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THE MOSAIC MODEL



Engaging BME communities
in National Parks



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ABOUT THIS PAPER

Welcome to this paper, one in the second series of Early Findings papers. **This paper outlines the learning from one of the Access to Nature projects, Mosaic. Mosaic has created an approach and then reflected on its application in engaging people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities in National Parks to formulate a model to help inform their own practice, as well as guiding the work of other organisations.**

These papers are being produced across the lifetime of Access to Nature and demonstrate what is being learnt about encouraging people who have little or no experience of the natural environment to go out into the outdoors. This includes messages to inform the continuing work of Access to Nature projects and the work of other organisations interested in or committed to this kind of work. More Findings Papers will be produced as Access to Nature progresses and as we build on our learning to date.

THE CURRENT CONTEXT

The current political agenda parallels the goals of many of the Access to Nature projects. The vision for a Big Society focuses on a belief that people should be empowered to improve their communities and shape the services they receive. The three core strands of the current Localism agenda – promoting social action in communities; empowering communities; and opening up public services – all reflect the kinds of ambitions of many of the funded projects. Within Natural England, the commitments to reconnect people with nature; protect natural assets; and maximise the opportunities offered by a greener economy are all priorities that underpin and complement Access to Nature.



BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Evidence shows how people from BME communities can feel disengaged from the natural environment.¹ While they make up around 10% of the national population, ethnic minorities represent only about 1% of visitors to National Parks, for example.²

There are a number of factors that explain these figures, including economic circumstances, language barriers, lack of transport and limited access to information. However it's also the case that a lack of understanding and awareness among organisations working in the natural environment has led to further marginalisation of ethnic minorities from the outdoor landscape.³ And yet, Natural England's Diversity Review did show that there is a desire among people from BME communities to engage with the countryside.⁴

ABOUT MOSAIC

The Mosaic project was funded by Access to Nature to tackle the twin challenges of enabling people from BME communities to access to the natural environment and working with key agencies to help them improve how they engage with BME communities. Building on a period of pilot work and the learning from that phase, this was a national project led by the Campaign for National Parks (CNP), **aiming to cement long term, sustainable engagement between BME communities and the National Parks and Youth Hostel Association (YHA).**

Mosaic was a partnership between CNP, the YHA and the ten National Park Authorities in England (NPAs): the Broads, Dartmoor, Exmoor, Lake District, New Forest, North York Moors, Northumberland, Peak District, South Downs and Yorkshire Dales. It targeted urban areas with high levels of deprivation to build links between BME communities in these areas and their nearest National Park.



There were two parallel strands of activity:

1. Recruiting and training 'community champions' - volunteers who encouraged others to visit National Parks through a range of activities including organising and leading group visits



2. Helping organisations to make changes to help them reach new audiences across BME communities

Both are equally important: it is not enough to get people from BME communities out into the countryside. There also needs to be institutional change among key agencies to ensure they engage with people from BME communities in a meaningful way.

THE MOSAIC MODEL

The independent evaluation of Mosaic conducted at the end of the Access to Nature funding concluded that it had been **very successful** in achieving its outcomes. It had successfully tested a model through which the NPAs and YHA could meet their shared aim of reaching and engaging with communities that are under represented among their traditional users. Mosaic also achieved all of its outcomes and made a strong contribution towards the overall aim of Access to Nature.⁵

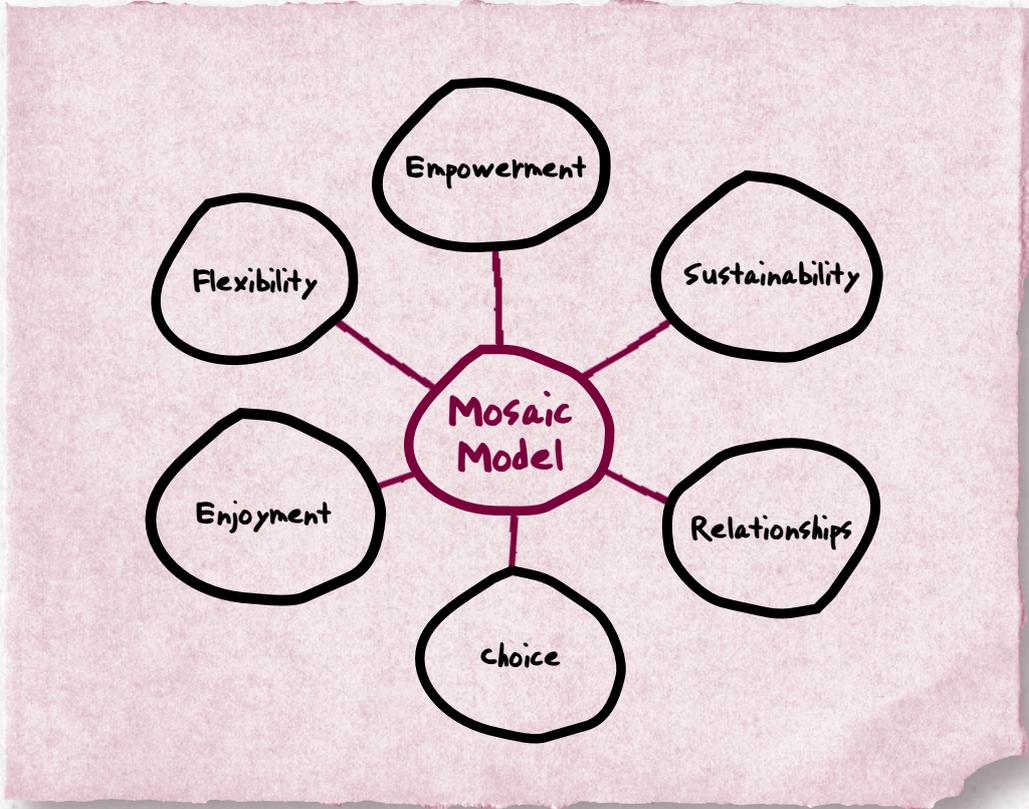
Mosaic was structured around a distinct approach, the '**Mosaic Model**'. In this paper we provide an overview of the Mosaic Model and the elements that would be required for it to be replicated elsewhere. We show the steps involved in developing a team of Community Champions, plus the stages in fostering organisational change in key agencies.

This model is transferable to other settings (e.g. urban nature reserves), sectors (e.g. museums) and audiences (e.g. young people). Each time that the paper uses the term National Parks or Youth Hostel Association, replace this with the sector or environment where you work or have influence.



THE MOSAIC MODEL PRINCIPLES

Everything that Mosaic did reflected six underpinning principles.



- **Empowerment:** giving individuals the skills and confidence to engage with National Parks
- **Sustainability:** making sure that the impact of the project lasts well beyond the period of core funding by training volunteer Community Champions and by helping service providers in National Parks make organisational changes to better engage new audiences in the long term
- **Relationships:** building personal relationships and networks between and across community members and service providers in the National Parks
- **Choice:** starting from Community Champions' and National Park service providers making a positive choice to engage; participation is not about compulsion, it is about choice
- **Enjoyment:** remembering that the project is about access to National Parks landscapes, which were created for the benefit and enjoyment of the public
- **Flexibility:** making sure that Community Champions and service providers in the National Parks can choose to undertake activities that they are interested in, being flexible and adaptable to local and individual circumstances



COMMUNITY CHAMPION DEVELOPMENT

"I've got my confidence back after such a long time and, due to this, my independence. I feel Mosaic has opened the doors to my childhood once more, reawakening memories that I can now actively share with people of my community. Mosaic has helped me visit different places through the training I have received and by broadening my knowledge of the National Parks. I am able to not only enjoy the National Parks with my family a great deal more, but also feel confident to encourage others to do so as well."

Mosaic Community Champion, Aisha Mirza

The following steps describe the process that Mosaic used to recruit and support Community Champions. You'll see that it takes a lot more than going into a community for the first time and seeking out people who will already be equipped for the Community Champions task. It's also important to bear in mind that the Community Champions must be people with some degree of influence in the target audience and who have an interest in promoting the National Parks to others and helping their communities benefit from the natural environment.

Step 1

Engage with communities

The Mosaic Model will only be successful if there is a significant amount of time invested in the project to make the effort to go out into communities, talking to people, building trust, establishing relationships and raising the profile of the project through repeated contact as a key first step.



Step 2

Recruit Community Champions

Through the engagement work, identify and recruit individuals with a growing interest in the outdoors to become Community Champions and explain how they will also benefit from being involved.

For example: Mosaic found that face to face contact works best. The Project Officer wanted to make links with the Chinese community in Middlesbrough but had no links with that community. He tried cold calling the community centre by phone and email with no result. Eventually he went in person and waited until someone was available to see him. Once he had made a contact that person put him in touch with someone who was very interested in Mosaic. After a couple of meetings the Project Officer was introduced to more people. After a time, four people signed up to become Community Champions and have subsequently introduced many members of the Chinese Community to the North York Moors National Park.



Step 3

Induct Community Champions

Each new Community Champion is provided with a skills audit, personal development plan and volunteer agreement; it works best to do this in person with the Champion.

Step 4

Provide 'pathways' to Community Champions

As part of the induction, present the four pathways as a structure for understanding how Champions can promote the National Park to others:

Visiting: organising visits to the National Parks for others

Promoting: promoting the National parks to others, for example, at urban events or using the media

Training: training others to promote National Parks

Influencing: helping service providers make changes to better reach new audiences

Step 5

Group leader visits

Organise a weekend in the National Park for all new and potential Community Champions to introduce them to the National Park, National Park staff and the Champion role.

For example: Eight new Community Champions attended a Group Leader Visit in the South Downs National Park in October 2011. They were joined by a more experienced Champion and staff from the National Park Authority. They stayed at a Youth Hostel, got to know about the public transport facilities and where you could walk and hire bikes, plus other activities available in the area. During the months that followed, three of the Champions organised their own residential visits to the Youth Hostel. One of these used the NPA contacts she had gained on the weekend to get hold of a walk leader for her group. A fourth used the weekend to learn about the area and organised an eight mile hike for her group a few weeks later.

"Mosaic gives me an opportunity to meet other people, join groups to explore the countryside, share my love and passion for the outdoors and learn new skills in looking after nature. Last summer, I was helping with a school outdoor activity as an educational volunteer. That was fantastic – when you see children enjoying nature and the countryside."

Mosaic Community Champion, Charvrit Boonsom



Step 6

Provide training

Provide training that will help Community Champions fulfil their role. As a minimum each Champion should be trained in how to organise a visit and fundraising. Other training might include leading walks, first aid, map reading or presentation skills.

For example: In a survey of Community Champions, a majority said that the training in 'Organising a Visit' was the most useful training they had received. Mumtaz, a Yorkshire Dales Champion based in Leeds, attended a Walk Group Leader Training course through Mosaic. This gave her the skills and confidence to start a walking group, Onna Walks. The group walks regularly in the Yorkshire Dales and has also tried other activities such as caving.

Step 7

Champion led activity commences

Support Community Champions in taking responsibility and leading their own activities, providing each with a goal of each promoting the National Parks to an agreed number of people (20 in the case of the Access to Nature funded Champions).

For example: Lucy is a South Downs Champion who had never visited the countryside in England before becoming a Champion. Through Mosaic she got to know staff in the NPA and members of the South Downs Society. At first she was nervous about contacting them for advice about organising a visit for a youth group. With support from the Project Officer she did make contact and went on to take advantage of a South Downs Society / Southern Trains offer for free transport in the National Park for youth groups. So far she has organised visits for around 80 people.

Step 8

Support and thank Champions

Support Champions by providing regular information and annual celebration event. Remember to thank them for all their hard work.



ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Organisational change is integral to the Mosaic model and should not be overlooked. It can be a longer and more challenging process than Community Champion development, and it should focus on partners who are taking an active role and have made a positive choice to engage with the project. The key and crucial starting point to enable change to take place is **senior level 'buy in'** – lasting change will not happen if those with power in the organisation are not committed to the idea of engaging with people from BME communities more pro actively. This in itself can be challenging, but Mosaic had firm foundations and relationships with National Parks developed through a piloting phase.

The following factors all then play a part in creating an environment in which organisational change can flourish.

"The Mosaic work has helped us move along a bit quicker... really given a very tangible aspect to our work. So instead of it being abstract, it's tied into a strategy. (We) have been able to point to real progress, real champions, real projects on the ground, and that's helped build a sort of confidence"

CEO, Peak District NPA

Partner action plans: it is important to draft an annual action plan with the partner organisation that details all the changes to be achieved at strategic, policy and practice levels across all service areas. The plan should show how each action will contribute to corporate priorities and secure commitment at a senior level.

Build relationships: ensure relationships are established and enabled to grow between Community Champions and key staff. Invite staff to Champion events, and encourage direct communications between staff and Champions; bring them together in feedback forums to review progress and share ideas.

For example: Mosaic focused on using informal events to bring Community Champions and key staff together to enable them to get to know each other well. Once a year, a 'Regional Feedback Forum' was held between the staff and Community Champions from each National Park. Held over a curry, everyone enjoyed the food, relaxed and felt able to speak freely to each other. Northumberland National Park Champions gave feedback about the lack of images representing their communities at one of these forums and the NPA took steps to address this by including a wider range of images in their 2012 Visitor Guide.



Work together: arrange for Community Champions to have the opportunity to work shadow or be mentored by service providing staff. Arrange for Champions to take on volunteering roles – for example, at one-off conservation tasks, leading walks, volunteer rangers or office volunteering. It is important to recognise that this relationship is seen as one with two-way benefit: both parties have a lot to learn from each other.



“Since becoming a Community Champion, Vanessa has tried to ensure that diversity and equality are embedded in the work of the agencies that maintain the National Parks, and that Mosaic’s work to achieve this is sustained beyond the project period. She has been co-opted onto the CNP Board, becoming the first black British-Jamaican woman Board member in CNP’s 75 year history. She has also worked with other community champions to set up Drinking Ginger, a Community Interest Company with the objective of opening up access to National Parks for under represented communities.”

Mosaic final evaluation report

Formal and informal influence: support Champions to apply for formal governance positions – trusteeships or members of public authorities. Engage Champions in other forms of influence – for example, sitting on advisory boards and contributing to consultations.

For example: In 2012 Mosaic Community Champions are members of the Dartmoor and Lake District Local Access Forums; others sit on the Monsall Trail Steering Group, the Yorkshire Dales Society Board, the Friends of the Peak District Board, and the YHA Board.

Learn from each other: organise joint events between rural communities in National Parks and Community Champions. Attend urban events, and support National Park staff to attend them with Community Champions.



LEGACY PLANNING

In order for a project like this to succeed into the future, planning for its legacy should be a part of the picture throughout the project delivery.

Succession framework: start planning a detailed succession framework, in conjunction with all partners and Champions, well before the project end.

Partner exit strategy: task each individual partner organisation to write an exit strategy, based on the succession framework, in the last year of the project.

Handover of Community Champions: in the final months of the project, ensure there are ongoing and established relationships between the Community Champions and their partner organisation so that they can be supported and integrated into existing volunteer structures.

IN SUMMARY

By applying this model, Mosaic laid firm foundations for ensuring that engagement between BME communities and the National Parks and YHA could be sustained in the long term. The enthusiasm, experience and knowledge of the Mosaic staff has also been a critical factor in the success of the project, as has the senior level of support in the partner organisations that ensured Mosaic remained a priority. The opportunity now exists to roll out this tried and tested approach into other settings to keep increasing the percentage of BME people who access the natural environment.

This paper has drawn heavily on Mosaic's Legacy Paper, the Mosaic Model, and the final evaluation report produced by The Gilfillan Partnership (see website: <http://www.mosaicnationalparks.org>).

Project Fact File

| | |
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| Name | Mosaic |
| Lead | Campaign for National Parks |
| Overview | Mosaic was a national project led by the Campaign for National Parks (CNP), aiming to cement long term, sustainable engagement between BME communities, English National Parks and the Youth Hostel Association (YHA). |
| Website | http://www.mosaicnationalparks.org |

ABOUT ACCESS TO NATURE

Access to Nature is a scheme run by Natural England and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Natural England works on behalf of a consortium of eleven other major environmental organisations and distributes £28.75 million Lottery funding under the scheme, which has been developed to encourage more people to enjoy the outdoors, particularly those with little or no previous contact with the natural environment.

Funded projects range from local community based schemes through to national initiatives from large organisations. Diversity in scale is mirrored by a diversity and richness of projects, from equipment to allow people with disabilities to access the natural environment; supporting disadvantaged groups and those who ordinarily face barriers to visiting the countryside; as well as many projects which are providing a range of volunteering and educational opportunities for local communities and young people.



FOOTNOTES

- 1 Black Environment Network, 2005. *Engaging Ethnic Communities in Natural and Built Heritage*. Llanberis: Black Environment Network.
- 2 Data from National Park annual visitor surveys, 2005-2007
- 3 Ayamba, M. and Rotherham, I. 2008. *A Handbook and Guide for Agencies Working with Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in South Yorkshire*. Sheffield: Tourism and Environmental Change Research Unit, Sheffield Hallam University.
- 4 See www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/outdoorsforall/diversityreview
- 5 See Mosaic final evaluation. The evaluation plus a range of other legacy materials can be found at: <http://www.cnp.org.uk/content/mosaic-legacy>

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

Our documents are available as pdf downloads from our website, suitable for text reader technology. We may be able to provide other formats (e.g. Braille, a minority language, or large print) for special documents where there is a proven communication need.

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