

# Scotland's National Parks & National Nature Reserves

- overcoming barriers to engagement

March 2009



Loch Lomond  
& The Trossachs  
National Park

Pàirc Nàiseanta Loch Laomainn  
is nan Tròisichean



Cairngorms  
NATIONAL PARK



Scottish Natural Heritage  
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland  
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

*“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of autumn.”*

John Muir

## Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge the support and assistance received in completing this research from all those involved.

In particular we wish to highlight the contribution of the commissioning partners, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage. The project leads from each of these partner organisations provided solid practical assistance, as well as invaluable and considered contributions to debates and discussion. The success of the project is in no small part down to their combined efforts.

We also wish to thank the various schools and other target groups who volunteered to participate in the research. Their contributions are gratefully acknowledged; along with the many other partner and intermediary organisations working within Scotland's National Parks and/or with the target groups involved in this research. Their input was important in informing the research findings and subsequent recommendations.

We believe that this report will contribute to an improved understanding of the barriers encountered by under-represented groups when engaging with Scotland's National Parks and National Nature Reserves. It provides the partners with a series of recommendations, to be implemented in partnership with others, which will assist in overcoming these barriers.

**Avanté Consulting**  
**In association with the University of Edinburgh**  
**March 2009**

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## 1.0 Précis

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### Research goals

*Why is it that some people from areas of social exclusion do not currently make better use of Scotland's two National Parks and National Nature Reserves?*

In the summer of 2007, that question formed the basis of research commissioned by the Cairngorms National Park Authority, the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Over the past eighteen months the three partners have worked with Avanté Consulting and The University of Edinburgh, Moray House School of Education to identify the barriers, work out how best to tackle these, and develop sustainable outreach and engagement programmes. These will support the research goal of ensuring that the Parks are a resource for all of Scotland's people.

### Approach

Information on those that use the Parks helped identify the target groups for the research:

- Young people
- People with disabilities
- People living on low incomes, and
- Schools.

Developing an understanding of the experiences of these groups when engaging with the Parks sat at the heart of the research; and entailed a combination of on-site Park projects with the target groups, together with a school surveys and visits. These experiences were considered by wider stakeholder focus groups at different stages of the process, providing scope for activity to be influenced by the feedback. The research design and recommendations were also informed by a comprehensive literature and context review<sup>1</sup>.

### Drivers

Promoting and supporting engagement within the Parks, including those identified as under-represented, marginalised and excluded, is a priority for Scotland's National Park Authorities and SNH; and is in keeping with national and international legislation and policy drivers. Both Scottish and UK governments recognise the benefits of outdoor engagement, and the need for the

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<sup>1</sup> Full details on the research methodology are available at Appendix B. The literature and context review can be found at Appendix A and the case studies can be found at Appendix C and D.

opportunities that this presents to be available to all of Scotland's people. This is especially important given that those groups traditionally excluded tend to be those who experience almost daily barriers to accessing such opportunities, or to participating in mainstream society. The research literature and context review (Appendix A), identifies the considerable body of evidence that exists to support the kind of contribution to these policies that the experiences on offer in the National Parks and Natural Nature Reserves provide.

## Barriers and solutions

The recommendations for action reflects the main barriers to engagement identified during the research which are summarised under four main themes:

1. Building relationships and networks
2. Raising awareness and providing information
3. Building commitment, confidence and competence
4. Providing practical support.

### 1. Relationships and networks

#### More focussed targeting

The target groups are very broad and the ways of attracting and engaging specific sections within these can differ considerably. A more developed rationale is needed to understand which sections within these is the focus of the partners' attention.

For example, Park Authorities have considerable existing contact with schools, however there is little classification of these to help identify whether they are working within communities that include the target groups. Clearer targeting of schools working within communities experiencing high levels of deprivation indicators; or more marginalised and challenging young people is needed. This kind of analysis and focus applies equally to work with those on low incomes, people with disabilities and young people.

#### Importance of intermediaries and ambassadors

The research has shown that the best way to engage with target audiences is through intermediaries that are already working in this area.

A clearer definition and understanding of the target groups will make it easier to identify and manage relationships with the kind of organisations that can support the Parks' work in this field. This includes key intermediaries working with the target groups. The research highlighted the considerable benefits of ambassadors for this kind of

engagement among support agencies; securing and supporting such key relationships will require the partners to develop policies and commit staff to work of this nature.

### Managing demand

Equally, providing a range of support packages that meet the differing needs of groups will enable staff to better manage their relationships and the demands on their time. In this way, those who seek to engage with the Parks but fall outside any agreed priorities, or who are able to manage their own engagement, can still enjoy the Park; freeing up staff to work with those who may need more support.

### Evidencing impact

Improving work in this field will also require the Park authorities to improve how information on their experiences is shared. This includes learning from the wider national and international Park and outdoor community. Improving monitoring and evaluation of engagement will also ensure that the commitment to tackling exclusion is translated into stronger evidence of the benefits of such work with target populations.

## 2. Raising awareness and providing information

### Relevance

Those in the target groups consistently question what relevance engagement with the Parks or NNRs has for them when set against the many competing priorities in their lives. Most have no awareness of the Parks or NNRs and for many there is a perception that groups such as theirs don't 'fit' with those that use the Parks and won't be welcome in them. It is clear that most of the target groups will therefore engage through the support and encouragement of organisations that they are in contact with elsewhere in their lives.

### Easily accessed information

This reinforces the need for accessible marketing information and materials to be targeted at such support agencies, who along with Park staff, express support for a '*clearing house*' or single point of access and information for those seeking to engage in (or support) activities within the Parks. Such a facility has the potential to operate as an information, skills and services exchange, while also providing practical resources such as lessons and visit plans, as well as testimonials (through a variety of media) that illustrate the positive experiences of those from the target groups.

### Packaged experiences

A number of National Park Authorities across the UK have successfully used packaged learning experiences; something also developed with some success in the Natural Nature Reserves (NNRs) in Scotland. This approach provides more structured opportunities that are readily accessed and understood by those seeking to engage with the Parks. The value of this approach was strongly supported by both Park staff and external stakeholders during the research.

### Links to partner objectives

Networks of organisations working with the partners' target groups need information that highlights how engagement can support the individuals with whom they work. They want to understand the benefits of engaging with the Parks and how this directly relates to their own strategic outcomes. Packaged experiences, tailored to particular organisational objectives (for example the Curriculum for Excellence in schools or health and wellbeing targets), provide a stronger basis on which to persuade those uncertain that the effort of engaging is worthwhile.

## 3. Building commitment, confidence and competence

### Beyond Duty and compliance

Ensuring an understanding of equalities and diversity in the context of inclusion will require an approach that extends beyond traditional considerations for Equality Schemes and Equality Impact Assessments. While these are important, the commissioning partners will want to continue to define and explore how best to understand and respond to the needs of those living in communities where deprivation indicators are high.

### Supporting and developing staff

Park Authority boards must be encouraged to consider how their remits can reflect a commitment to inclusion; from the point of agreeing person specifications and job descriptions, through to annual performance planning. Support will be needed for Parks' staff nervous about engaging groups who may have challenging behaviours or special needs. Ensuring that performance monitoring frameworks as well as professional development plans cover such considerations will help measure and embed practice that supports work in this field.

### Corporate responsibility

It is important that work to support inclusion is understood to be the responsibility of everyone (at all levels) in the commissioning partners. While work of this nature is assisted by champions and dedicated resources within the Parks (and among organisations supporting the target groups), its success rests on the extent to which the commitment to the work is felt, understood and measured across the Park Authorities, their sponsors and partners.

### Champions

However, it is evident that those who actively support and promote work in this field should be nurtured and networked both within the Parks and across partner agencies. Such 'champions' provide leadership in overcoming many of the barriers to engagement for staff and target groups.

## 4. Providing practical support

### Reducing bureaucracy

There's some 'old chestnuts' that consistently recur when considering engagement with the Parks and NNRs. Most of these centre on practicalities, such as transport, managing risk, accessing equipment, costs, negotiating school timetabling and classroom cover and generally reducing the bureaucracy associated with planning, risk management and engaging with the outdoors.

### Removing obstacles

These present very real obstacles for the target groups and there are many examples across the UK and internationally that provide ideas on how to tackle these. This includes the development of small grants schemes, readily available frameworks and practical tools for risk assessment, the development of volunteering schemes, information portals with easily accessed and packaged materials, as well as contacts for affordable community transport and simple ways of making contact with appropriate Park personnel.

## Already out of the starting blocks

### Good foundations

Both Parks and SNH have developed strategies and committed resources that provide opportunities for a breadth of communities across Scotland. In this sense, efforts to engage harder to reach communities are already well underway. Partners have demonstrated their commitment to engage groups identified as under-represented among those using the Parks and the NNRs that sit within them. Strategies and related activities continue to develop, some resources are in place and relationships with relevant partners are in place or developing. There is a solid foundation on which to build; and this research (with associated materials<sup>2</sup>), demonstrates the willingness of the commissioners to seek out fresh approaches to their work in this field.

### **Building on commitments**

This is further evidenced by the actions taken during the life of the research by partners keen to address the emerging issues. The project has not only set out the experiences of local stakeholders, through the literature review, it has also highlighted good practice taking place across Scotland and further afield. The partners are committed to reflecting on the research findings and to working together and through the Outdoor Learning Strategic Advisory Group (OLSAG), Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services, Learning and Teaching Scotland and other national and regional partners to help wider partner involvement and to implementing the recommendations.

The existing and growing legal duties in this field, along with the Scottish Government's policy commitments and those of SNH and the National Parks, will ensure that there is a continued focus on work of this nature.

### **March 2009**

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<sup>2</sup> Literature and policy review (Appendix A), case studies (Appendices C&D) and Resource pack (copies of the resource pack are available through the contacts on p88).

## 2.0 An overview of the barriers to engagement project

**“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal.”**

Hannah More

### 2.1 What the research set out to do

The aim of the research that is the subject of this report is to identify the reasons why some groups of potential visitors from areas of social exclusion do not currently make better use of Scotland's two National Parks in particular the NNRs within them. By identifying the barriers to such engagement, we can then work out how best to tackle these, ensuring that the Parks are a resource for all of Scotland's people.

### 2.2 The Partners

This is a key goal for the project's commissioners: Scotland's two National Park Authorities, Cairngorms National Park Authority (CPNA), and the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Association (LL&TNPA), in conjunction with Scottish Natural Heritage.

Collectively, these commissioning partners are among the leading bodies in Scotland charged with conserving and promoting Scotland's natural environment and cultural heritage. They are members of Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services (SEARS), a partnership of nine organisations delivering rural and environmental services for the Scottish Government. Further information on each of the organisations can be found in the comprehensive literature and context review which is attached in Appendix A.

### 2.3 The target groups

The research considered the experiences of groups identified by the partners as under-represented among those using the National Parks:

- Young people
- People with disabilities
- People living on low incomes, and
- Schools<sup>3</sup>.

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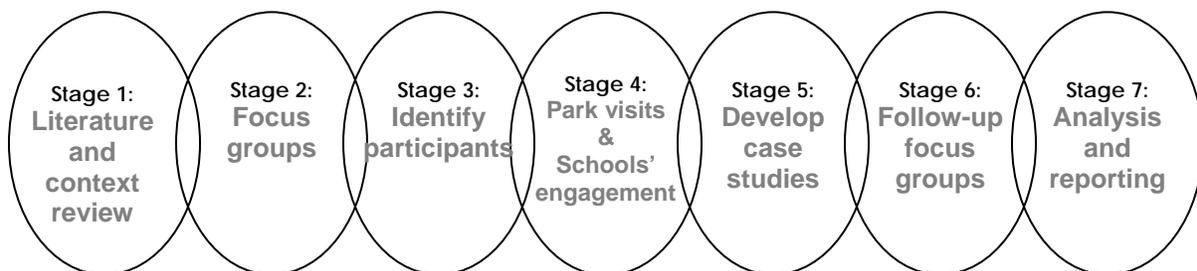
<sup>3</sup> Importantly, these do not reflect the only groups with whom Scotland's Park Authorities seek to engage. Work in other areas has been undertaken and is outlined in section 4.0.

## 3.0 Research methods

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Commencing in July 2007, the research took place over an eighteen month period. Using a series of linked stages, illustrated in Figure 1 below, the research sought to use a model of action research. This involved a participatory cycle of planning, action and reflection.

**Figure 1**



### 3.1 Literature and context review

This considered the body of available research and information from partner organisations and from other National Parks, outdoor services and other service providers. The findings from this informed the participants and subject areas for subsequent focus groups, Park-based projects and visits with target groups, the engagement of schools and final analysis. A full copy of the literature and context review is available at Appendix A.

### 3.2 Focus groups

Focus groups at the start and towards the end of the project brought together internal stakeholders working within Scotland's National Parks, as well as external stakeholders working with the target groups. This included people with mixed experience of engaging with the wider outdoors. The latter focus groups considered the findings from the case studies and other research evidence, and drew on the experience of the stakeholders involved to assist in identifying actions to overcome barriers to engagement.

### 3.3 Primary fieldwork

The primary fieldwork involved two approaches - project-based visits to the two National Parks and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) undertaken by community participants and service users, and a series of interviews, focus groups and surveys undertaken with six schools.

## 1. Target group projects and visits

This entailed different experiences, some of which were linked to the existing activities of the organisations, whilst others were new. The work was supported by organisations working with those in the target groups, and involved a total of seventy-nine young people, six people on a low income, fourteen support staff and four people with disabilities from the following organisations:

- **Capability Scotland, Perth** – *Providing a range of practical, emotional and health related support to individuals with disabilities.*

Adults with mobility considerations and/or using wheelchairs, from the Springlands Resource Centre, undertook an afternoon's outing through Ballater in the Cairngorms. The route was based on an identified walk from the 'Cairngorms on a Shoestring' which forms part of the Cairngorms Explorer publication.

- **The Prince's Trust, Clydebank and The Tulloch Trust, Dumbarton** - *Both working with excluded young people living in areas identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as experiencing multiple deprivation levels above national averages.*

Young people were involved in a three-month path building project at Conic Hill by Loch Lomond as part of Tulloch's commitment to skills development and environmental education; while a further group from The Prince's Trust Team Programme from Clydebank completed an activity session at Inchcailloch NNR, on Loch Lomond.

- **The Escape Group, Inverness** – *Supporting lone parents from the local community - an area of identified multiple deprivation.*

This all-women group completed a day visit to Craigellachie NNR, near Aviemore in Cairngorms, as part of their regular weekly walking programme.

- **The Scottish Youth Hostel Association (SYHA), Give Us A Break programme** – *Providing school pupils with an opportunity to use SYHA centres as bases from which to visit the outdoors. Pupils involved in the pilot came from Glasgow and Perthshire.*

Students undertook visits to National Park areas as part of the SYHA Give Us A Break Programme, visiting Loch Lomond and the Cairngorms.

## 2. Engagement with schools

Ninety-three parents, teachers and students took part in a series of interviews and focus groups; and a total of three hundred and seventeen<sup>4</sup> students, parents, teachers and staff responded to surveys of the six participating schools. This approach reflected the challenges encountered by schools engaging in Park-based activity and was supported by early findings from the literature and context review.

The rationale used for selection and the methods used to engage groups and schools is explained in more detail in an expanded methodology to be found in Appendix B and the case studies in Appendices C and D.

### 3.4 Case studies

The experiences of all groups involved in the research were developed into a series of case studies, pulled together in Appendix C and D. These offer feedback from those involved, and identify the key barriers to engagement with NNRs, National Parks and the outdoors. The experiences from the case studies have been developed into a **Resource Pack** which supports this report.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.5 Analysis and reporting

The action research nature of the project allowed learning to be reflected back to the commissioning partners throughout the lifetime of the project. As a result a number of initiatives were taken, across both Parks, to support improved engagement with under-represented groups.

The spread of participation across the target groups enabled barriers to engagement to be identified that were both specific to each group as well as common across groups.

At the end of the project, all data gathered was brought together, reviewed and analysed. The findings from this are set out in section 5.0 with recommendations for action in section 6.0.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B Methodology for a breakdown of participant numbers

<sup>5</sup> The resource pack supports organisations and groups to consider the barriers that they may experience in engagement with the NNRs and National Parks when planning a visit and/or activities. A copy can be obtained from the contacts listed on page 88.

## 4.0 Background to the project

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*“When I hear someone sigh ‘life is hard’, I’m always tempted to ask ‘compared to what?’”*

Sydney Harris

### 4.1 The need for inclusion

Promoting and supporting engagement within the Parks by all groups, including those identified as under-represented, marginalised and excluded, is a priority for each of the commissioning partners. This is in keeping with national and international policy drivers, as well as other work in this field, which is set out in the evidence gathered in the literature and policy review found at Appendix A. This identifies the specific drivers for inclusion and presents a justification for tackling the barriers to inclusion.

*“We might all be equal on the starting line but political, economic and cultural resources that people have, and the hurdles that they have to get there, are inherently unequal.”*

Marguire, 1991

The National Parks are described as ‘*Britain’s green lungs*’ by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2008). The literature and context review provides evidence of the benefits of outdoor engagement, and illustrates the need for the opportunities that this presents to be available to ALL of Scotland’s people. This is especially important given that those groups traditionally excluded tend to be those who experience, almost daily, barriers to accessing such opportunities, or to participating in mainstream society.

*“It is unacceptable that, in Scotland, the wealth of a child’s family should determine their chance of enjoying the kind of positive future that should be their right. It is also unacceptable that, because of a lack of income, older people can be deprived of the right to live in dignity - or that families can be dragged into a cycle of deprivation. The time has come for sustained action to address this huge waste of potential in our people and society.”*

Scottish Government, 2008

From this it is clear that there are good reasons for supporting and promoting inclusion among the target groups in the outdoors.

At a national level, significant developments have taken place which focus on reducing the poverty gaps evident in Scotland. These promote opportunities and seek to remove the processes that can lead to social exclusion for many groups. Key policy interventions include the following (which are explored in detail in the literature and context review found at Appendix A):

- 'Social Inclusion, A Scotland where everyone matters' (1999)
- 'Opportunity for All: Tackling poverty and social exclusion' (1999)
- 'Better Communities in Scotland: Closing the gap' (2002)
- 'Partnership agreement: A Partnership for a better Scotland' (2003)
- 'Closing the Opportunity Gap: the ten targets' (2004)
- 'Regeneration Policy Statement: People and Place' (2006)
- 'Achieving our potential' (2008)

The literature and context review identifies the considerable body of evidence that exists to support the kind of contribution to these policies that the experiences on offer in the National Parks (and NNRs) provide.

It demonstrates that engagement with the outdoors can be a significant learning tool for individuals in developing environmental sensitivity and knowledge (*Lugg, 2007*). For young people and children, outdoor learning impacts on their learning and development by addressing their intellectual, affective and social development (*Dismore & Bailey, 2005*). It can give depth to the curriculum while also benefiting teachers (*Sheerman, 2006*).

Outdoor activity has been shown to have a positive impact on the physical activity levels of all groups, with evidence demonstrating that in schools, the combination of outdoor and indoor educational experiences can have a significant impact on raising the physical activity levels of students (*Mygind, 2007*). For those with poor mental health, experiences in the outdoor and with nature can: '*have an immunising effect by protecting us from future stresses and help us to think more clearly.*' (*Countryside and Recreation Network.*)

## 4.2 Partner commitments

Whilst the Parks have much in common, share strong relationships and work together on a range of initiatives, they operate independently of one another with considerably different staffing and operational structures. Each Park fulfils a key facilitating role in working with partners, with Loch Lomond and Trossachs also having a strong direct delivery role through its large internal Ranger Service. With a greater focus on an enabling function, CNPA does not have a Ranger Service, although such services can be found in the Park available from other organisations, for example the local authority.

In the last year there has also been a move to greater integration of corporate functions, with the Parks now sharing a joint Human Resources Manager. Further detail on the context for the Parks work, their strategic aims and corporate plans can be found within the Literature and context review at Appendix A - A1.

Such plans set out overarching aims for both National Parks as well as the more specific corporate plans for each of the three partners. These identify clear commitments to ensuring that opportunities available within each of the Parks are extended to and taken up by all communities across Scotland.

Whilst this commitment is articulated in strategic documents, and in a number of initiatives developed by partners, evidence from previous National Parks Visitor Surveys, including Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park (2003) and Cairngorms National Park (2005), indicate that the profile of Park visitors does not show strong representation from a number of equalities groups. The statistics highlight the profile of Park visitors as:

- Visitors to the Park areas tend to be older, with 75% age 35 or over in LL&TNP and 72% age 35 or over in CNP;
- 66% of visitors to LL&TNP and 70% of visitors to CNP are classified ABC1 social grade;
- The visiting parties consisted of two adults and no children in 49% of the visits for LL&TNP and only 22% of the parties included children. For CNP, 46% of the visits were parties of two adults, and 23% included children in their party;
- People travel to the Parks predominantly by car. 79% of visitors to LL&TNP and 78% of visitors to CNP indicate they came to the Parks areas in a car.

These figures indicate that people from the target groups for the barriers to engagement project are currently and historically underrepresented as visitors to the Parks.

### 4.3 Addressing the agenda

Against this and other historical data relating to the profile of Park users, each of the National Parks has worked to build and sustain relationships with a range of organisations working with groups identified as hard to reach.

CNPA set out its commitment to a *Park for All*, in a 2004 board paper. This paper, and subsequent status reports and board papers set out the Park's intention to support inclusion and to focus on three priority groups - those living on low incomes, those with disabilities and young people. This commitment to inclusion and the agenda of *Parks for All* is one that is shared by LL&TNPA. Alongside this

each Park supports the promotion of education in the outdoors and opportunities for linking outdoor learning to learning within Scotland's classrooms.

Against this commitment of *Parks for All* both National Parks, working with a range of partners, have sought to establish and develop links to, and activities with, organisations working with these and other target groups. These links have led to a range of developments to support greater involvement in Scotland's National Parks by under-represented groups and include within Cairngorms National Park Authority:

- The creation of a dedicated social inclusion and education team to develop and support inclusion activities;
- The appointment of a John Muir Award programme lead as a mechanism for supporting engagement with the outdoors;
- A range of activities involving young people including: 80 young people involved in consultation events across the Park as part of the development of the Park Plan; a highly acclaimed youth media project involving seven secondary schools producing 15-minute films on life in the National Park; a summer activity programme for Young People in Badenoch and Strathspey;
- An adult Education and conservation project in Upper Deeside;
- A Big Issue Foundation visit to highlight issues for people on low income accessing the Park;
- Work with black and minority organisations through the Black Environmental Network Backbone Project, to train staff to support engagement with the Park;
- Bringing together disability organisations to inform the CNPA on disability issues. This group has subsequently expanded to become **The Inclusive Cairngorms Forum**, bringing together representation from across a range of hard to access groups;
- A variety of initiatives designed to encourage participation in the Park.

Beyond initiatives to support these and other engagement activities with hard to reach groups, both Parks highlight their commitment to inclusion and equalities within their respective Park Plans. In addition CNPA has set out their commitment to supporting equalities within its Single Equalities Scheme. Published in July 2008, this reflects the organisation's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for Park users and those employed by the organisation. At the time of the research LL&TNPA was in the process of combining its various equality schemes; disability; race; and gender within a Single Equality Scheme to be published in 2009.

While the CNPA has a dedicated team to support engagement work, historically, related activity in LL&TNP has been taken forward across the organisation. Support for work with such groups in this authority has in the main fallen to local Ranger Teams and a Volunteer Co-ordinator post.

Activities in the area have however included a number of developments with under-represented groups, including:

- Support for pilot visits by Black and Minority Ethnic communities through the Black Environmental Network (BEN);
- Completion of environmental projects with local youth projects including Callander Youth Project and The Tulloch Trust;
- Ranger-assisted visits for individuals with visual impairments; and
- Work with local schools to support field trips and educational activities.

Recently the LL&TNP Authority has undergone a staff restructuring exercise which has seen the appointment of a new Learning Development Adviser. This new post has led to the development of the Park's first education strategy, which sets out the framework for strengthening the work in this area, focusing on links to schools and other organisations working with those under-represented within The Park's visitor profile.

It is against this background of a strategic commitment to the principles of Parks for All, and the experience of a number of initiatives on the part of the commissioning partners to support inclusion by equalities and other under-represented groups, that this research takes place. The findings of which will support an ongoing commitment to improved work in this field.

## 5.0 Key Findings – Barriers to Engagement

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*“If you can find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere.”*

Frank A. Clark

The following section presents the barriers identified through the completion of the research project. They have been grouped under a number of key themes, which are:

- Target group perceptions
- Information, planning and organising
- Partner links and organisational commitment; and
- Practical challenges.

### Target group perceptions

**Sections 5.1 – 5.4 set out the main barriers experienced by the target groups and the impact of inequalities on their lives, as well as their awareness levels and motivation for engaging with Scotland's National Parks and NNRs.**

### 5.1 Inequalities

Before reflecting in some detail, on the barriers experienced by those in the research target groups, it is helpful to examine some of the wider issues around inequality. These are highlighted in the literature and context review found at Appendix A, which identifies that for those within the target groups, barriers to participation extend beyond their engagement with Scotland's National Parks. They are experienced in other wider societal inequalities, touching on aspects of social, cultural and economic life. This includes for example:

- Poverty;
- Poor health and well-being; and
- Lack of opportunity to be included in much of mainstream society.

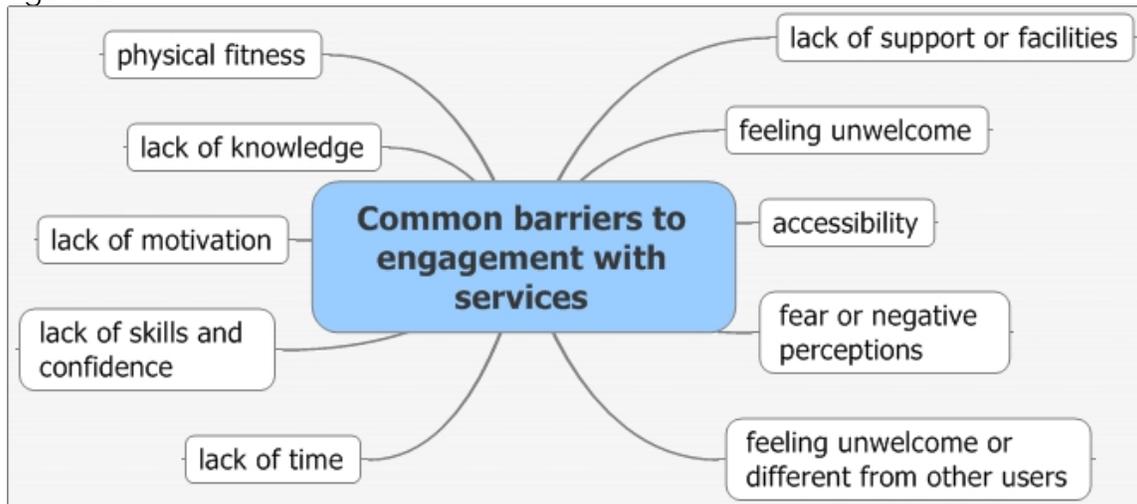
At a collective level, the groups most excluded from the outdoors may face one or more of the above issues, coupled with considerations such as personal skills and confidence. When taken alongside the range of structural and institutional difficulties that exist, the path through such barriers can be highly challenging.

## 5.2 Compound effect

The compound effect of these is a key consideration for those seeking to engage many of society's already excluded groups. For National Parks, the evidence suggests that these inherent societal problems construct barriers to engagement for the target groups.

Figure 2 below attempts to summarise the common barriers to engagement which traditionally excluded groups face and is drawn from analysis of the literature and context review set out in detail at Appendix A. This examined a number of initiatives undertaken to tackle barriers to engagement, including initiatives from Royal Botanic Gardens, SNH and The Forestry Commission in Scotland, as well as some from further afield such as The Mosaic Project undertaken by The Council for National Parks in England and Wales, and work with minority ethnic groups undertaken in Vancouver, Canada.

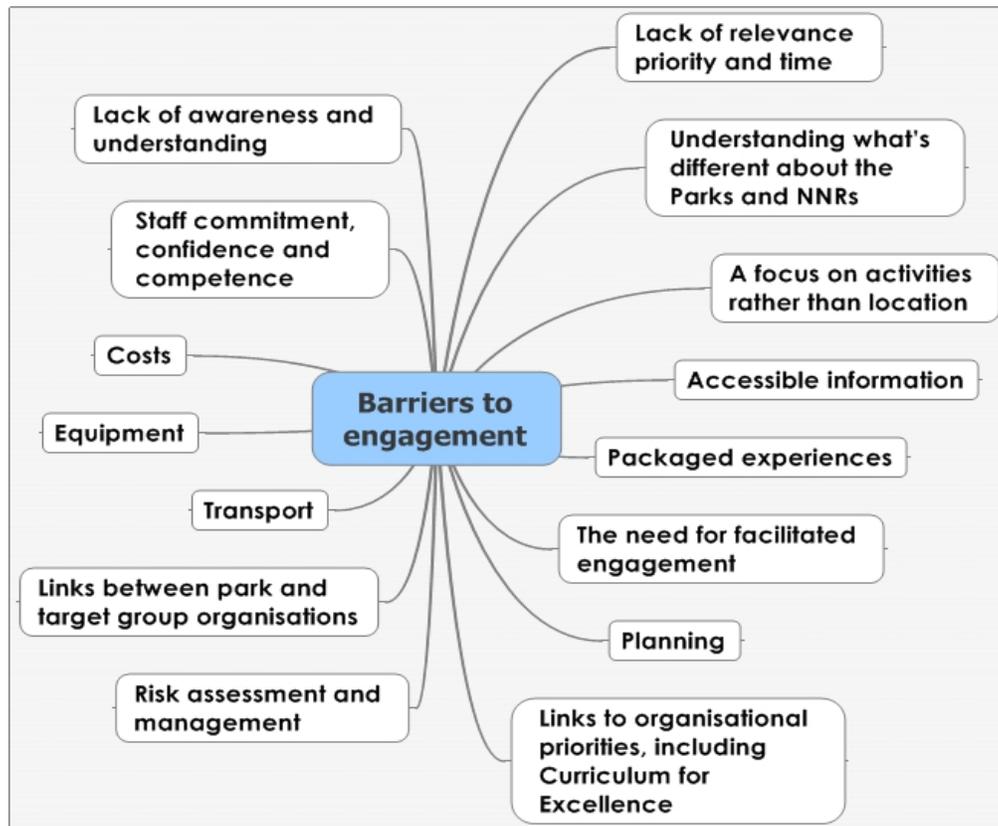
Figure 2



From the perspective of participants in the research, the barriers identified fell into two broad categories - **perceived** and **real** - with perceived barriers often being a crucial first hurdle before any real barrier to engagement.

These are explored using the headings set out in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3



### 5.3 Awareness and understanding

The first and perhaps most fundamental of the barriers to engagement experienced was the variable and often limited awareness and understanding of National Parks and National Nature Reserves amongst individuals within the target groups.

- For those within the Capability Scotland group there was no awareness of Scotland's National Parks and students involved in the focus groups struggled to name one of the National Parks. None could explain why the National Park areas had been given such a designation and none knew of National Nature Reserves.
- Feedback from those involved in the schools surveys was more encouraging with around 40% of respondents aware of Scotland's National Parks. This is likely to reflect the fact that some of the schools were located within National Park boundaries, as notably lower levels of awareness existed in those schools located outwith the Parks.

- Other groups of young people involved in the projects confirmed their lack of awareness of The National Parks, including those that were working in a Park during their residential held at the SYHA hostel at Loch Lomond.
- Over 80% of young people involved with The Tulloch Trust and Prince's Trust who undertook a project and visit to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, had no awareness of The Parks.
- There was little or no understanding of the importance of the designation as a National Park. Young respondents' comments illustrate the range of perceptions including: *'it's about looking after the area and the animals'*.
- When asked what a National Park was, respondents would comment: *'places with loads of trees'* and *'somewhere that you can't damage the trees or hurt the animals'*. There was a limited understanding of their significance in terms of conservation and protection.
- The greatest level of awareness was from the women involved in The Escape Group from Inverness. Here all the participants were aware of Cairngorms National Park and around half had heard of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. This awareness was largely attributed to their ongoing relationship with the outdoors, developed through their regular weekly walking programme. Whilst most of the women were aware of the designation, they had limited understanding of what this designation meant, beyond a responsibility for conserving and protecting the environment.

Overall the awareness levels of National Parks across the target groups involved in the research is extremely limited, with less than 20% of those involved in pilot visits aware of National Parks. This figure rises to around 30% for students completing school surveys and focus groups.

Even lower levels of awareness exist for Scotland's National Nature Reserves (NNRs), with none of those involved in pilot visits or school focus groups aware of these; and less than 10% of school surveys respondents indicating an awareness of NNRs.

This pattern of limited awareness is less pronounced in the staff teams working with the target groups. Around three quarters of the staff were aware of National Parks. The picture is less positive in relation to NNRs with around 25% of staff aware of these. Teaching staff demonstrate the highest levels of awareness.

## 5.4 Relevance

### 5.4.1 What's different about the Parks and NNRs?

Among those engaging with the outdoors, a recurring theme was a question about the uniqueness of the Parks over other outdoor areas. In early focus groups, a number of staff from organisations working with the target groups highlighted this concern.

*'I think that I can enjoy the outdoors without having to visit a National Park. It's just a label.'*

*'I've worked with groups for years and we've been to both Parks and lots of other places in the outdoors without them being any different.'*

Focus Group Participants

This view of there being little that was unique or different was also highlighted in feedback from the school stakeholders and those involved in pilot visits.

*'As teachers we can tell students that they are in a National Park; we can talk about it just as we can talk about the death rate in Malawi, some mathematical formula or a chemical reaction ... we are just teachers...What we need, I think, is for those people in power in the Parks to make a sales pitch, to say 'look what's on offer' and how can we make sure it is on offer for future generations to come.'*

Schools stakeholder

Individuals from The Tulloch Trust, Prince's Trust, Capability and Escape Group visits reinforced this questioning of what was different. The Trusts' groups had been involved in visits to the Lake District, Applecross, Northern Ireland and the Scottish Borders, whilst the Escape Group had been walking in Wales and the French Alps. Feedback from those involved in these experiences highlighted that participants saw no difference in what was on offer within a National Park when compared to many other areas of the outdoors.

*"We went to the Lake District and did loads of activities and it all looked the same as here. It was beautiful but just looked the same, mountains, trees and stuff..."*

Tullochan Participant

*“We walk most weeks during term time and we don’t think about whether it’s in a National Park or not; we just go somewhere different each time and we’re lucky that we are surrounded by so many beautiful places.”*

Escape Group Participant

Such feedback highlights a challenge to those promoting engagement within the Parks; those within the target groups continue to question what is distinctive and different about areas within the National Parks, particularly given the natural beauty found in many parts of Scotland outwith the National Parks.

- None of the young people involved in The Tulloch project considered the location of the project within Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park as a key consideration. Many questioned why the project was not being undertaken in their local community. A number of the group had also participated in outdoor activities in other areas of Scotland and the UK and reflected on the lack of difference, noticing differences in activities rather than the area.
- For those from The Prince’s Trust, including young people and staff, previous engagement with the outdoors had included activities within and outwith the National Parks. Again the feedback was that the area was less of a consideration with more interest in the nature of the activities available.
- For those within the Capability and Escape Groups, neither saw engagement with the National Parks as offering added value to experiences in other areas. In the case of The Escape Group it was suggested that being in the Parks could in fact increase the level of perceived controls and monitoring by Rangers and other services, and that this in itself was a deterrent to engagement with the Parks.
- Young people regularly commented that they wanted to undertake activities in areas further away from their homes as this heightened the sense of adventure and remoteness.

#### 5.4.2 Juggling time

One of the primary barriers identified in feedback from individuals within the target groups was that engagement with the National Parks and NNRs was not a priority, nor relevant given other commitments, pressures and demands on their time.

Whether juggling the demands of parenting, addressing issues of health, employment or fulfilling school commitments, spending time in Scotland’s

National Parks did not feature as something that participants would actively pursue. Such visits were described as low on the list of priorities for the majority of those involved in the project.

- Ten of the original forty young people involved in the Tulloch Trust Group sustained their interest in the project. For this group their commitment was often linked to the relationships with other group members, as well as involvement in completing their Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- Feedback from the young people involved in The Prince's Trust group project highlighted that with one or two exceptions, the group would not actively seek to return to the Park (unless supported by staff from The Trust or another agency).

Such experiences among young people are supported by the 1990 study (Hunt) of young people's opportunities for adventure and challenge through engagement with the outdoors, which concluded that 70% attributed their non-involvement in outdoor activities to being 'too busy'.

- The Escape Group of single mothers has a strong commitment to the outdoors. However there remained a question mark over the extent to which the group would prioritise engagement with a National Park or NNR over other parts of rural Scotland.

#### 5.4.3 What's in it for me?

Views such as those illustrated above, were also reflected in feedback from stakeholder focus groups. Staff from organisations working with the research target groups raised questions that they felt were relevant in relation to engagement:

- 'What's in it for me?'
- 'Why should I go to the Parks?'
- 'What are the objectives of having people engage with the Parks?'
- 'Why would agencies and staff fit engaging with National Parks and NNRs alongside the many other priorities that they're expected to deliver?'

#### 5.4.4 Competing opportunities and priorities

For schools the question of relevance and priority was seen as more of a question of balancing demands and opportunities. Teachers have a range of options available to support learning; engagement with Scotland's National Parks is only one of many competing opportunities. For example, a history and archaeology teacher described how he took a group of students to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival each year for a day. During the day they see four or five shows. This experience is very stimulating and covers many learning

outcomes in a way that he is currently able to understand as more immediately evident than a trip to the Park.

However, the majority of teachers were supportive of further engagement with the outdoors, including National Parks, but felt challenged to fit this alongside other teaching priorities.

#### 5.4.5 Decreasing trends

During the visits to the schools it became clear that there is a trend for outdoor learning opportunities to be decreasing. This was described by participants as spanning some 20 years. One school illustrated this reduced commitment to outdoor activity by citing the reduction three years ago of a traditional concentrated 'outdoor activities week' at the end of the academic year, to broader ranging activities days.

#### 5.4.6 Disruption

Tensions also exist between subject areas in schools, with differing views about the value of taking students outside when considered against the interruption this causes to timetables. Other considerations include the fact that students miss a class so their work needs to be covered. This means that students have to request permission to miss a class and arrange to catch up on the work. Teachers are at liberty to turn down requests for time out. The teacher taking a group out for a day also needs to arrange for their classes to be covered and consider the impact on those students. In this climate, teachers and students need to have a strong sense of relevance and benefits from engaging with the Parks to deal with such disruptions.

#### 5.4.7 The 'In Crowd'

Participants in the pilot visits commonly described a sense in which they did not fit with the regular users of the Parks or indeed the outdoors. This belief that they were not part of the 'outdoor crowd' is illustrated in comments from project participants:

*"They don't want folk like us coming out here"*. Prince's Trust participant

*"People were surprised to see us out in chairs"*. Capability Scotland group member

Feedback from internal stakeholders within each National Park indicated that such feelings may be based on some reality, with some staff noting the difficulties that certain groups present. This included for example dealing with young people with challenging behaviours. National Park staff are 'custodians of the Parks'. This role can conflict when conservation and protection is a greater priority than meeting the wider needs of the target groups.

The perception of participants as being different to the regular profile of those using the Parks is based to some extent in the reality of the Park user surveys undertaken by both Cairngorms (2005) and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Parks (2003). Both of these describe the majority of Park users as white adults over 35 and from ABC1 social grade.

#### 5.4.8 Activities not locations

When considering the relevance of the Parks and NNRs, more emphasis was placed on activities rather than areas. Across each of the groups involved in the pilots there was a greater interest in what they would be doing rather than where they would be doing it; and this sense at the planning stage was reinforced during the experiences.

- For The Escape Group, their interest in the outdoors was primarily based on their commitment to undertaking weekly walks, without consideration to the specific areas visited.
- Feedback from school students and participants from The Prince's Trust and Tulloch Trust groups, highlighted a range of activities as being of interest, rather than specifically being in the Parks. The activities that would draw people into the Parks were described as adventure activities, both land and water based, and an interest in environmental activities including the completion of volunteering projects. For a number of young people from Tulloch and Prince's Trusts, volunteering activities were linked to the completion of other programmes, including Duke of Edinburgh's and John Muir Awards.

### Information, Planning and organising

**Sections 5.5 – 5.9 set out the main barriers identified and experienced around the availability of information, challenges in the planning and risk assessment processes, and issues in relation to organising and managing visits to the Parks and NNRs.**

#### 5.5 Accessible information

As previously highlighted, those within the target groups had limited or no information on Scotland's National Parks and NNRs prior to involvement in this project, and had little or no idea how to access information, beyond use of the internet.

For young people involved in the Tulloch and Prince's Trust groups, none had accessed information on the Parks or NNRs prior to the 'Barriers to Engagement'

project. This is in line with a study completed in 1990 (Hunt)<sup>6</sup> which considered opportunities for adventure and challenge for young people. Findings included one third suggesting 'a lack of information' as the reason for not taking up opportunities.

### 5.5.1 Hungry for news

Across the organisations and individuals engaged in the research, there is a thirst for information. A number of organisations within the National Park boundary receive some form of regular bulletin; however levels of information held by those outwith the Parks and working with the target groups was limited and in most cases entirely absent. The one exception to this knowledge and information void was with teaching staff, who on the whole had an awareness of the Parks but limited amounts of specific information in terms of Park structures, opportunities or activities.

*'The thing about the National Park, I think they have lots and lots of activities on for young people but I don't know about them and I don't think it is very well publicised. If something came out to the school and said this is what we have got on, this is the age group it is geared towards and we could get them there I would have my classes along there every other week. What we need is a liaison officer who is actually coming out here to local schools for a start.'* Teacher comment

### 5.5.2 Engaging formats

When presented with existing information available through National Park and NNR literature and websites, feedback from those in pilot groups was that it did not particularly enthuse or motivate them to seek out further opportunities to engage with The Parks or NNRs. Participants and support staff noted that neither Parks' website proved particularly user friendly or easy to navigate to find the information they were looking for; a number of staff commented that they had given up looking and tried to phone someone.

When questioned on the information that they would like to be able to access, their desire was for easily accessed, digestible and interactive material. This proved difficult to meet, with partner webs-sites and other sources limited in this regard. The impact of this lack of accessible information was most apparent for those with poor literacy skills, or for those who preferred more visual materials.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A literature and policy review

The lack of webcam or video based materials was also highlighted as a concern by Capability Scotland.

### 5.5.3 Specialist and targeted

The lack of what was seen as a central focal point for information on the Parks and NNRs was a recurring theme. Project participants across the board were keen to have more information that felt relevant to their organisation and its goals. For example, teachers would like educational material and those working with individuals with disabilities would like information on access issues.

This desire for targeted, specific and easily accessible information was highlighted as a common issue in the literature and context review (Appendix A).

### 5.5.4 Packaged information

The Parks cover huge and diverse areas. This issue of scale and packaging was also reflected in feedback from a number of the groups, including Escape, Tulloch and Prince's Trust participants, who had all made use of packaged programmes to assist them in structuring activities in the outdoors. These included completion of elements of the John Muir Award and Duke of Edinburgh Award programmes.

### 5.5.5 Easier for NNRs

The NNRs, largely as a result of their more limited scale, appeared better able to package and communicate a clearer message on the attractions within an NNR area. In terms of the accessibility of information, target group participants and support staff commented that the NNR website and hard copy information was more practical, providing 'bite sized chunks of information' for individuals or groups intending to visit. Both Inchcailloch and Craigellachie provided clear and accessible information sheets, maps and guides to support groups in their visits.

In the case of Craigellachie, visited by The Escape Group, this was also complemented within the NNR by a series of mobile phone supported information points. These offered visitors the opportunity to access a telephone information line as they progress along trails within the NNR.

### 5.5.6 The human touch

When organisations' support staff made direct contact with the Park Authorities seeking initial information, the experience was mixed. While there is an interest in making direct contact, one stakeholder captures the experience:

*'I felt like a tourist and didn't know where to turn.'*

Staff member comment

This barrier of not knowing where to turn to when seeking out initial advice and information was generally not an issue once points of contact had been established, and relationships developed. Invariably feedback from those staff with established relationships with Park Authority staff was very positive, with staff seen to be knowledgeable and supportive.

### 5.5.7 Enthusiasts

For two of the four pilot projects their engagement with a National Park and a NNR as part of this research was supported by staff from one of the Park Authorities. This involved planning or site visits. Feedback highlighted the benefit of this 'live' information from staff that are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about engagement.

This positive experience of Park staff was an area commented upon by organisations and schools in both Park areas. Park inclusion and education staff, volunteer co-ordinators and Rangers all noted that offering support to facilitate engagement as important.

## 5.6 Packaged experiences

In addition to the need for more accessible and targeted information is a desire from stakeholders (principally those staff working with the target groups), to be able to access 'off the shelf' experiences, programmes and activities. They would like these to be linked to the objectives of their organisations.

The use of and need for structured packages to support learning was highlighted in feedback from teaching staff. When considering outdoor excursions teachers would like to be able to buy into a package deal where the provider covers risk assessments, leadership, curriculum links and sometimes travel arrangements. This frees up teachers to concentrate on permissions and administrative duties in pre-trip planning. It also limits their concerns about getting involved in something that is beyond their skills training, while also covers their concerns about being vulnerable (in their view) to litigation and professional criticisms.

*'I also think that there are certain types of outdoor visit you could do and a lot of the infrastructure is in place for you. And in this day and age where time is at a premium I will snatch at anything like that, that is going to help and support me. Otherwise I would have to go out at a weekend and do it privately. I am not going to do that.'* Teacher Feedback

A further example of teacher preferences for packages comes from a school with a plethora of opportunities on the door step. However, the students travel to the opposite side of the Park and beyond (over 3 hours) for a week long residential experience with an outdoor activity provider. The rationale for this was suggested as entirely pragmatic - the provider takes care of everything and makes it easy for the teachers to participate.

Teachers, students and parents made mention of the John Muir Award and the Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE). Some schools were keen on the philosophy of the John Muir Award (JMA) and see it fitting well with S1 and S2, partially because it is considered to be “bureaucracy light” in comparison to some other schemes. The trend seems to be to offer students an option to subsequently build on this, probably with the Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE). This gives good opportunities to tie in with personal and social development needs and across the curriculum more generally.

Feedback from staff working with other target groups, reinforced the experiences of schools, with support staff suggesting that there is value in using packaged experiences to provide a framework for engagement with the outdoors.

*‘Sometimes it’s difficult to know what to do when you’re thinking about taking people out’.*

Tullochan Trust Staff

The Prince’s Trust Team programme, Prince’s Trust XL programme, John Muir Award, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and Millennium Volunteers were all used by groups involved in the pilots to provide a structure to their engagement with the outdoors and activities undertaken in the National Parks.

More locally a number of visits made use of local information packages provided through NNRs, the Cairngorms on a Shoestring element of Cairngorms Explorer, and resources made available by Ranger Services.

## 5.7 Facilitated engagement

For all the groups involved in the fieldwork element of research, whether school or non-school, their experience of previous engagement with the outdoors (including National Parks), and their expectations of future engagement, was that it had or would be facilitated by another party, most often a school, support agency or worker.

For the Park Authorities, this presents a challenge in re-directing or securing resources. Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has a substantially larger ranger workforce able to be considered for this, compared to the Cairngorms, which does not have a Ranger Service. This was recognised as a challenge, highlighted by stakeholders who noted that both authorities would need a greater degree

of targeting of resources, as well as support from external partners (the latter most noticeably for the Cairngorms).

### 5.7.1 A burden on staff

Forward planning and then supporting people while in the Park was a consideration, and a potentially contentious issue. Whose role is this - the Park or the support agency?

Opportunities exist for Park Authorities to develop stronger links with those organisations already working with underrepresented groups. However, the expectation that engagement would be facilitated by such groups was described as placing a burden on support agencies. When the work is understood to be beneficial to both the Park and the participating organisations, there was an interest in exploring how best to share this role, whilst recognising the limitations of available staffing and other resources within both Parks.

### 5.7.2 Who brings the expertise?

The facilitation of visits largely included an expectation that the cost and practical arrangements would be covered by support organisations. In only one case was support provided from within the Parks (The Prince's Trust, whose visit to Inchcailloch was assisted by two Rangers from the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park).

In other cases, there was an assumption that the visiting organisations had or could source the expertise, training, skills and qualifications needed. This is illustrated by the experience of the pilot visits to the Parks and NNRs:

- In the case of The Tulloch Trust, the project was supported by input from The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) working alongside the staff from Tulloch.
- In the case of The Escape Group, the group received regular support on each of their walks from an experienced, female walk leader, provided through Wild Walks, an organisation based at Glenmore Lodge, the national training centre for outdoor leadership.
- While in one case - the Capability Scotland group - the visit was undertaken without external additional specialist support. Capability Scotland staff brought much needed expertise in supporting people with disabilities. As such the group needs were met by the expertise of the support organisation and were not on offer from the Park; this may be a consideration for a group that includes disabled people, which does not have access to such specialist support within their organisation. This visit highlighted the need for higher levels of

staff/support ratios for individuals with disabilities and/or additional personal care and support needs.

## 5.8 Planning & managing risk

The importance of planning and managing risks was a key consideration for the staff within support organisations and schools. This was less of a priority for participants for whom this aspect was largely invisible, because it was taken care of by support staff. The only exception to this during the pilots was that of the Escape Group whose participants have weekly exposure to the outdoors and are involved in elements of training and planning. However, while they are very conscious of the issues of risk and risk assessment, they rely heavily on their walk leader to manage this aspect of their activity.

Recognition of risk is however highlighted by participants in previous examples of engagement with the outdoors and National Parks included within the literature and context review supporting this research (Appendix A). Here previous work by The Forestry Commission in the UK and research into the experiences of members of the Chinese community in Vancouver highlight that participants viewed safety and risk as barriers to their engagement.

A summary of the key issues in relation to the planning and the management of risk are set out below. These were highlighted by organisation stakeholders that took part in the focus groups (and include some aspect of barriers covered above):

- The need for long lead-in times removing spontaneity in working with groups;
- Available resources to support engagement, including appropriate transport, equipment and other practical resources;
- The availability of specialist support staff with experience in the outdoors and skilled to work with the target groups;
- Appropriate insurances and risk assessments;
- Training and support for staff to undertake risk assessment in outdoor activities;
- Impact on other services, staff and service users when taking staff out of their 'normal' working environment;
- The completion of administrative processes and paperwork;
- Challenges in managing the behaviors of certain client groups.

These themes were further developed in the feedback from schools and those involved in pilot visits.

#### 5.8.1 Long lead-in times

Within schools, in order for visits to take place they need to be planned some time in advance so they fit in with curriculum planning and timetables, and allow administrative procedures to be completed.

#### 5.8.2 Good scheduling

Most off-site visits (of any kind) were suggested by teachers as happening in the first term in schools (August to December). This is the time of year when teachers believe it is much easier to get students out of classes, when more flexibility is possible in the timetable and sufficiently far away from exam times which place additional pressures on staff, marking and disruption to the timetable.

This has implications for planning for all involved and it may be advantageous to be aware that school timetables and calendars (which are distributed to parents and students) are normally developed in the spring preceding the academic year, which means that planning for a visit to happen in October should happen in the previous April. In school planning terms this is a relatively short timescale; to take the example further, planning a visit in May normally needs to happen the previous April – 13 months beforehand.

#### 5.8.3 Group capabilities

For Capability Scotland, planning involved additional considerations. This included the nature of the client group, their varying capabilities, the need for high ratios of staff support, specialist transport and equipment, and the availability of appropriate local services, including accessible toilets, parking, picnic areas and other services. The implication for the continuing service within the local unit while staff were involved on trips was also highlighted (an issue also raised by teachers).

#### 5.8.4 Strategic and financial fit

For both Tulloch and Prince's Trusts, working within existing resource limitations was a central consideration in planning. Linking experiences in the outdoors with ongoing programmes was the best way to link with the National Parks. Finding a way to articulate this would assist in prioritising resources. Within both organisations there were different degrees of formal and informal recording of the development of young people's core skills. These consider working with others, communication,

confidence, team building and problem solving. These priorities underpin the goals of many agencies working with young people and as such stakeholders felt that there would be merit in strengthening an understanding of the contribution of the National Parks, to these areas.

#### 5.8.5 Time and effort to fundraise

For The Escape Group planning the weekly activities was largely left to the qualified walk leader. However the group had the responsibility to plan and manage fundraising activities - which proved challenging - alongside more practical barriers such as transport and childcare.

### 5.9 Risk Assessment and management

Linked to the barriers associated with planning is that of risk management and assessment. This is much more a consideration for schools, Parks' staff and support agency staff than for any activity participants. This is evidenced by very limited feedback on this issue from individuals within the target groups involved in pilot visits, school students and surveys.

#### 5.9.1 Motivated by risk

Feedback from many of the young people involved in the research demonstrates that activities with higher levels of risk - rock climbing, abseiling, mountain biking and other 'adrenalin pursuits' - are much sought out, and are a potential motivator for engagement with the Parks.

This is further supported by the study undertaken in 1990 by Hunt, which considered opportunities for adventure and challenge for young people. He found that elements of risk and danger, highlighted as a barrier in schools based research, were rarely mentioned by young people.

#### 5.9.2 Staff responsibility

As with planning barriers, assessing and managing risk, were areas where the responsibilities were seen to lie with staff from the support organisations. It was from these staff that associated barriers were highlighted.

#### 5.9.3 Bureaucratic minefield

Within schools in particular risk assessment and management is a serious concern. The level of perceived risk, risk aversion and the associated level of paperwork and bureaucracy attached to risk assessment and management were all described as considerable barriers to engagement with the Parks.

*'I teach art and design. We take the kids out drawing but we have actually done it less in the last couple of years because of the increased bureaucracy involved in trips and taking them across the school door. I have to get a more general consent form sorted out so we can take them out to the local gallery and park so we can do some perspective drawing. Some of these are things I want to repeat in the future.'*

*'There is an incredible amount of paperwork. Shortly after I came here I went on a risk assessment course which absolutely terrified me and it put me off a wee bit. I know you have to have things in place if you are going to take the students out. It was a bit of a fear factor on the course. Although having been involved in outdoor education I have never had a bad experience.'*

Teacher comments

#### 5.9.4 Nothing new

In the case of The Prince's Trust it was notable that the assessment and management of risk was reduced by revisiting sites for previous activities, thus reducing the need to carry out a fresh risk assessment.

*'We tend to go back to places we know as it means that you don't have to look at a new risk assessment every time and you feel more confident managing the group'*

Prince's Trust Staff

#### 5.9.5 Reliant on staff

For The Escape Group the assessment and management of risk prior to and on the day of their walks was carried out by their qualified walk leader. In keeping with the experience of schools and other organisations, it is therefore evident that while the issues around risk assessments are considerable, they also rely heavily on the willingness of staff to find ways of overcoming these. Some staff are more motivated and confident than others to do this.

*'She is brilliant - if it wasn't for her then we would never be able to do all the things we do.'*

Escape Group Participant

### 5.9.6 Need for experts

In the case of The Tulloch Trust, their lack of experience in managing environmental projects resulted in their making use of an external organisation, in this case British Trust Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), to manage risks associated with delivering the project.

*'We brought in BTCV as they had loads of experience in working with groups like ours and managing the kind of project that we wanted to do.'*

Tullochan Trust Staff

### 5.9.7 No need to pre-view

Notably, having highlighted the significance of risk described by all the organisations involved in the research, three of the four organisations involved in the pilot visits to the Parks, did not undertake any reconnaissance visits prior to engagement. In two cases this was suggested as being due to the activity leader being familiar with the area, or the visit being facilitated by others and the responsibility lying with them. In the other it was simply suggested as an issue of available time and resources to complete such a visit.

## Partner links and organisational commitment

**Sections 5.10 – 5.12 highlight those relating to the relationship between partners working within the Parks and with target groups; and thereafter considers the challenges within each of these groups in relation to their abilities and commitment to working with target groups within National Park areas.**

### 5.10 Links to organisational priorities

For staff, the relationship between their organisational priorities and activities in the outdoors was seen as crucial. Where this relationship could not be demonstrated it was unlikely to win support from managers - despite enthusiasm and commitment from staff.

#### 5.10.1 Connecting to diverse objectives

The challenge for the Parks is the need to be able to promote opportunities in line with the diverse objectives and priorities for the range of organisations likely to be supporting the target groups.

However the research demonstrated that common themes exist, which are cross-cutting. No matter the nature of the target group, there is an underpinning commitment by organisations to support individuals to

develop, learn and grow; with an acceptance that engagement with the outdoors, and by default National Parks and NNRs, had the potential to provide this for service users and pupils.

### 5.10.2 Demonstrating outcomes

The task for all involved is to ensure that there is sufficient evidence to readily demonstrate that such outcomes can be achieved for those that participate in Parks' activity. The Scottish Government has made it clear that each of the 32 Community Planning Partnerships in Scotland should focus their attention on delivering against a nationally agreed Performance Framework which identifies national outcome targets. These are expected to enable Scotland to become a safer, fairer, greener, wealthier, smarter and healthier nation. These overarching national goals, filter down into local priorities, and are reflected in the strategic plans of the organisations working with the under-represented target groups that are of interest to the National Parks.

Given that the work of such organisations will be aligned in some way to one or more of these outcome areas, when research participants feed back that they struggle to secure a commitment from within their organisations to engage with the Parks for reasons of strategic fit, some form of barrier exists to demonstrating this. It is evident that the benefits of engagement with the Parks and the contribution that this can make for organisations working with the target groups, is either not sufficiently understood or well articulated.

### 5.10.3 Common language

Each profession develops its own vocabulary. Those working with the groups that are the target of the research are no different, including the commissioning partners. This permeates communications and can present a barrier when trying to connect outcomes from Park engagement to organisational priorities.

If the opportunities for engagement among the target groups are to have relevance for the organisations it seeks to involve, then a common language of outcomes (what is different in people's lives through engagement with the Parks), will have to be shared. One of the barriers to securing support for engagement appears to be that such understanding is not adequately developed.

### 5.10.4 Realising A Curriculum for Excellence

For schools the literature and context review (Appendix A), highlights a number of specific barriers offered from previous research undertaken across the UK. These barriers include the requirements of aspects of

school and university curricula and timetables. In Scotland, the underpinning strategic document within which those working in education (both formal and informal), operate is *A Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)*.

CfE recognises the contribution that outdoor learning can make to a model of education that is "*for all children and for every young person and supports them to be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society and at work*". Notably, the aspirations set out in CfE apply equally to informal education undertaken using community learning and development approaches when working with communities, including those in the research target groups.

For schools, while the benefits of outdoor activity is explicitly stated, balancing this with curriculum demands presents challenges. Securing dedicated space for such activity alongside the demands of other classroom based curricular commitments can be difficult. As one head teacher illustrates:

*'No one seems to be coordinating in terms of A Curriculum for Excellence. I think there is plenty of opportunity for outdoor education in there. To be honest if you are committed to A Curriculum for Excellence then it needs to be coordinated, which it is not. It comes down to whether there is cover for the classes - and individual teachers have to be keen that it goes ahead.'*

#### 5.10.5 Classroom cover

From the research, teachers were clear that they need to be convinced that visits to outdoor settings will be worthwhile, and in this respect making strong and clear connections to the curriculum are essential. One Modern Studies and History teacher explained the issue from his perspective:

*'It really comes down to whether there is enough cover for your classes. The individual teachers have to be keen that it goes ahead and then you have to almost make sure that this is something every year so you can go back and say ... remember how we did this last year ... like this is set in stone; that's how we have worked it.'*

#### 5.14.5 Timetabling

Teachers highlighted a range of other challenges in relation to timetabling within schools:

- The management of pupil's learning
- Disruption to other subjects
- Staff time and cover
- Working within the parameters of a 50-60 minute period pattern.

### 5.11 Park networks

The experience of the National Park Authorities in developing links with organisations identified as working with the target groups is discussed in section 4.0, background to the project. From this it is evident that efforts have been made to engage communities and organisations comprising, representing or supporting under-represented groups. The commitment to this is demonstrated by the development of the Inclusive Cairngorms Forum, a new Education Strategy in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and a range of other actions.

#### 5.11.1 Variable connections

Whilst significant connections had been made in some areas with key organisations, there was an understanding that there is a need to develop a greater range of links, particularly with key regional and national intermediaries. Links between organisations and schools in and around the Parks are well developed, however those with relevant organisations located within more urban areas, or based some distance from the Parks, is not as strong. There are many examples of positive relationships built around project work with schools across the Parks. These are well-established and rely on historical or reactive arrangements, rather than approaches that target key organisations in a planned way. Work with schools based in more challenging areas is limited.

#### 5.11.2 Weak links

Whilst relevant support organisations appear to prefer connections to be initiated and developed by the Parks, there was recognition that the Parks had limited resources dedicated to work in this field, and that there were many demands on these teams. Weak links between the Parks and these organisations were suggested as being down to:

- a lack of interest or commitment on the part of all stakeholders
- time and resources on the part of all partners;
- conflicting priorities;
- other 'more important' relationships;
- not knowing who to build links with - all stakeholders.

### 5.11.3 Mixed experiences

**Pilots:** For those organisations and schools involved in the pilot and school visits, previous experiences of engagement with Park Authority structures were mixed.

- The Tulloch Trust had undertaken a number of previous projects with the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Ranger Services; despite this connection, their staff describe '*feeling like a lost tourist*' when engaging with the Park Authority.
- The experience of The Prince's Trust was more critical, with historical poor experiences of engagement resulting in The Trust staff no longer attempting to engage with The Park Authority.
- For Capability Scotland staff at Springlands, their previous experience had included involvement in the Inclusive Cairngorms Forum, but their own staffing commitment made it difficult to sustain involvement on a regular basis. The lack of a dedicated Ranger Service within the Park Authority, such as that available in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, meant that this form of support was not available to the group.
- The Escape Group had no direct engagement with either Park Authority. They sourced information, found their walk leader and support worker through the Merkinch Partnership.
- For both the organisations involved in the Loch Lomond based pilots, involvement had been a catalyst for the development of ongoing relationships. These look set to generate further project and volunteering opportunities for young people.

**Schools:** Feedback from schools involved in the research on links with National Parks was mixed, with some enjoying regular ongoing contact and actively involved in working with Park Authority staff, whilst others had sporadic, little or no ongoing contact. Of those schools involved in the study, all of those within Cairngorms had some form of contact with members of the Inclusion Team within the Park Authority, whilst two of the three schools based in and around Loch Lomond and The Trossachs had previous experience of working with the Park Authority Rangers.

### 5.11.4 Relationships

Throughout visits to schools and conversations with the various stakeholders, it was clear that relationships are crucial to schools and others when visiting NNRs and the Parks. It is already clear from discussion

in previous sections that barriers exist in relation to accessing appropriate information. What is also clear is that there is need for improved clarity of communications between staff in the Parks and external organisations. Knowing who from within the Parks should be contacted for information, advice, a host of practical issues, as well as 'what's on' or the development of projects 'what's possible' were all cited as being needed.

#### 5.11.5 Quality of response

Not knowing who to turn to was a crucial barrier for organisations, particularly the first point of contact. Lack of direction, support or a poor quality of response at this point left organisations either walking away from the idea, or seeking support elsewhere and/or in other locations. One teacher described a past experience when visiting an English National Park.

The aspiration was that the Scottish NNRs and Parks should be able to offer something similar:

*'I thought I could maybe take a mini bus (of students) down to the Park. I would phone up and within a day a pack of material would arrive with all the activities that are available in the Park, whether it be for O grade, higher ... and the name of the person who would be available on that day to show me around and assist me during a visit. Basically that would be a Ranger. A ranger who would have that expertise not just in education but in the specific courses; they would know what the O grade Geography course was about and that it was different from the GCE Geography course – but they knew about that as well. ... They had an education officer. I'm not sure about who the education person is now ... I forget her name.'*

Teacher

#### 5.11.6 Structures and processes

Feedback from internal stakeholders working within the Park Authorities highlighted that while there is a strategic commitment to supporting the engagement of under-represented groups, essential underlying organisational structures and processes are not sufficiently in place to adequately support such work.

## 5.12 Staff commitment, confidence and competence

For each of the National Park Authorities and SNH, supporting inclusion forms one of a number of priorities which, whilst seeking to be complementary, invariably require decisions on the time and resources available to fulfil each.

### 5.12.1 Commitment

The priority and commitment attached to an inclusion agenda by the commissioning partners was questioned by both internal and external stakeholders. However, the creation of lead posts, and/or teams, within each Park Authority to support inclusion and education was recognised by external stakeholders as an important support and an indication of the priority given to this agenda.

While notable work has been undertaken or is under development by staff with an inclusion role in both Parks, stakeholders continued to query the extent to which such work fitted as a central priority for Park Authority board members and managers, as well as SNH. The degree to which the inclusion agenda with associated practices, permeated across all staff groups within the partner organisations, was considered worthy of further exploration.

This does not detract from the work that has been carried out to date in introducing new Single Equality Schemes across each organisation. CNPA and SNH have, during 2008, developed internal ambassadors for equalities/inclusion as part of these equalities schemes, and have carried out combined training with staff members.

### 5.12.2 Competing priorities

Whilst it would be widely accepted that inclusion should underpin the work of all those involved in the Parks, it is evident from feedback from internal stakeholders that it can at times struggle to find support from within the organisations for this agenda, when faced with competing priorities.

In pursuing the four stated National Park aims, it is notable that both Parks recognise that each has equal status. However, if it appears that there is a conflict between the *conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage* and other National Park aims, then each Park Authority gives greater weight to this aim over the others.

### 5.12.3 Skills and competence

**Support organisations:** Stakeholders consistently noted concerns that a key barrier was the level of skills and confidence among staff from support

organisations to undertake activities in the outdoors with the target groups. This included Park Authority staff as well as those in organisations supporting the target groups.

While feedback from pilot projects on their experiences of working with the Park Authorities was overwhelmingly positive, this was only after projects had identified and developed appropriate and supportive relationships with personnel within the Park Authority structures. The involvement of Park Authority staff eased their concerns about the capacity (skills, knowledge, resources and confidence) to undertake work which would otherwise have been unsupported or may not have happened. This support, provided by Park Authority staff, was enhanced in one of the projects, The Tulloch Trust, by the availability of staff from other partners. The experience highlighted the key role of Park Authority staff in being aware of and able to facilitate access to other organisations within the Parks who have a responsibility to support those within the target groups.

However support agencies involved in the pilots also noted the variable commitment as well as skills, of Park Authority staff in working with the target groups.

The best outcomes and confidence among staff were where a degree of synergy of skills and knowledge between the Park Authority Staff and the support organisations' staff could be achieved. This was evident for example for the Capability Scotland group, whose staff had a greater understanding of the issues and considerations for people with disabilities than the Park staff; the latter brought considerably more knowledge of outdoor related activity.

**Parks:** Feedback from internal stakeholders within Park Authorities highlighted a more cautious tone in terms of their own capacity. This also reflected the different delivery mechanisms and staff resources available within each Park Authority, and the ability of staff to respond to the level of demand from those within the target groups, and more widely.

Staff noted concerns about their level of skills and commitment to working with some of the target groups. Issues of confidence and competence to work with certain target groups was also mentioned, most notably in relation to young people, those with offending or drug histories, those with challenging behaviours and those with personal care needs.

*“I don't mind admitting that I sometimes feel a bit nervous about some groups of people that come into the Park and are looking for support”.*

National Park Authority Staff Member

#### 5.12.4 A shared commitment

Internal stakeholders and external project partners highlighted the need to consider how such work is reflected in the person specifications and job roles of staff across the Park Authorities.

*'I came from an inner city area so I'm quite comfortable working with challenging groups, but my experience is quite different from most of the people that I work alongside.'* National Park staff member

*'There is still a sense that it's only really Rangers who have to deal with working with excluded groups and it's not really the responsibility of others across the organisation.'* National Park staff member

### Practical challenges

Section 5.13 – 5.17 set out a number of what were seen as 'old chestnuts', barriers highlighted as being long standing issues faced when supporting engagement by those within the target groups. The section finishes by highlighting a number of specific barriers for those individuals with mobility disabilities.

#### 5.13 Competent to be out

Whilst a number of individuals involved in the fieldwork element of the study had visited National Parks, most notably Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, many had seldom been beyond the main visitor areas of Balloch and Luss. Engagement in the areas, and the activities that individuals highlighted as a motivation for being in the Parks, required a degree of competence, training or guidance not held or immediately available to many of those within each of the target groups, or in many instances the staff within the organisations that supported them.

From across the groups involved in the schools and pilot visits only two participants declared that they had undergone any form of leadership training for outdoor pursuits (in this case walk leader training); no other participants had been involved in any form of training or qualification in outdoor activities.

This lack of experience, competence and training again highlighted the ongoing reliance on support organisations to facilitate future engagement with the Parks and NNRs; and it illustrates the potential opportunity to develop future engagement, by those within the target groups, around training and skills development in outdoor pursuits and/or the use of volunteering opportunities to develop such skills.

## 5.14 Transport

Transport to and from the Park was a barrier highlighted across all aspects of the research. The literature and context review explores the issues in more detail, see Appendix A, with highlights provided below.

### 5.14.1 Getting there and back

Where motivation is an issue (a barrier explored earlier), this is further exacerbated if there are transport issues to consider. The vast majority of current Park users travel by car; however for those within the target groups, access to a car is very limited. Getting participants to and from the Parks was therefore a key part of the support offered and proved to be essential. Either the support organisation used its own transport, or a local community transport facility. The nature, availability, accessibility, cost, insurances, maintenance and drivers are all considerations for those seeking to bring participants to the Parks, with some more able to secure the resources that this requires.

There is a strong reluctance to use public transport, which is not considered a viable option for schools and groups. Issues of timings, routes, availability and management of the groups for this mode were all cited as barriers.

The issue of transport is one that is compounded by distance from the National Park areas. When compared with Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, which is less than an hour's travel for most major urban settlements in west central Scotland, Cairngorms presents a greater challenge in terms of its relative proximity for a majority of the population of south and central Scotland.

### 5.14.2 Specialist considerations

For those in the Capability Scotland group, there was a universal acceptance that their engagement with the Parks, and more generally with the outdoors, was something that would only be achieved through the provision of transport by a third party. This was due to the specialist nature of the transport required for those using wheelchairs or with significant mobility considerations.

## 5.15 Equipment

### 5.15.1 Expensive

For the majority of participants there were practical barriers relating to appropriate clothing, footwear and equipment, and their associated costs. Most of those involved in the pilot visit element of the research did

not have the finances to purchase the necessary basic equipment. Anything required for specialist activities was well beyond their means.

#### 5.15.2 Sources of support

Feedback from the schools suggested that previous outdoor activity had been supported by equipment provided by the school (through a local outdoor activities organisation or outdoor centre supporting the visit). In two of the four non school projects, Tulloch and Escape, participants used clothing and equipment purchased through grants or other funding. None of the organisations made use of any existing resources that provide outdoor equipment. Many noted that such a resource would be a valuable support in engaging with the outdoors, the Parks and NNRs.

#### 5.15.3 Fit for the conditions

For a number of participants involved in The Prince's Trust pilot visit their experience of the NNR and National Park was coloured by the poor equipment they had available. This was especially true as the weather conditions on the day were poor, with heavy rain affecting the site. In such circumstances the need for appropriate clothing and footwear is paramount; however a number of the group did not have access to this, from their own, their organisation's or the Park's resources.

#### 5.15.4 Health

Whilst the weather was fair on the day of the Capability Scotland group visit, participants noted that it may have been uncomfortable, or potentially dangerous, to undertake such a visit in bad weather for fear of cold related illnesses, as well as changes to the terrain for those using standard wheelchairs or with restricted mobility.

### 5.16 Costs

The literature and context review (Appendix A) highlights the issue of cost for a number of those involved in previous studies, including that undertaken in 1990 by Hunt which considered opportunities for adventure and challenge for young people. This found that one third considered the activities to be too expensive.

Barriers in relation to cost in the current research were largely highlighted by staff within schools and those working with other target groups. Issues of cost were focused around a number of areas:

- The perceived relatively expensive nature of engagement with the outdoors including travel, equipment and activity costs;
- The costs of instructors and specialist staff;

- Fighting for tight budgets when engagement with the outdoors was not seen as an organisational priority but more of a luxury;
- Providing staff cover in schools;
- Additional insurances;
- Staff time costs dealing with cumbersome safety procedures;
- The comparatively less expensive options in local areas for those outwith the Parks.

During the visits to schools cost was low on the list of discussion points and was only raised in two of the schools. However, cost is a complex issue and one that can be viewed in several ways.

#### 5.16.1 Can't pay, can't go

Staff in one school explained the challenge of costs of taking students outside in different ways. There is the cost of covering teaching while they were out of the classroom, plus the difficulty of asking students for money to pay for aspects of field trips. This was usually to cover transportation, but can mean that some students are unable to participate. This is a common theme - if the engagement is dependent on those involved having to find the funds from their own resources, given the target groups, they are unlikely to be able to participate.

The alternative is to source funding. For three of the four pilot visits undertaken to Parks and NNRs, the cost of engagement with the Parks was supported by funding from external sources - including the local Community Planning Partnership, Landfill tax, National Lottery Awards for All, Grants and Trusts, and a range of donations and other fundraising. Sourcing income to underwrite activities in the outdoors, including National Parks and NNRs was an area of constant effort for organisations and one that created a demand on existing limited, mainly staffing resources.

#### 5.16.2 Hard to prioritise budgets

A common theme is the challenge to secure funds and permission to run a trip.

*'A few years ago we did a river study and we had support from some rangers for that...we did it two years ago and it was just great but, again, it was costing a lot of money and the head master at that time would not let us continue. I have not tried it again and I think it would be pushing our luck to get another day out of school – I think we are doing well to get one day out in each year.'*

Geography teacher

## 5.17 Supporting disability

Whilst the barriers set out above are broadly consistent for all the target groups in the research there are a number of particular considerations for those individuals with disabilities. This was apparent from the experience of the pilot visit, as well as from the body of evidence available in the literature and context review (Appendix A).

- The time and ratios required to support engagement with the outdoors for staff working within an intensive, often one-to-one support environment;
- The range of disabilities and the extent to which such a range can be accommodated within available activities. Linked to this is the need to tailor experiences to reflect the capabilities of those involved;
- The extent and quality of disability assessment for locations and activities within The National Parks areas;
- Practical barriers of transport, mobility, personal care, toilets, food and other facilities;
- Disclosure checks for those working with vulnerable people;
- Assessing the value of engagement with the outdoors for individuals with disabilities, and creating opportunities for feedback where written feedback is not an accessible option;
- The visibility of disabled people in the outdoors as Park users or staff, as well as in publicity material for outdoor areas, including Parks and NNRs.

These points are supported by studies undertaken in the UK by The Sensory Trust, Kent County Council and Forth and Tay Ramblers Association. Studies in the US undertaken by National Parks and disability organisations reinforce and develop a number of these barriers, and the findings highlight barriers relating to:

- levels of individual ability;
- physical barriers caused by steps, gradients and other natural and manmade features;
- accessibility of transport to and within National Parks;
- lack of appropriate toilets, catering and other services;
- staff awareness of the needs of people with disabilities;
- limited tailored activities; and
- lack of disabled people seen to be employed within the National Parks.

## 5.18 Barriers: The consistent messages

Across the literature and context review, focus groups, interviews and experiences of those involved in pilot and school visits there can be seen to be a recurring set of themes relating to barriers. These can be summarised as:

1. Individuals within the target groups, and those supporting them from external organisations have a limited awareness of the Parks, and can struggle to see their relevance or understanding their role
2. There is a lack of accessible and attractive information that encourages and motivates those in the target groups to engage
3. Health and safety and risk management issues, primarily on the part of those working with the target groups
4. Target groups' belief that they don't 'fit' with those that use Parks
5. A lack of confidence and skills among those in the target groups and those working with them on aspects of Park activity
6. A lack of confidence, skills and competence on the part of those within the Parks supporting engagement by the target groups
7. Mixed and unplanned connections and relationships between the Parks and agencies supporting the target groups
8. Practical barriers in relation to transport, cost and access to necessary clothing and equipment

The following section considers how barriers identified in the research have been tackled by others involved in previous engagement initiatives, and how those involved in focus groups, interviews, school and pilot visits suggested that they could be tackled.

## 6.0 Overcoming barriers to engagement

*“Most of our obstacles would melt away if, instead of cowering before them, we should make up our minds to walk boldly through them.”*

Orison Swett Marden

The information contained in this section is complemented by the literature and context review, found at Appendix A and the blended case studies, which are provided in Appendices C and D.

### 6.1 An overview of feedback

Combining feedback from the various stakeholder groups in the research, along with the literature and context review, there are a number of suggestions for tackling barriers to engagement. The literature and context review draws our attention to a 2003 study considering why Chinese people in Vancouver did not visit wilderness areas. From this, seven recommendations were made which seem pertinent to the context, and adapt well to the ‘barriers to engagement’ research. This included the need to:

1. Provide a safe park environment
2. Ensure that parks offer amenities and services that meet the needs of current and potential visitors
3. Raise awareness of parks and recreation opportunities
4. Facilitate access to park information
5. Devise culturally sensitive means of addressing particular aspects of Chinese subculture that are hindering participation
6. Generate means of coping with the unique barriers that immigrants face in accessing parks
7. Ensure that all ethnic minority groups feel welcome in park spaces.

Closer to home The Mosaic Project initiated by the Council for National Parks (CNP) and the Black Environment Network (BEN), which ran from July 2001 until July 2004, highlighted a number of themes to support access:

- Sustainability was seen as a key issue within the work of the initiative taken forward by the Mosaic Partnership. The initiative has subsequently secured funding through Natural England's £25 million Access to Nature grant scheme, within which the Campaign for National Parks has been awarded £932,314 to continue delivering Mosaic for another 3 years, from 2008. The project will build ethnic minority capacity for engagement with National Parks and will develop Community Champions for National Parks within black and minority ethnic groups in 20 cities.
- Volunteering was of significant interest, and thought to provide significant opportunities for promotion of the Parks, but the interest was not capitalised on with follow-up efforts or initiatives.
- Making contact between the Parks and the community groups was difficult, and more could have been done to train community group leaders in working with the National Park Authorities; and
- Train National Park Authorities staff in ways of working with the minority ethnic communities.

Other research in this area provides additional learning points when considering access and promoting outreach. These include:

- Creating meaningful learning experiences that offer an opportunity for reflection to encourage learners to see the relevance of the experience;
- The importance of role models in demonstrating the value of experiences in the outdoors for those within the target groups; and
- Supporting those with experience of the outdoors to share and motivate others, acting as champions and promoters for further engagement.

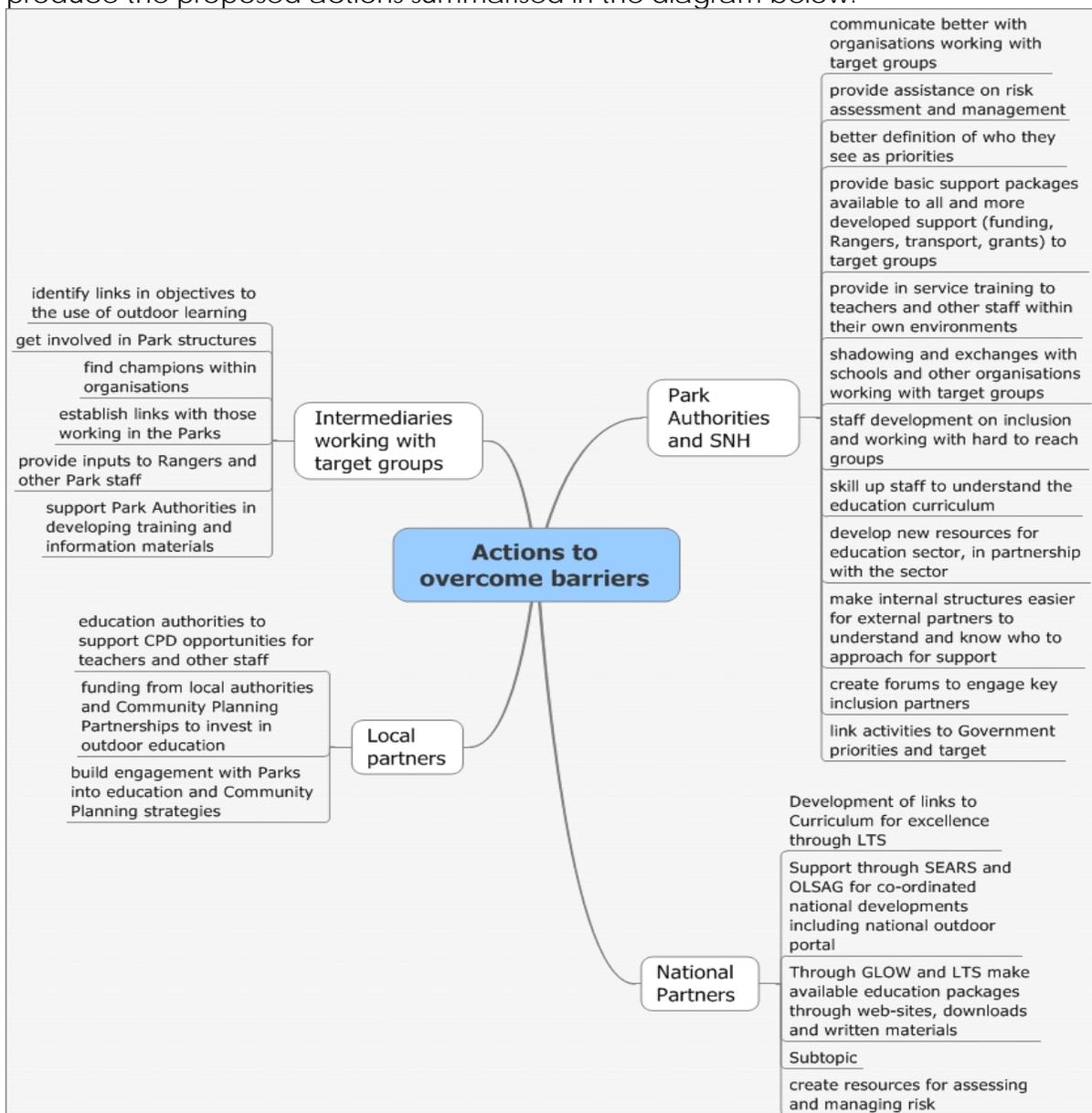
Engagement and outreach projects across other National Parks and further developed by other services, also provide valuable lessons. They inform how the Parks and SNH could further develop engagement by under-represented groups. These lessons highlight:

- The value of volunteering demonstrated in the European Junior Ranger programme and My National Park initiative operated by North York Moors National Park. The European Junior Rangers programme was piloted in Cairngorms during 2008 with a further roll-out expected in 2009;
- Teacher development as per Gros Morne National Park in Canada;
- Initiatives through other service providers to support improved outreach and access, including Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum's New Century

Project, which included an access policy that presented a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to outreach and access;

- Support for participative learning as shown in the Reaching Out Project delivered by North York Moors National Park; and
- The development of co-ordinated single access portals as demonstrated by The National Park Service in the United States. This provides an interpretation and education website portal that offers 'curriculum, fun and games, a guide to park Junior Ranger programs and other educational media' created by the Park and its partners.

Combining the above with feedback from research participants helped produce the proposed actions summarised in the diagram below.



From these suggested activities and the feedback from those involved in schools and pilots during the research, a number of key areas for overcoming barriers to engagement are offered.

## 6.2 Awareness, understanding, relevance, priority and time

These themes form a set of perceived and real barriers by those within the target groups, as well as those that offer them support. Overcoming these is fundamental if Parks and NNRs are to successfully engage with the target groups. The research suggests that actions to address these would include:

- Creating networks to bring together internal Park Authority 'inclusion champions' with 'champions' from target group intermediaries.
- Using direct staff contact rather than mailings and the internet, to target promotion to socially excluded groups. This principle extends to involving other partners working within the Parks to take the message out to schools and other target groups.
- Produce and widely promote, a 'who's who and what do they do that matters to you' guide to Park staff (with contact details).
- Ensure that the first contact from any group is greeted with enthusiasm and that the opportunity is supported by a staff 'champion'.
- Back-up early enquiries with easily accessed information on how to tackle potential barriers, and support engagement with the opportunity to speak with an internal 'champion' from the Park authority or one of its partners.
- Use and promote positive role models from the target groups; and provide examples of positive experiences by similar groups and individuals.
- Improve the links between local initiatives and the Parks to demonstrate how local activities complement Park work.
- Promote twinning arrangements between areas and groups within and outwith Parks to build connections and highlight similarities in experiences. As previously this should seek to spread the commitment to inclusion to other Park partners and not rely solely on Park Authority staff.
- Proactively create connections with target groups, Park Rangers and other organisations able to facilitate engagement.
- Highlight 'what's in it for me?', showing how engagement can provide fun, develop skills, offer volunteering opportunities, allow people to spend time with friends, provide new experiences etc. - whatever motivates the individuals or groups.

- Provide a high quality 'wow' first experience with follow-up opportunities that build on this success.

Overcoming these barriers was seen as principally about winning hearts and minds. The experience of those involved in the research highlights that the most effective means of overcoming this barrier is direct experience of the outdoors.

*'I couldn't imagine not doing this now-it is part of my life and I love being outdoors.'*

Escape Group Participant

The driver for overcoming these barriers is fundamentally linked to those in the target group seeing the activity as interesting and worthwhile. The experience of those in the Escape Group highlights the value of regular exposure to the outdoors as a means of developing a sense of connection and a commitment to ongoing engagement. Improving the way in which the impacts and outcomes of the work are evidenced and linked to organisational priorities, will also be key to this. Recommendations for this are set out in the following pages.

### 6.3 Understanding what's different about the Parks and NNRs

For the majority of those in the target groups involved in the research, understanding what was different about the Parks when compared to other outdoor areas was a key barrier.

From participant feedback it is questionable whether committing energies to addressing this barrier with the target groups as part of initial attempts to promote engagement will be the best use of resources. Seeking to identify the differences between one area and another, highlighting particular eco systems, plant and animal life, or elements of the landscape within the Park, or areas of the Park, is not likely to deal with the core issue. Whilst publications from both Parks are available to highlight and increase understanding of the special qualities of the Parks, these are not considered as being relevant or a priority to the majority of those within the target groups.

Instead what has come through is the need to focus on what is available within the Park areas that can potentially support engagement. This is likely to be the strongest and clearest way of differentiating Parks against other areas of the outdoors. This includes promoting:

- The availability of Ranger Services and other staff to support planning and the completion of visits/activities
- The availability of simple information to support visits - information packs, fact sheets and leaflets, maps, activities, visitor centres, signage

- Importantly ensuring that information highlights the links to educational and development opportunities
- Volunteering opportunities
- Supported walks and other activities
- Access to support through the Park Authorities in the form of advice and sign-posting, and potential assistance with transport and small grants to support engagement; and
- Specific activities, attractions or resources unavailable in other areas
- National Nature Reserves may be a good setting for taster sessions as they are smaller and more easily comprehended.

The experience of the Tulloch and Prince's Trust groups within the research highlights the important contribution that was made to the success of the project from support available through the Park Authority and partners. Such support would not necessarily have been available in other areas and as such merits promotion. Extending this principle of involving other Park based agencies and businesses is one that recognises the limitation of resources within each Park Authority, and seeks to ensure that partners signed up to each Park Plan are delivering against their commitments.

#### 6.4 Focus on activities rather than location

In keeping with the above barrier is the need to focus on activities on offer rather than the location. For the majority of participants involved in the research, a lack of awareness of National Parks and NNRs, and thereafter a lack of perceived interest and commitment to the difference that this status offers, suggests that initially selling the Parks and NNRs as entities in their own right will not generate particular enthusiasm.

This is not to suggest that the uniqueness of the Parks and NNRs should not be highlighted, but merely reflects the interest and motivation of the target groups who, in the main have limited exposure to the Parks and NNRs.

Feedback from these groups demonstrates that their motivation for engagement is more focussed on activities than locations. Support staff are keen to know more about available activities within the Parks as a means of promoting engagement. In seeking to address this barrier the following actions were suggested:

- Carrying out studies of those within the target groups to assess their interests and motivations

- Maintaining a database that highlights what interests groups, and using this as the basis for activity development and marketing
- Offering supported taster session/activities to those organisations working with the target groups
- Providing regular mailings and e-bulletins to organisations on upcoming activities, particularly things that are free
- Promoting packages of activity that have been designed around the likely or known interests of the target groups, highlighting what support is available for those interested
- Creating an online information resource or 'clearing house' where these activities and related resources can easily be accessed, and allowing groups from outwith the Parks to establish links with service providers working within the Parks; and
- Promoting the use of volunteering through existing volunteering opportunities provided through the Park Authorities; developing existing volunteering programmes, such as Millennium Volunteers and BTCV, and working with other organisations, including volunteer centres, as a means of getting access to these activities. Consider a rewards scheme - by volunteering you get to do some of the activities that interest you as "payment".

## 6.5 Accessible information

The accessibility of information, in various forms, remains a key requirement for those seeking to support engagement by the target groups. Given the pattern of much of the engagement to date (facilitated by support organisations, schools and others), it will be beneficial to ensure that information is accessible to both the individuals within the target groups as well as those offering support.

A strong message has emerged that there is a need for single points of contact, clear, informative and interactive information and importantly more emphasis on the provision of direct input through Park staff and partners to target groups in their local areas, and while in the Park. Whilst there is a need to ensure that the information currently available is more regularly communicated to those in the target groups, additional actions identified during the research include:

- The development of single entry points for information, including a portal that provides overarching information, and more specific information based on the needs of individual target groups and the activities that in which they are interested

- Improved navigation and interactive features within Park and NNR websites to ensure that they are more attractive and responsive to the needs of the target groups (it is acknowledged that LL&TNPA has recently launched a new website with a new learning area)
- For those with sensory impairments increased use of audio and video facilities within web-sites and information packs available from the Parks, such as those are already available through other UK National Parks (the Brecon Beacons, the Lake District and Snowdonia)
- Regular updates to inform support organisations of opportunities within the Parks
- The development of existing national internet based information points through GLOW and LTS, to provide information to school audiences
- The cascading of information through national umbrella organisations working with the research target groups; and
- The increased use of Park staff to provide information directly to target group audiences, both in their home areas and during visits to the Park. This was seen as critical in bringing information to life and allowing the commitment, passion and knowledge of staff to enthuse and motivate others.

## 6.6 Packaged experiences

The use of packaged experiences is already considered an effective means of promoting engagement in the outdoors. The John Muir Award, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Prince's Trust Team and XL programmes, Millennium Volunteers and others, all provide this kind of structure to support engagement, and importantly, recognise the efforts of those involved.

- The promotion of these by the Parks, in partnership with the organisations managing each programme, offers a tried and tested means of supporting the engagement of those within each of the target groups. Beyond these programmes, the development of experiences and tailored packages for target groups, and in particular schools, remains a major challenge and opportunity.
- Importantly for those with a range of disabilities, packages suitable for their needs are not readily available. This suggests a need to develop more tailored and bespoke experiences.
- Feedback from schools highlights the importance of creating and promoting packages which considerably ease the bureaucracy, planning and risk requirements for staff.

- Equally, packages for schools should clearly set out how the activity will meet the curricular requirements of a range of subjects.
- Focusing on manageable 'bite size' experiences may be a good starting point for schools with limited experience of the outdoors; and with potentially shorter time commitments this could limit the concerns and costs for staff cover and timetable disruption.
- The availability and benefits of educational support material is promoted on a number of other UK National Park websites, including The Peak District and North York Moors, and is an area that is currently supported by the education lead officers group within the Association of National Park Authorities (ANPA).
- Feedback from stakeholders involved in the research, and from experience of the wider UK, highlights the need for and use of single portal points from which to access information and resource packs.
- Park and NNR websites need updated to take account of the feedback in this research. This includes improvements required as part of a portal arrangement and wider access considerations discussed in more detail in 6.5 above (LL&TNPA has already begun this process).
- In addition to website changes, Parks and NNRs need to make better use of other national intermediary sites, including GLOW and LTS, as points of access and availability for educational resources and packages.
- The research highlighted the use of mobile technology at Craigellachie, and resource packs provided by Ranger services at Inchcailloch, as a positive means of providing engaging information whilst in the Parks. The need for such approaches was evidenced by feedback from the research groups, who noted that static information boards were either missed or ignored completely.

## 6.7 Practical barriers - cost, transport and equipment

It is evident that most of those in the target groups will be unable to meet the financial costs associated with many of the Park activities. This includes for example, transport, equipment and child-care. For most, the need to balance limited incomes and other financial priorities means that committing funds for engagement with the Parks is not an option. Such costs are not however normally passed on by support organisations.

- The availability of financial support for this kind of activity through grants and others sources, while important, is relatively limited. A number of small programmes are available to young people, through for example Young

Scot Awards; and additional information on funding sources through Trust and electronic Grant finders (including Funder Finder and the Directory of Social Change), offer some support for those seeking funding.

- Provision of funding, through small grants and support, remains an area for potential development, particularly to support the costs and equipment for those involved in volunteering.
- The commissioning partners are well placed to facilitate discussion on how best to address funding needs by bringing together interested parties to develop solutions.
- Support organisations are more likely to address what limited time they have available for fundraising, to securing core costs. Their engagement with the Parks may well be in jeopardy, or prove too difficult without help. Park staff can provide direct assistance by identifying ways of covering the costs of engagement, by helping to frame a proposal to funders, by sharing information on ways to minimise costs (e.g. equipment loan schemes), and by signposting to helpful resources or organisations.
- As previously highlighted one of the 'differences' that Parks and NNRs have over other outdoor areas is the availability of resources within the area, be these staff, centres, transport or access to certain funding streams to support engagement. European Union funding is available through programmes such as LEADER or local grant programmes to encourage inclusion. The promotion and targeting of these resources to those within the identified groups, provides a potential way for the Park Authorities to work with partners to support increased engagement.
- The availability of funding for groups engaging with Parks appears to be an area that remains under developed. There are limited examples of activity in this arena.
- While the Park Authorities could do more to address the issues around costs, the research highlights the experiences of support organisations that have been successful in accessing funding streams to support engagement with the outdoors. The following sources were utilised to support engagement in pilot projects:
  - National Lottery, Awards for All
  - Regeneration Funds through a Community Planning Partnership
  - Landfill Tax
  - Paths To Health funding
  - Business sponsorship; and
  - Fundraising.

## 6.8 Planning, risk assessment and management

Staff in schools and support organisations need help to minimise the burden of planning, management of projects and dealing with risk. The Parks can provide a range of practical support and resources to ease this load by bringing together examples of available materials into a single information point, and/or acting as a sign-posting support to direct organisations to any available standard assessment and planning tools.

Stakeholder feedback made it clear that there was considerable value in having access to a supportive person and/or practical resources when trying to overcome these barriers. Within the Escape Group planning and risk assessment was carried out by an experienced walk leader; while for The Tulloch and Prince's Trust visits, support for risk assessment was provided by Rangers and partner organisations (BTCV). Feedback from teachers reinforces the benefits of such support, with one commenting:

*'When I book the climbing I say I don't sign the risk assessment form but the climbing centre actually give me a risk assessment that they have done therefore I don't need to do it because they have already done it for their company. That would really help if we said we want to take a group there and a private company said they had the risk assessment already completed. It makes it easier for us, much less paperwork'.*

Teacher comment

*'If there was even just some guidance from the Park on how to go about achieving that [mountain leader award] that is something I would be interested in pursuing'.*

Teacher comment

Park and partners providing practical assistance in the planning and risk assessment/management processes, could be seen to include:

- Providing a centralised set of assessment templates or information on planning that can be adapted for visits, similar to that available through sister Parks in the UK and other organisations. e.g. <http://www.rhet.org.uk/EZEdit/view.asp?MID=93>;
- Promoting opportunities to visit NNRs and National Parks when risk assessment and leadership is available – e.g. a package approach;
- Ensuring that whatever opportunities are offered that they are approved through relevant council and authority systems so that visits are as administratively light as possible for teachers;

- Presenting risk assessments in a positive light and as a support mechanism rather than a barrier;
- Being familiar with the different school and organisation systems and ensuring that materials are adjusted appropriately to streamline the paperwork process;
- Having staff available to support reconnaissance trips and visits by target groups;
- Providing information on graded levels of risk, with material completed for teachers and support workers to then fill in additional areas;
- Liaising with Local Authorities for CPD on risk assessments (offering some training courses in schools or within support organisations);
- Providing accurate information to dispel some of the perceptions and myths around risk;
- Working to make teachers and support workers aware of the resources available to them in terms of people, skills, CPD opportunities and equipment;  
([http://www.outdooreducation.dk/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=46](http://www.outdooreducation.dk/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=46))
- Encouraging a mentoring system which 'spreads the word' on how user friendly systems are and considering options for doing this and sharing of resources electronically;
- Involving teaching staff in local partner forums to strengthen links with each national Park Authority and other partners;
- Encouraging the use of generic permission slips.

The reduction and removal of risk, and support for the planning process is a critical consideration for those working with vulnerable target groups which the Parks seek to engage. Support by the Parks to reduce the planning and risk burden are seen as critical in allowing schools and other groups to make better use of the available opportunities within Scotland's National Parks.

## 6.9 Links to organisational priorities, including Curriculum for Excellence

Schools in particular, but organisations generally, cite a need to connect the benefits of time spent in the Parks, with their strategic priorities. This will require everyone involved to be much clearer about how they evidence the likely

impact on individuals and groups (and potentially communities), ahead of and after the engagement.

- Parks Authorities can ease this process, by ensuring that promotional material, activities packages and evaluation evidence articulates the connection between activities within the Park and outcomes set by Government and other strategic partners.
- This should not be an onerous task as the Scottish Government, through the National Performance Framework, as well as the national education framework: A Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)<sup>7</sup> (and related work in parallel fields), has provided a common language and targets for those seeking to evidence the impact of their work.
- The government's Improvement Service, is working with Community Planning Partnerships across the country to enable partners to work together and develop an understanding of how best to gather data to support evidence of the impact of their work; and how to work collaboratively on the delivery of Single Outcome Agreements (the local plans for the delivery of the National Performance Framework).
- Many of the organisations that the Parks seek to engage will be working towards priorities agreed with their CPP or against national outcome targets. In this sense it should be relatively easy to identify the outcome priorities in a given field, and ensure that conversations, materials and information connect to these. In this way, Parks can demonstrate the benefits by 'speaking' the language of those interested in, for example, health improvement. Having this available ahead of any engagement will assist those staff struggling to persuade colleagues, managers and boards that engagement with the Parks delivers against their priorities.
- CfE specifically encourages the use of the outdoors as a means of delivering the educational achievements for Scotland's children and young people in a school setting; but it also covers the goals for informal education, using community learning and development (CLD) approaches; and working with the three national priorities for CLD, namely: achievement through learning for adults and young people, and the building of community capacity. All of these relate well to the outcomes that can be achieved for groups when engaging with the Parks.
- CfE identifies the goals for **personal development** with individuals, supporting people to become:
  - Confident individuals

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<sup>7</sup> Shared by those working in formal and informal education, such as for example, those supporting the goals of community learning and development.

- Effective contributors
- Responsible citizens and
- Successful learners.

While community learning and development approaches (adopted by many support organisations working with the target groups), seek to **build the capacity of people and organisations**, enabling them to:

- Become more skilled and active members of their community
  - Access resources of benefit to their community
  - Have influence over things that affect their lives
  - Plan and manage activity that is of benefit to their community
  - Develop effective networks.
- Whether linking to the work of schools, or communities of interest, such as those in the target groups for the research, it is evident that there is much that can be done, referencing and using these strategies, to persuade hesitant organisations of the benefits of engaging with the Parks; and the strategic fit that this will have for their organisation.

## 6.10 Links between Parks and target group organisations

It is evident from the research that the majority of participants expect that in the first instance, and potentially for some time thereafter, the engagement of those within target groups will only happen where it is facilitated by others. While this is likely to be schools and support organisations, the Parks may wish to consider how best to respond to this requirement. It is possible that Rangers or other staff could provide some agreed assistance in this regard. However, if it is likely to be external organisations that have to facilitate the engagement, the Parks should focus energies on supporting these organisations.

- External partners are keen to see both National Parks and SNH work more collectively in determining how they best built and maintain links with those organisations working with the research target groups.
- A number of well established and ongoing relationships exist between Parks and individual organisations working with target groups. This provides a platform from which to further develop relationships with parallel organisations in areas not yet well-represented, or where relationships are not well-established. Effort is however, required to develop stronger relationships at local, regional and national level with key intermediaries supporting target groups.
- Work with schools is well established, with examples of positive relationships built around considerable project work with many schools evident across the Parks. However, work with schools based in more challenging areas, or with groups that would meet the project's agreed

definition of hard to reach, is considerably more limited. This points to a need for Parks and schools in these areas to spend time together building relationships that start with the Parks offering support to engage.

- There is need to consider a more focused level of targeting within the groups identified as priorities. The diversity and availability of physical and staff resources within each Park Authority, coupled with the number of organisations that provide support to these groups, who in themselves have variable needs, merits a more considered approach to targeting.
- The responsibilities for supporting inclusion and building links to other organisations tend to rest with a small number of staff within each Park Authority. Both internal and external stakeholders recognise that these teams within the Parks have considerable demands on their time and resources. It will therefore benefit all stakeholders for the Parks to be very clear and considered in how best to deploy available resources. A starting point will be a more detailed profile and rationale for the specific strands within the current groups that merit attention. For example, young people is a very broad category that could be further refined; similarly people with disabilities could be further refined; and the range of people on low incomes is potentially very wide-ranging.
- For external stakeholders the experience of the initial engagement with Parks often proved to be a challenging one. Difficulties were encountered in knowing who to speak to, and who could offer support; the quality of the response was varied. All external organisations supported the use of dedicated staff to provide advice and information, and encouraged the use of such staff in working outwith the Parks to strengthen relationships and links to partners. More accessible information that would also ease this process has been discussed earlier.

### 6.11 Staff commitment, confidence and competence

Section 4.0 discusses the impact of structural and institutional barriers on the target groups. It is therefore helpful to note that this affects the capacity, skills and motivation of individuals within the target groups. Feedback from stakeholders, supported by the literature and context review, reminds us that it is the people within the organisations that engage with the individuals facing such structural inequalities, who have the greatest chance of supporting their needs and affecting change.

- In this sense, there is considerable support for the conceptual understanding, skills, drive and achievements of Parks' staff leading and contributing to this agenda. Such a resource is essential and should be sustained and enhanced.

- Staff across the wider Park Authorities believe that they face some difficulty balancing a core commitment to Park conservation, with the promotion of an inclusion agenda. The engagement of the target groups (particularly those that need specialist support), presents challenges for boards and staff across the Authorities; with some staff openly anxious about the expertise, commitment and input available from the boards and workforce, to support engagement of this nature.

*'I don't mind admitting that I sometimes feel a bit nervous about some groups of people that come into the Park and are looking for support.'*

National Park staff member

- Such concerns extend to external support organisations, with teachers and support workers in other organisations highlighting their own limitations to support engagement. Challenges exist across many organisations and staff in this regard.
- Support for overcoming these and other barriers to engagement is recognised as being a two sided coin, with the Parks and their staff on one side, and support organisations on the other. The commitment and abilities of Park based staff to support engagement therefore require an investment and commitment from those working externally with the individuals and groups within the Parks target groups. Here again there is a need for commitment, confidence and competence in engaging with Scotland's National Parks and NNRs.

*'I came from an inner city area so I'm quite comfortable working with challenging groups, but my experience is quite different from most of the people that I work alongside.'*

National Park staff member

- Continuing personal and professional development has been suggested as one way forward, in addressing issues of skills and confidence. Staff are keen to ensure that any CPD is supported by others experienced in working within the outdoors, including National Parks. Staff involved in The Tulloch and Prince's Trust projects, as well as teachers who had undertaken placements with external organisations, highlighted the value of working alongside staff that had skills and experience that they did not have, and from whom they developed skills and, importantly, an interest and commitment to working in the outdoors.
- Establishing a shared continuing personal and professional development programme, such as the Highland Environmental Network, for staff and board members across agencies. This should seek to build the capacity of participants (their skills, knowledge, resources and confidence), in areas relevant to their engagement with the target groups.

It will also promote team working across the Parks and support organisations, leading to improved and shared understanding of how best to engage and support the target group, while also building relationships and networks across agencies with an interest in this work.

As a consequence of such a programme, a bank of staff will be available whose raised capacity in this field will provide the opportunity for knowledge transfer across a spectrum of other staff, governors, volunteers and partner agencies.

Partnership projects are likely to spring from the collaborative environment for the programme; this will provide opportunities for greater integration of effort, exchanges of expertise and effective use of staff time through improved collaboration between support organisations and Park Authorities.

Such a CPD programme should also result in an increased commitment among a broader range of staff and boards to engagement with target groups. This will help address barriers to engagement across a range of organisations, while developing more consistent practices and relevant competencies.

- Commitment to inclusion is believed to be variable across the Parks. This is illustrated in the following comments from Park staff.

*'There is still a sense that it's only really Rangers who have to deal with working with excluded groups and it's not really the responsibility of others across the organisation.'*

National Park staff member

- Support agencies involved in the pilots noted the variable commitment of Park Authority staff when working with the target groups. This commitment needs to be embedded within each park Authority, and reflected within the organisational structures and systems, board and staffing groups, and operations practice across all areas of Authority activity. The best outcomes and degree of confidence among staff was where a degree of synergy of skills and knowledge between the Parks and the support organisations' staff could be achieved. This was evident for example for the Capability Scotland group, whose staff had a greater understanding of the issues and considerations for people with disabilities than the Park staff. The latter brought considerably more knowledge of outdoor related activity. This approach should be replicated and promoted.
- For schools and external organisations, work that supports people to experience the outdoors was invariably as much down to the

commitment of key individuals as it was to organisational priorities and resources. Without these people the work flounders.

- This is a feature also highlighted in the literature and context review (Appendix A), which supports the experience of this research, that internal 'champions' within support organisations and Parks are crucial. They play a key role in understanding the barriers that are likely to be encountered, and use personal as well as organisational resources to stay ahead of these.
- Such champions (usually staff or volunteers), have invariably had positive experiences of the outdoors. They become central to work promoting and supporting the engagement of target groups for they understand the challenges, and motivate others using their energy, connections, relationships, ideas and resources to develop a commitment to engagement with the outdoors for the target groups. Champions exist in the Parks as well as in support organisations. They should be identified, nurtured and replicated. Examples of such champions for the research pilots include:
  - Within Capability Scotland, interest in the research was built upon the commitment and experience of two staff who were involved in outdoor activities.
  - For the Escape Group the role of the walk leader was crucial in providing a role model, both in terms of gender and ability, for other group members. Two of the group have gone on to work within their communities to develop further walking opportunities for mixed ability groups. These two individuals have also undertaken additional training as walk leaders.
  - Both The Prince's and Tulloch Trusts had staff members who actively promoted and supported members to engage in outdoor activities through elements of the respective organisations programmes.
- Internal 'champions' within school and support organisations were invariably at the heart of promoting and supporting the engagement of clients, be they students, young people, those with disabilities or those on low incomes. The partners themselves recognise the value of 'inclusion champions' as seen in joint working between CNH and CNPA. This principle is also reflected in the experience of The Mosaic Partnership working with National Parks in England. The commitment of leading staff within organisations is a critical ingredient in promoting activity and developing buy in from other staff and service users.
- While the principles of taking students outside was agreed among staff in schools it was interesting to note that to do this the head teacher plays a

central role. One teacher responsible for pupil support explained, this importance:

*'(You need) the enthusiasm of teachers and support of the head teacher - which is currently easy as he is keen. It is crucial - you have got to get the go from the man at the top.'*

Teacher comment

- Both internal and external stakeholders noted that the scale of the resources available within the Parks dedicated to inclusion work, is small by comparison to those available for other Park functions. Additional dedicated resources are needed and would be welcome. This ranges from:
  - budgets directed at some of the initiatives outlined in this report (e.g. updating websites, information portal, packaged activity materials, training programmes, equipment and funding schemes);
  - nominated inclusion champions from the board;
  - additional dedicated inclusion staff needed to build stronger networks and relationships.
- However, should any of this prove difficult to secure, it would be helpful to identify from amongst staff teams, those staff that are likely to have a role in supporting engagement work; they could then come together as engagement champions. This is an area that is already being taken forward by CNPA and SNH.
- Stakeholders are keen to secure an ongoing and tangible commitment from the Parks to work supporting the engagement of the target groups - reflected in:
  - The make up of the Park boards, to reflect involvement of lead officers from target intermediaries as well as building support from local elected members
  - The remits and responsibilities of Park staff
  - Clearer responsibilities around inclusion for all staff
  - The scale and nature of dedicated resources
  - The availability of other Park staff to support such work
  - Training and development for Park staff (building on the examples of the existing joint training already delivered by SNH and CNPA)

- The structures in place internally to ensure engagement is supported across the organisation
- Plans that ensure the involvement of those within the target groups and those supporting them
- Ongoing training and development opportunities, including opportunities to develop skills in direct engagement, working alongside and within, organisations supporting the Parks' target groups
- Stronger links between Park staff and those within target organisations
- Regular information exchanges across other National Parks on how they have successfully supported an inclusion agenda, with practical advice on how this has been achieved and the challenges faced.
- Further specific proposals offered as potential solutions to barriers for staff in relation to their confidence, skills and competence emerged from the research. These include:
  - Offering short taster courses for staff from either organisation on issues relating to target groups. These may include increasing knowledge of certain areas - disability, poverty, drug use and offending - as well as offering practical training on engagement skills in working with those within the target groups; this could include relationship building, mediation, conflict management and motivation.
  - Providing shadowing and placement opportunities for staff
  - Ensuring literature is shared between organisations to keep staff up to date
  - Inviting staff from different sectors to conferences, training and events
  - The sharing of information on training opportunities through a calendar of such opportunities for both park staff and external organisations. Provide information on a web page for such courses in order that it can be updated regularly.
  - For schools, arranging for courses to occur during school holiday time so that cover does not have to be found (and financed) by the school
  - Training to encourage multi-disciplinary events and bring different bodies together
  - Some education authorities rely on National Governing Body Awards as indicators of competence when it is possible for them to consider experiences as indicators without qualifications (in line with the

Adventure Activities Licensing Service). Working with education authorities to (a) encourage them to consider experience of teachers may help to avoid an over reliance on national governing body awards and (b) work with education authorities to provide relevant national governing awards for teachers at reduced costs or free of charge; and

- o Encourage, and where possible provide, funding support via the Parks to support teachers and other staff to take appropriate qualifications (such as BELA, WGL and local authority endorsements).

## 7.0 Planning ahead – recommendations

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*“Beware of undertaking too much at the start. Be content with quite a little. Allow for accidents. Allow for human nature, especially your own.”*

Arnold Bennett

The following pages set out a series of recommendations for the commissioning partners based on the findings from the research. These aim to underpin a future model for sustainable outreach and engagement in Scotland's National Parks and National Nature Reserves (NNRs).

The commissioners have already demonstrated their commitment to engage groups identified as under-represented among those using the Parks and NNRs. Strategies and related activity are well-developed, resources are in place and relationships with relevant partners are strong. This is a solid foundation on which to build; and the 18-month research that is the subject of this report (with associated materials<sup>8</sup>), demonstrates the willingness of the commissioners<sup>9</sup> to seek out fresh approaches to their work in this field.

This is further evidenced by the actions taken along the way by partners keen to begin to address the issues. The research has not only set out the experiences of local stakeholders, through the literature and context review, it has also highlighted good practice taking place across Scotland and further afield. The partners are committed to reflecting on these findings and to working through OSLAG, SEARS and LTS to implement the recommendations set out below.

The following recommendations are complemented by the materials that support this report (see Appendices); and are structured around key themes identified within the findings. They are presented against four overarching areas.

1. Building relationships and developing networks
2. Building commitment, confidence and competence
3. Raising awareness and providing information
4. Providing practical support

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<sup>8</sup> Literature and policy review (Appendix A), Case studies (Appendices C&D) and Resource pack (copies of the resource pack are available through the contacts on p88)

<sup>9</sup> Scotland's two National Park Authorities, Cairngorms National Park Authority, and the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Association, in conjunction with Scottish Natural Heritage.

## Recommendations: Building relationships and developing networks

### Overview

#### More focussed targeting

At present each of the commissioning partners have broad headings for their identified target groups, including those that were the focus of the 'Barriers to Engagement' research, namely:

- Young people
- People with disabilities
- People living on low incomes, and
- Schools

Beyond schools overarching groupings of young people, individuals with disabilities and those on low income, provide broad groupings within which there are considerable degrees of divergence. More targeting within these groupings is required, and ongoing monitoring of engagement is necessary.

The research highlighted that both Park Authorities have considerable existing contact with schools, however little or no classification of schools and whether they are working within communities that include the Parks' target groups. It is not clear therefore the extent to which current schools' work focuses on hard to reach groups.

The research supports the removal of schools as a generic target group in favour of clearer targeting of schools working within communities experiencing high levels of deprivation indicators; or more marginalised and challenging young people supported by targeted programmes within the main student population.

## Recommendations: Building relationships and developing networks

### Building and sustaining relationships

With a clearer definition of the target groups, partners will be able to undertake a more focussed strategic approach to identifying appropriate contacts. Thereafter establishing and managing relationships with those supporting and working with the more defined target audience should be possible. This will include ensuring that relationships are sustained with key intermediaries working with the target groups at national, regional and local levels.

Park Authority staff have highlighted the challenges in providing support to all those who make demands on the organisations, more targeted use of limited resources within each Park Authority and SNH is required to ensure best use of staff time and other resources. A range of support packages that meet differing needs will enable staff to better manage their relationships and time.

There is a need for a better exchange of information and practice across each of the commissioning partners. The act of commissioning and managing this research has in itself increased opportunities for the three partners to develop their respective and collective approaches to tackling barriers to engagement. More widely there is considerable good practice available from other National Parks across the UK and through ANPA.

### Recommended actions: Building relationships and developing networks

	Action by	Other partners	Timescales (TBA)
1. SNH, CNPA and LLTNPA should circulate the report amongst SEARS and OLSAG partners and invite engagement in discussion on the research recommendations from these and other key partners.	All	SEARS, OLSAG and others	
2. Individually partners review who they see as 'target groups and/or areas' underpinning their commitment to inclusion. Broad headings of	All individually	The Inclusive Cairngorms	

## Recommendations: Building relationships and developing networks

<p>young people, those on low incomes and those with disabilities are to be broken down to provide greater clarity in the targeting of partner resources.</p>		Forum	
<p>3. Following 1 above partners agree a list of shared priority groups.</p>	All		
<p>4. From the revised individual and collective priority groups, a list of national and regional intermediaries working with each target group is drawn up and used as the basis for engaging the revised target groups. Thereafter staff from each Park Authority and SNH are identified to lead on the development of relationships with these intermediaries.</p>	All individually and collectively	To be agreed based on new priority groups	
<p>5. Building on the above and the work of Inclusive Cairngorms partners, individually and collectively, establish regional and national forums and create supporting databases of intermediaries working with each target group.</p>	All individually and collectively	Intermediary leads from 4 above	
<p>6. Partners develop a protocol on information sharing, links to intermediaries at 5 above, and resources to develop information systems and packages to better engage target groups.</p>	All	Intermediary leads from 4 above	
<p>7. Partners conduct focus groups with intermediaries to agree priorities and develop a range of support packages. These packages should be appropriate for those able to support their own engagement, through to others working with priority groups and requiring more support.</p>	All	Identified intermediary leads from 4 above	
<p>8. Each National Park is to review its use of schools as a generic target group. Partners should agree a more targeted engagement strategy for schools, focusing on schools within agreed geographic priority areas</p>	CPNA and LL&TNPA	Education department leads and	

## Recommendations: Building relationships and developing networks

(see 1 above) and programmes within schools which target young people requiring additional educational support and/or are at risk of exclusion. (This process is already underway in CNPA)		individual schools	
9. Building on the experience of the work undertaken in CNPA, LL&TNPA is encouraged to set up internal working groups with each local authority within the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park area to discuss and develop links to the education curriculum and Curriculum for Excellence.	LL&TNPA	Local authorities in LL&TNPA area	
10. Partners work with LTS and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland to strengthen links with educational leads across the country.	All	LTS, Education Directors	
11. In partnership with LTS, partners map educational activities available within National Parks and NNRs to areas of the current educational curriculum.	All	LTS	
12. Relationships with target education and intermediary organisations should be reviewed by partners on an annual basis.	All		Annually

## Recommendations: Raising awareness and providing information

### Overview

One of the recurring messages from those in all target groups was of not having any awareness or information about National Parks and more so National Nature Reserve. Feedback questioned why they should engage and what relevance engagement has when competing with other priorities. For a number of those involved in the research there remains a perception that groups such as theirs, are not encouraged to be part of the opportunities available through the Parks and NNRs.

### Improved information points

Throughout the research external partners and support agencies made ongoing requests for a single point of access and information. This suggestion, referred to by some as a form of '*clearing house*', reflected frustrations with online information; exacerbated by a lack of clarity on who best to approach when engaging directly with Park Authority staff.

A clearing house facility was suggested as a means of facilitating links between the Park Authorities and external intermediaries. Such a facility has the potential to exchange information, skills and services, providing a platform to illustrate what is special about the Parks, provide lessons and visit plans, share examples of successful engagement by target groups and over time provide tools to plan and deliver activities in the Parks.

### Promotional materials

Comments by external audiences highlighted the need for marketing and other materials to be developed which are both accessible and better reflect the diversity of groups which the Parks seek to engage. Work on this front is an area that has already been highlighted by the Outdoor Learning Strategic Advisory Group (OLSAG).

## Recommendations: Raising awareness and providing information

There is a need to develop a co-ordinated approach to improving engagement in the National Parks and wider outdoors and the marketing and associated 'packaged activity' material is a crucial part of this. Stakeholders within the education field seek links to be developed through LTS and the GLOW intranet for teaching staff.

Amongst the strongest feedback from external partners was the value of the Park Authorities in providing well structured and packaged experiences for those seeking to engage in the Parks. The use of developed packages or existing award schemes such as JMA & DoE provides a more structured basis upon which external organisations are able to build engagement.

### Evidencing impact

The packaging of experiences and opportunities within the Parks has the potential to assist in overcoming the challenge of conceptualising and finding The Parks relevant.

Importantly this can also provide a stronger basis for linking experiences to the policies, strategies and objectives of external organisations. This can help persuade organisations of the benefit of their engagement. Of particular note was the need to develop packages for the education sector which clearly linked activities within the Parks to Curriculum for Excellence, the overarching strategy document within the field of education.

Parks and SNH are encouraged to collate and promote examples of engagement to networks of organisations working with the Parks' target groups as a way of highlighting how engagement can support the individuals that they work with and help achieve the organisation's objectives.

Recommended actions: Raising awareness and providing information

	Action by	Other partners	Timescales (TBA)
13. Within each Park area there is the development of a clearing house facility for groups and schools requesting support to find partners who can provide them with resources or assistance.	CNPA and LL&TNPA	OLSAG and SEARS	
14. Partners review with SEARS, OLSAG and LTS the availability of a central, 'one shop' information portals for engagement with Scotland's National Parks, NNRs and the wider outdoors.	All	SEARS OLSAG LTS	
15. Partners work with appointed ANPA secondee and steering group to review available learning packages provided across the UK family of National Parks to identify best practice. Thereafter partners set up a working group, potentially through SEARS, LTS or OLSAG, to co-ordinate materials to support links to the education curriculum.	SNH and Park lead	ANPA, SEARS OLSAG LTS	
16. Partners work with OLSAG to review how development programmes; Duke of Edinburgh, Prince's Trust, John Muir Award etc can be best utilised to improve target group engagement with Parks and NNRs.	SNH and Park lead	OLSAG	
17. Each Park and SNH review their websites, links to intermediary websites and publicity materials through focus groups with target groups/intermediaries to assess accessibility and relevance of information and work with ANPA to identify examples of best practice in providing published and written information for target groups, including the use of interactive; audio and visual mediums.	All	Identified intermediary leads at 4 above	
18. Partners provide quarterly updates to target intermediaries. These will highlight engagement opportunities and provide examples, case	SNH and Park lead	intermediary leads at 4	

studies and testimonies from those within target groups.		above	
19. Partners deliver a programme of presentations to intermediaries to highlight opportunities available through engagement with National Parks and NNRs.	All	intermediary leads at 4 above	

## Recommendations: Building commitment, confidence and competence

### Overview

#### Commitments

Partners have already expressed their Equalities commitments through their respective Equality Schemes. Additionally each partner is required to complete Equality Impact Assessments for all strategies to ensure that they reflect the partner's commitment to equalities at all levels of policy, planning and delivery. All staff must be encouraged to consider how their remits can reflect a commitment to inclusion. Inclusion must be seen to be the responsibility of all those within each tier of the organisation and not the preserve of an identified few.

Providing an understanding of equalities and diversity in the context of inclusion will also require an approach that extends beyond traditional considerations for equality schemes that deal with issues associated with race, gender, sexual orientation, faith, disability and age. While these are important, partners will want to continue to define and explore how best to understand and respond to the needs of those living in communities where deprivation indicators are high.

Feedback from external stakeholders who have worked alongside staff from each of The National Parks highlighted the very high regard in which Parks' staff are held. Feedback from both external and internal staff suggested however that there was a need to ensure that the commitments to such work extended throughout the organisations. For some staff, they do not see this as part of their responsibilities.

#### Confidence and competence

Confidence and competence reflects an invisible internal barrier within the wider Park Authority staff, and means that for some staff there may be a lack of willingness or even a degree of nervousness in having to engage with particular underrepresented groups; especially where such groups may include individuals with

## Recommendations: Building commitment, confidence and competence

challenging behaviours or special needs. It will be necessary to ensure that staff are equipped with the skills and abilities to properly fulfil these responsibilities. Ensuring that performance monitoring frameworks as well as professional development plans cover such considerations will also help measure and embed practice that supports work in this field.

### Champions

It is important that partners work to identify and support champions of inclusion work in their own organisations as well as with others in schools and intermediaries. Support for these individuals should extend to the need for information-sharing, personal and professional development opportunities, networking opportunities and improved links for external organisations with nominated National Park Authorities and SNH staff.

## Recommended actions: Building commitment, confidence and competence

	Action by	Other partners	Timescales (TBA)
20. All future Park Authority and SNH's strategies and plans reflect a corporate commitment to equalities and inclusion through the completion of EQIAs.	All		
21. The boards of each partner organisation reflect a diversity of members, including representation from the education sector and intermediaries working with target groups. (This process has already been completed within the CNPA).	All		
22. Inclusion and equalities induction and development opportunities are offered to board members by all three partners. (This process has	All		

## Recommendations: Building commitment, confidence and competence

<p>already been completed within the CNPA).</p>			
<p>23. Partners are to ensure remits and person specifications for all staff reflect their organisational commitment to supporting inclusion.</p>	All		
<p>24. All staff are provided with inclusion training as part of their induction and encouraged to access further training and development opportunities within their six monthly and/or annual development cycle, this should include development opportunities for Park and SNH staff through external intermediary organisations. (This process has already been completed within the CNPA).</p>	All	Intermediary agencies at 3 above	
<p>25. Targets set for equalities and inclusion work are monitored and reviewed annually within all individual and team planning and performance cycles.</p>	All		
<p>26. A calendar of training and development opportunities is distributed to key intermediaries to support their engagement with National Parks and NNRs. This will include courses, placements and shadowing opportunities. (This process has already been completed within the CNPA).</p>	All	Intermediary agencies at 3 above	

## Recommendations: Providing practical support

### Overview

#### Risk

One of the recurring practical and perceived barriers highlighted across the research was that of planning and managing risk. There would be benefits from partners collectively developing a series of risk assessment and planning tools to assist groups. These packages should be piloted for agreed key destinations/activities which engage hard to reach groups, providing a framework of information to support intermediaries in completing full assessments prior to engagement with the Parks. It is acknowledged that this is an area of work that partners may contribute to through OSLAG rather than reinventing activity being carried out elsewhere.

#### Volunteering

Participant experiences and the literature and context review highlighted the value of volunteering with the development of existing volunteering opportunities in the Parks having the potential to be built upon.

#### Practical supports

There is a need for a host of practical assistance, including for example reducing bureaucracy, financial assistance through small grant and/or support programmes, together with other dedicated resources, such as equipment, transport or staff support. These are a crucial element in supporting future engagement. Partners are encouraged to review their existing small grant and other support programmes to ensure they reflect a targeting of resources to priority groups. Such programmes should seek to draw in additional or match funding from others, including local authorities and Community Planning Partners, with shared commitment to inclusion within The National Parks.

Recommended actions: Practical support			
	Action by	Other partners	Timescales (TBA)
27. Partners work together with OLSAG and ANPA to develop planning and risk assessment toolkits to be adapted and used by external groups.	All	ANPA OLSAG	
28. Template risk assessments (part completed) are provided for NNRs and other key attractions within the National Parks.	All	OLSAG	
29. Partners work with other organisations to create a 'bank' of volunteering opportunities and programmes within the Parks and NNRs.	All	VDS, BTCV, volunteer centres	
30. Each partner develops its volunteering policy for those within the target groups, promoting the use of volunteering to target organisations.	All	VDS, BTCV, volunteer centres	
31. A dedicated contact is identified in each Park to support or signpost organisations with issues of planning trips/visits and risk assessment.	CNP LLTNP	OLSAG	
32. Partners stage a series of risk assessment training days, utilising expertise from other partners, and publicised to intermediary organisations.	All	OLSAG	
33. Partners identify available funding sources, nationally, regionally and locally to support engagement with the Parks and NNRs. These sources to be promoted to intermediary organisations and publicised on websites and through the proposed portal and clearing houses.	All	OLSAG	
34. Partners make available from their own resources or through work with others access to mini buses and transport for groups whilst in the Parks.	All	Other Park agencies	

For additional copies of this report, its appendices or the supporting resource pack please contact one of the three partner leads listed below.

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**End/**

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