answer)

Less than 30 minutes	30-60 minutes	1-2 hours	2 hours or more
7.5%	38.8%	25.4%	28.4%

Q6. What do you normally do in this place?

Relax	10.7%	Participate in an event	0.9%
Exercise or sport	6.7%	Look at plants or wildlife	16.2%
Children's play	9.7%	Social gathering	2.4%
Go for a walk	33.8%	Other (please specify)	4%
Walk the dog	15.5%		

B. About wildlife and nature reserves – nature reserves are places that have been specially designated for people and wildlife

Q7. Do you know of any nature reserves in Cumbria?

I know of...(please write the name of the nature reserve)	I have visited this nature reserve (please tick each nature reserve you have visited)

Q8. What do you like most about nature reserves?

Q9. What do you like least about nature reserves?

Q10. How could nature reserves be improved to encourage you to use them?

The next part of the questionnaire contains statements about wildlife and nature reserves. Please can you score each statement according to your level of agreement as follows:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5

(Note, summary scores are shown as % of respondents in the table below)

Q11.		1	2	3	4	5
I think nature reserves	are important places where children can learn about nature	1.6		3.1	33.9	61.5
	can be difficult to find out about	4.8	17.6	29.8	38.3	9.6
	are important for local communities	2.1	1.0	13.5	53.6	29.7
	can be places to meet people	4.8	12.2	40.4	34.0	8.5
	are not relevant to me	31.2	42.5	16.1	5.9	4.3
	are difficult to get to	7.1	31.7	39.9	16.4	4.9
	are important places for plants and wildlife	0.5		1.1	21.1	77.4
I would visit nature reserves	that have facilities such as toilets, shelters and seats	2.2	6.5	16.1	33.9	41.4
	to walk my dog	30.8	10.5	22.1	16.3	20.3
	to take part in conservation work	5.6	18.6	43.5	22.0	10.2
	where there is an entrance or parking charge	15.7	22.2	35.7	21.1	5.4
	to take part in community events	5.6	20.0	39.4	27.2	7.8
	that are within walking distance of my home	6.0	10.9	21.9	37.7	23.5
	that appear to be looked after by someone	2.1	5.8	19.0	50.3	22.8
	where there are rangers or wardens	2.1	5.3	25.7	41.2	25.7
	that look natural and wild	1.0		8.3	47.2	43.5
	to relax	1.0	2.6	9.8	46.1	40.4
	for exercise	2.6	2.6	13.2	46.6	34.9
	to see plants and wildlife	1.0	1.0	6.8	37.7	53.4
I associate nature reserves	with getting away from people	8.2	19.0	31.5	22.8	18.5
	with feeling bored	42.8	38.3	13.3	2.8	2.2
	with feeling peaceful	1.6	1.1	6.8	55.3	35.3
	with feeling close to nature	0.5	1.6	6.3	42.7	49.0
	with a sense of community ownership	3.7	10.2	43.3	27.8	15.0

C. About you

The next part of the questionnaire contains some questions about you. Any information you supply will be very helpful for this research.

Q10. Are you involved with any local or conservation groups to do with outdoor places?

Yes 6.4%	No 93.6%	If yes, please specify the organization: Arnside District Natural History Society; Cumberland Geological society - RIGS Project; Cumbria Wildlife Trust; Dunnerholme golf course; Kirkby 'The Door Step Green' project (n=2); Lakeland Horticultural Society; Local Junior Football club; National Trust (n=2); Protection of the red squirrels and local birds; Ramblers Walking Club.
-------------	-------------	--

Q11. What is your current occupation? (please tick one answer)

Employed	In Education	Parent/carer	unemployed	Retired
104 (51.0%)	11 (5.4%)	15 (7.4%)	9 (4.4%)	65 (31.9%)

Q12. What kind of work does the "bread-winner" in your household (you or your spouse/partner) do? (please tick one box)

Professional or managerial	77 (50.3%)
Clerical, administrative, small employer or self-employed	40 (26.1%)
Semi-routine or routine manual	36 (23.5%)
Not given	52 (3.9%)

Q13. What is your gender?	Male	Female
	91 (41%)	114 (55.6%)

Q14. What is your age?	20-34	35-49	50-64	Over 65
	31 (15.1%)	58 (28.3%)	75 (37.1%)	40 (19.5%)

Q15. What is your ethnic origin? (please tick one answer)

White	Mixed	Black/ Black British	Asian/ Asian British	Chinese	Not given
200 (97.6%)			1 (0.5%)		4 (2.0%)

Q16. Any other comments about nature reserves in Cumbria?

Appendix 4 Outdoor recreation sites visited by people in Cumbria

Local Nature Reserves (LNR) Harrington Reservoir (2), Kingmoor (2)
National Nature Reserves (NNR) Bassenthwaite Lake (2), North Walney (4), Smardale Gill (CWT)
RSPB nature reserves Leighton Moss (2)
Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT) nature reserves Clints Quarry near Egremont (2)
Lake District National Park (LDNP) Lake District (14), Birkrigg Common (Ulverston), Borrowdale Fells (6), Brockhole (3), Buttermere, Coniston Water (2), Derwent Water (4), Lake Windermere (5), Ullswater (2)
National Trust (NT) Fellfoot, Tarn Howes (2)
Forestry Commission (FC) Grizedale Forest (8), Whinlatter Forest (4), High Stand (nr Wetheral)
Country Parks Bardsea Country Park, Talkin Tarn Country Park (4)
Public Parks Barrow-in-Furness public park (6), Bitts Park (Carlisle) (7), Cartmel Park (Carlisle) (2), Gornal Park, Maryport Millennium Green, Newlands Lane Park, Penrith Park (4), Rickerby Park (Carlisle) (4), South Lakeland local parks, Walker Road, Whitehaven Parks (5)
AONB/SSSIs Ambleside (2), Roanhead Beach/Duddon Estuary (2), Silloth Beach, Solway Firth (3),
Miscellaneous sites Ashmeadow Woods, Biggar Bank (Walney Island) (5), Burnside Woods, Caldbeck Common (2), Canalfoot (Ulverston), Cragg Fell, Crummock Water and Woodlands (2), Cumbria way - Carlisle to Dalston, Devil's Bridge (Kirby Lonsdale), Dunhallard Pike/Pooley Bridge (Penrith) Edenhall (River Eden), Egremont Castle (Beckermet), Ennerdale (3), Farleton Knott, Finsthwaite Tarn, Flimby cyclepath, Frank's Bridge (Kirby Stephen), Garburn Pass, Geltside Woods (Brampton) (5), Hammonds Pond (Carlisle) (3), Harraby Park (2), Harris Park (Cockermouth), Haverigg, Helm (Kendal), Heysham Park (Carlisle), Hoad area (Ulverston), Holehird Garden (Windermere), Holker Hall (2), Holmrook (2), Howe Tarn Woods, Hutley, Kendal (3), Kinniside Common, Kirkby (2), Ladies Walk (River Eden) (2), Lambrigg Fell (nr Kendal), Lorton local village walks, Lower Furness Park, Loweswater, Lowther Valley, Maryport Beach, Mill Field / Curwen Hall, Netherall Estate (Maryport), Nethertown (beach), Ravenglass/Muncaster footpaths, River Calder footpath, River Eden (2), Rydal Water, Salterbeck (Harrington Reservoir LNR), Sandwith (nr St. Bees), Knott Tarn walk (Windermere), Scotland Garden, Scout Scar (Kendal) (3), Sedgwick area, Serpentine Woods (Kendal), Setmurthy Forest, Sheep Mount (Carlisle), Sleagill Dam, South Lakeland Fells, Thalka Beck (Penrith), Thursby Park (nr Carlisle), Trinity Gardens (Whitehaven), Ulverston, Vulcans Park (Workington), Waital Carn, Waterhead (Ambleside)(2), Workington (Old railway track) (2)
Sites outside Cumbria Cowal Peninsula, Isle of Bute, Scotland (includes NSA and SSSIs)

Note: Numbers in brackets refer to the number of respondents identifying each nature reserve
 Initials in brackets refer to other designations that all or part of the site fall under
 Locations named by respondents are identified to the best of our knowledge but some in the miscellaneous category may have been mis-named or incorrectly identified

Appendix 5 Questionnaire sent to health care professionals

A. About outdoor activities or exercise

Q1 Do you ever recommend **outdoor physical activity** or **visiting outdoor /natural areas** (for health reasons) to your patients?

Yes, please go to Q2. N=23	No, please go to Q3 N=0
-------------------------------	----------------------------

Q2. What outdoor physical activity do you prescribe or recommend?

Q3. What are the reasons you do not recommend outdoor physical activity?

Q4. What, if any, do you consider to be the potential health/well-being benefits of increased outdoor physical activity to your patients?

Q5. What, if any, do you consider to be the benefit of access to nature and natural places?

Q 6. What do you consider to be potential risks of increased outdoor activity to your patients?

Q7. What do you consider to be the main barriers to increased outdoor activity for your patients?

Q8. Have you ever heard of or recommended any of the following to your patients? (please tick all that apply)

	Heard of	Have recommended
Generally increasing everyday physical activity eg walking or cycling rather than using the car or bus	20 (86.9%)	19 (82.6%)
Walking in outdoor places eg open spaces or nature reserves	20 (86.9%)	18 (78.3%)
Outdoor sports or other exercise	18 (78.3%)	13 (56.5%)
Outdoor exercise schemes (please give details)	9 (39.1%)	-
Health walks eg Walking to Health Initiative (please give details)	15 (65.2%)	11 (47.8%)
Involvement in gardening or conservation activities (please give details)	9 (39.1%)	4 (17.4%)
Any other outdoor physical activity (Please state what it is)	-	-

Q9. Are there any particular outdoor places to visit in Cumbria that you would recommend to your patients? If so, please name them.

--

Q10. Why do you recommend this place/these places?

--

B. About your outdoor activity

Q11. Do you, on occasion, visit outdoor places such as parks, playing fields, woodlands, lakesides, beaches, rough ground or nature reserves?

Yes	No	If no, please go to Q14
N=23	N=0	

Q12. What is your favourite outdoor place to visit in Cumbria?

(please give a name and/or location for the place)
--

Q13. What do you normally do in this place? (Please tick one answer)

Relax	7 (30.4%)	Participate in an event	1 (4.4%)
Exercise or sport	11 (47.8%)	Look at plants or wildlife	9 (39.0%)
Children's play	2 (8.7%)	Social gathering	2 (8.7%)
Go for a walk	16 (69.6%)	Other (please specify)	2 (8.7%)
Walk the dog	10 (43.5%)		

Q14. Do you know of any nature reserves in Cumbria? Nature reserves are places that have been specially designated for wildlife and people.

I know of...(please write the name of the nature reserve)	I have visited this nature reserve (please tick each nature reserve you have visited)

C. About you.

Q15. What is your gender?

Male	Female
10 (43.7%)	13 (56.5%)

Q16. What is your age?

20-34	35-49	50-64	Over 65
3 (13.0%)	11 (47.8%)	8 (34.8%)	1 (4.3%)

Q17. What is your ethnic origin? (please tick one answer)

White	Mixed	Black/Black British	Asian/Asian British	Chinese	Other
22 (95.7%)			1 (4.3%)		

Q18. What is your job within health care?

--

Q19. Any other comments about outdoor activity or access to nature?

--

Thank you very much for your help!

Appendix 6 Respondents from local strategic partnerships and Cumbria environmental groups

Camerton Millennium Group
Camerton Parish Council
Carlisle & District Citizens Advice Bureau (Carlisle LSP)
Churches Together in Cumbria (Cumbria LSP)
Community Empowerment Network
Cumbria and Cumberland WI federation
Cumbria Local Access Forum
Cumbria Neighbourhood Watch Association
Cumbria Special Constabulary (Cumbria LSP)
Cumbria Strategic Partnership (Cumbria LSP)
Cumbria Wildlife Trust
Eden CVS/ Eden Local Agenda 21,
Eden Rivers Trust (Eden LSP)
Environment Agency (Cumbria)
Fellrunner Village Bus (Eden LSP)
Friends of the Earth, Cumbria (South Lakeland LSP)
Friends of the Lake District
Home Housing
John Muir Award - Cumbria
Ramblers Association
Raymond Priestly Centre
Visit Egremont
Walking to Health Initiative
West Cumbria
West Cumbria Council for Voluntary Services
Wetheral Parish Council
YHA (England & Wales)

Places in Cumbria for wildlife and people

Report Authors: Catherine Findlay and Catharine Ward Thompson, Date: August 2006

Keywords: Cumbria, nature, green space, people, health, well-being, community

Introduction

It is important to understand how the nearby environment contributes to people's well-being and quality of life. This project focused on local open spaces and wildlife in Cumbria. It explored how a range of stakeholder representatives, from health professionals to local businesses and landowners, perceived the value of the natural environment and the need for more local provision of nature reserves.

What was done

English Nature commissioned the OPENspace Research Centre at Edinburgh College of Art and Heriot Watt University to carry out research in Cumbria. An initial forum was held with key stakeholders to identify the main issues relating to people's connections with nature, and particularly with nature reserves and green space in their local area. The forum also helped to refine strategies for approaching the different sectors in the main study.

A postal questionnaire was used to survey people living in Cumbria about their perceptions and use of green spaces and nature reserves. The sample was designed to ensure that the respondents, 205 in all, reflected the diversity of Cumbria's population and geography. Separate postal, e-mail and telephone questionnaires were used to obtain responses from particular targeted groups: healthcare professionals; representatives of local authorities and key partner organisations with land holdings in Cumbria; Local Strategic Partnership members and environment organisations in Cumbria; representatives of the business sector in Cumbria; and people working in schools and youth organisations.

The resulting data was analysed using qualitative and statistical methods as appropriate to reveal people's behaviours, values and expectations in relation to existing nature reserves, in the context of other local natural areas and open space in Cumbria.

Results and conclusions

1. Green spaces and nature reserves in Cumbria are highly valued for their contribution to health and well-being, enjoyment and relaxation, as well as opportunities to interact with wildlife.
2. Cumbria's natural heritage attracts 15 million visitors per year, contributing to the local economy, as well as attracting companies and professionals to relocate in the area.
3. Many people perceive that Cumbria is well served with nature reserves through the National Parks and National Nature Reserves; however the majority of Local Nature Reserves are located away from urban areas where most people live.
4. Local Nature Reserves are recognised as beneficial for people's health and wellbeing, quality of life, and local communities in general, as well as for wildlife.
5. What people value most about nature reserves are the opportunities to see wildlife, and also to experience peace and quiet.
6. For many of the respondents in this study, the issue is not the need for more nature reserves but, rather, the need to be better informed about the ones that already exist and to be able to have good access to them.
7. People consider that existing sites are poorly publicised and often not welcoming.
8. Better public transport and better physical access for disabled people, families with children, and people from economically disadvantaged areas would also make a difference to use of local green space and nature reserves.
9. A travel time of less than 10 minutes is a significant threshold for access to outdoor recreation sites in Cumbria, whatever the mode of travel but particularly for pedestrians. Almost all people who visit local green spaces more than once a week take less than 10 minutes to get there.
10. Although Cumbria as a whole approaches English Nature's recommended density of one hectare of Local Nature Reserve land per 1000 people, most local authority areas in Cumbria fail to reach this level. Barrow-in-Furness at present has no Local Nature Reserves.
11. People in Cumbria are already visiting a large number of local outdoor sites which could be enhanced and developed for wildlife as well as people.
12. Community engagement and local community identity are considered important aspects of nature reserves.

Recommendations for action

1. Greater publicity should be given to existing local sites, using a variety of media and pre-existing community resources, such as local papers and newsletters, GPs surgeries, libraries, etc.
2. The identity of Local Nature Reserves should be enhanced to create a welcoming and positive character (rather than emphasising what is prohibited), and improve accessibility for disabled people
3. Public transport to existing nature reserves should be improved, especially from disadvantaged areas.
4. In many cases, the richness and value of open space sites already used by local people should be developed, as an alternative to designating new sites. 'Local' sites which can be accessed by foot in less than 10 minutes from people's homes should be prioritised near urban areas.
5. New Local Nature Reserves can take advantage of old brownfield sites and derelict land in and around urban areas. The Barrow-in-Furness area in particular should be targeted for promoting access to existing nature sites and developing new ones.
6. The evidence provided in this report on the benefits for health and wellbeing, quality of life, education, business and the community in general can be used to support investment in management and maintenance of sites and to target budget holders in local authorities, business and tourism organisations
7. The interest shown by health professionals in developing more health-linked activities and providing more information for local people on existing natural areas and green spaces should be followed up.
8. Outreach and education work with local schools, youth organisations and communities should be developed to encourage more positive behaviours in green spaces, and combat the issues of litter, vandalism and dog mess which deter many people from using green spaces.
9. There are opportunities to develop a fresh dialogue between different interest groups – land owners, statutory bodies and representatives of user groups - to overcome longstanding stereotypes and negative perceptions
10. Community involvement in Local Nature Reserves should be developed and promoted, working in partnership with businesses, schools and land owners to engage people in the management of local sites and stress the value of outdoor conservation work to health and well-being and local communities.

English Nature's viewpoint

This research was commissioned to assess how NNRs fit into the overall greenspace and "nature" resource in Cumbria. We wanted to understand better how people value and use the local open spaces that exist within a rural county for experiencing nature and getting out into the countryside. We also wanted to look at the current and potential role of Local Nature Reserves in Cumbria. LNRs are not evenly distributed across the county, so we wanted to find out whether there are any sites that people know about which could be put forward as new LNRs. We work closely with local authorities to promote the designation and management of LNRs, and are keen to explore how better use could be made of an extended and enhanced network

The research has provided valuable evidence on how people perceive and use the open spaces they know about. There are some useful messages for us concerning the promotion of NNRs and what we should consider offering at these sites. The results also show that sites such as NNRs and LNRs and other greenspaces are valued by local people, however this is constrained by poor information on the location of these open spaces, what wildlife and other features they support, and what they can do there. It also highlights the importance of developing the richness and value of open space sites already used by local people as an alternative to developing new ones.

The research shows that people differ in what they want from greenspaces. What people value most are opportunities to see wildlife and also to experience peace and quiet.

Particular areas in Cumbria are identified which should be targeted for promoting access to existing nature sites and developing new ones. The report will provide important evidence to assist Natural England in developing its greenspace strategy in Cumbria.

Selected references

Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan. 2001. Available from: <http://www.wildlifeincumbria.org.uk/>

FRIENDS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT. 2005. *Open Spaces, Green Places* project by Friends of the Lake District, Cumbria County Council and Voluntary Action Cumbria. Available from: <http://www.fld.org.uk/info/openspaces.htm>

Further information

English Nature Research Reports and their *Research Information Notes* are available to download from our website: www.english-nature.org.uk

For a printed copy of the full report, or for information on other publications on this subject, please contact the Enquiry Service on 01733 455100/101/102 or e-mail enquiries@english-nature.org.uk