

# **Sector Analysis: Tourism, Recreation and Access**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. This sector analysis describes the characteristics and scale of the tourism, recreation and access sector, its impact upon the delivery of nature conservation objectives in England, English Nature's objectives for the sector and priority actions for the period 2000-2003.
- 1.2 It examines the key socio-economic and political factors that shape the tourism, recreation and access sector; it includes a brief analysis of the economic impact of the sector and the interaction with peoples' lifestyles. It describes in outline the roles of the key players within the sector: the government agencies, National Park and local authorities, the numerous representative bodies and the various special interest groups.
- 1.3 The paper analyses the nature conservation impacts of the tourism, recreation and access sector, both positive and negative. The annexes summarise the types of impacts which can result from a range of tourist and recreational activities, whilst section 4 acknowledges that there can be gains for biodiversity from tourism and recreation in terms of giving people opportunities to appreciate wildlife and enhancing the natural environment through initiatives associated with people's enjoyment of the countryside. Although the interaction between tourism/recreation and nature conservation occurs across all Natural Areas it is in coastal zones and close to towns where continued growth in the amount of tourism and recreational activity is likely to occur and where the greatest amount of management intervention by English Nature will be required.

## **2. Characteristics and scope of the sector**

- 2.1 Rural and coastal tourism/recreation is the most popular out of home leisure activity. Around two-thirds of the adult population of England visit the countryside each year making a total number of day visits in excess of 1300 million; day visits to the sea-side/coast total 150 million. Tourism/recreation in rural areas and on the coast is popular because of the many experiences it provides for the visitor: relaxation, freedom, pleasure, inspiration and challenge. The scale of rural and coastal tourism/recreation activity provides both challenges and opportunities in environmental, economic and social terms. With regard to the environment, there are a number of implications for biodiversity, geology and for nature conservation. The interactions between tourism/recreation and the natural environment occur across all Natural Areas, in both a positive and negative way; this means that the management of impacts from tourism/recreation (whether positive or negative) is an issue for all English Nature Local Teams. Section 4 below provides a more detailed description of the relationship between tourism/recreation and nature conservation.
- 2.2 Walking/rambling is by far the most popular single countryside activity with 400 million walks undertaken by 15 million regular walkers in England each year. However, the number of tourism/recreational activities in the countryside goes far beyond just walking and is wide-ranging and increasing; the trend is towards ever more diverse and active forms of tourism and recreation. These activities range across formal competitive sports and informal participative events to isolated, solitary undertakings. They involve not only people on foot (with and without dogs) but those on bikes, on horseback and in vehicles, and people who use equipment such as hang gliders, hot air balloons, jet-skis and metal detectors. They include traditional activities such as angling, baitdigging, birdwatching, caving, climbing, fossil collecting, golf, orienteering, (wildlife and landscape) painting and photography, and wildfowling, in addition to more novel pursuits. This very wide spectrum of activities encompasses every feature and aspect of the countryside, all types of terrain, waterways and coastline throughout the whole year.

- 2.3 The coast and inland freshwater bodies are especially attractive destinations for those seeking tourism and recreation opportunities, so the numerous forms of water-sports, such as canoeing, rowing, sail-boarding, jet skiing and water skiing, are important. Built development, such as caravan parks, holiday villages and moorings, often accompanied by dredging or coastal/food defence works, can be a significant issue in coastal areas and near to freshwater sites. It should be noted at this point that this particular analysis is concerned with all aspects of tourism and recreation taken out of doors and that, by definition, it *excludes* indoor leisure activities in (mainly) urban areas, such as visits to museums, cinemas, art galleries, theatres or restaurants. Walking and rambling in urban areas and visits to urban sites, such as Barn Elms SSSI in London fall within the scope of the sector however. Outdoor activities not given any attention in this analysis include grousemoor management, mainly a land management issue, and hunting with hounds, which is largely an animal welfare rather than a nature conservation issue.
- 2.4 Tourism and recreation in rural and coastal areas raise a number of inter-related issues and embrace the following:
- 2.4.1 an interest in the fabric of the countryside, the landscape, the natural and cultural heritage;
  - 2.4.2 the different forms of land management: conservation, development, farming, forestry and water management;
  - 2.4.3 the different expressions of leisure, sport, tourism and recreation in rural areas and the needs of people in the countryside;
  - 2.4.4 “quality of life” issues and benefits to society through improved physical and spiritual wellbeing.
- 2.5 The sector, which is characterised by not being an organised industry but a grouping of many disparate organisations and individuals covering a myriad of activities, is continuing to expand as peoples’ leisure time increases and their interest in the environment and the countryside grows. The major policy development during the period covered by this analysis (2000-2003) is the implementation of a statutory right of access to different categories of open country in association with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and a revision to procedures governing public rights of way. In particular, local authorities are now required under this legislation to produce rights of way improvement plans, and to establish Local Countryside Access Forums in their areas.
- 2.6 The Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) crisis in the UK during 2001 served to illustrate that the rural economy is a complex, interdependent system with tourism having emerged as a key central element within it. Leisure and tourism, together with manufacturing and services, have replaced agriculture as the mainstays of local rural economies and yet policy and official structures have failed to reflect this change. It is too early to draw detailed conclusions from the experience of FMD but the general consensus is that there needs to be a more joined up and coherent approach to tourism development and marketing. The tourism industry needs to make a coordinated effort to raise its standards and become more professional in its approach, and needs to find ‘spokespersons’ who can speak for the whole industry about opportunities and issues of concern in the way that individuals such as Ben Gill ‘champion’ the agricultural industry.

2.7 There are a number of other current forces for change including:

- the growing range of funding sources, such as the National Lottery, Heritage Lottery Fund, Landfill Tax, New Opportunities Fund and the European Regional Development Fund;
- the increasing emphasis being placed on a countryside for all, particularly socially excluded groups such as the disabled (as a result of the Disability Discrimination Act 1996 and the requirement to give consideration to disabled people specified under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000);
- the importance of visitor safety in the countryside;
- an ongoing issue that ethnic minority groups appear to have less affinity with the countryside and many of the activities which take place there for reasons which are not fully understood;
- a growing interest in the role of sustainable communities and consensus, peoples' understanding and perceptions of the countryside focusing especially on the views of young people, and the economic value of tourism/recreation as demonstrated by results of research by the countryside agencies.

2.8 The legal framework is largely provided by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, the Countryside Act 1968 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Habitats and Species Directives are also relevant. The development planning control system has a key role to play and there is a Planning Policy Guidance Note on sport and recreation (PPG 17) that was issued in 1991. This sets out the role of the planning system in ensuring that adequate land, water and air resources are allocated, created and retained for sport. In 1998 DETR published the findings of an evaluation of the effectiveness of PPG 17 and the Government has made a commitment to revise the guidance; a consultation draft has been published and Select Committee inquiry held. There is a PPG on tourism (PPG 21) and this provides an indication of Government policy in relation to land-use planning for tourism, including the treatment of tourism issues in development plans and tourism development. Health and safety legislation and the Disability Discrimination Act 1996 are of increasing relevance.

2.9 The tourism, recreation and access sector has significant interaction with the following sectors of importance for nature conservation:

- Coastal management
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Inland transport
- Construction and development
- Water

### 3. **Key players**

3.1 At a strategic level the key shapers include the European Union, the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) which has as one of its objectives to "improve enjoyment of an attractive and well-managed countryside for all"; the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which has primary government responsibility for leisure; and the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) for its role in regulating developments, planning and transport policy.

3.2 There are numerous interest groups and stakeholders reflecting the wide range of activities covered by the sector. The main stakeholders have been grouped below but it should be noted that many fall into a number of different categories:

- 3.2.1 **Government Departments** in addition to those named above, such as the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Defence, and a number of statutory bodies including the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, Environment Agency, Sport England, British Waterways, the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourism Council;
  - 3.2.2 **regional bodies** such as the Regional Tourist Boards, Regional Cultural Consortiums and Regional Development Agencies which have important roles to play. These are complemented at a sub-regional or more local level by **national park authorities** which need to weigh up their access and conservation objectives, and **local authorities** which have a key role through their various strategies on recreation, spatial development and economic regeneration;
  - 3.2.3 **landowners and land managers** including the National Trust, the CLA/NFU (and individual estates and landowners), the water companies, the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts;
  - 3.2.4 **numerous small businesses and operators** within the rural tourism/recreation and leisure 'industry', as well as larger private sector companies such as CenterParcs and the Rank Organisation;
  - 3.2.5 **special interest groups and/or charities** such as The Ramblers' Association, the Open Spaces Society, British Upland Footpath Trust, Sustrans (the organisation building the National Cycle Network), the Youth Hostels Association and Fieldfare Trust;
  - 3.2.6 **national governing and/or recognised representative bodies** such as the British Canoe Union, the British Horse Society, the British Mountaineering Council, the British Orienteering Federation, the British Water Ski Federation, the CTC (formerly the Cyclists' Touring Club), the English Golf Union, the Motoring Organisations' Land Access and Recreation Association, the National Caving Association, the National Federation of Anglers, the Royal Yachting Association, the Trail Riders Fellowship and so on.
  - 3.2.7 **research councils**, such as the Natural Environment Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council;
  - 3.2.8 **funding bodies** including the National Lottery for sports and heritage schemes;
  - 3.2.9 **other organisations** such as the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Central Council for Physical Recreation, and the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management;
  - 3.2.10 **CRN** (the Countryside Recreation Network) which has a key role in exchanging and spreading information amongst individuals working in the field of countryside recreation, tourism and leisure to develop best policy and practice.
- 3.3 Perhaps surprisingly there are relatively few pressure groups who are active in this area, although those that are active tend to be high profile and influential. CPRE published a report entitled "*Leisure Landscapes*" in 1994 which flagged-up a concern that there are a number of challenges to be resolved in relation to the use of the countryside for leisure purposes, in particular those of a cultural and sociological nature. User groups such as the Ramblers', the British Horse Society and the Youth Hostels Association all work hard to gain media attention and political influence. Whilst they campaign to protect their individual interests they also aim to promote good environmental practice. An organisation which has raised its

profile in recent times is the Countryside Alliance, although this is largely concerned with promoting field sports.

3.4 Key opinion formers include:

3.4.1 The **media** (in all its various forms) through numerous television programmes, videos, books, and magazines related to tourism, recreation and access to the countryside and on the coast;

3.4.2 **High profile individuals** in the outdoor movement such as Sir Chris Bonington, Ray Mears and Bill Oddie. Other individuals who specialise in this area include Roger Sidaway, who has written extensively on the subject and who was the special adviser to the House of Commons Environment Committee's 1995 inquiry into the environmental impact of leisure activities, and academics such as Martin Elson and Robin Grove-White.

## 4. Socio-economic and political factors

4.1 As demonstrated by the Foot and Mouth crisis during 2001 the revenue from millions of visitors and tourists is an important component of the economy of rural England. Total spending by all visitors to the countryside was estimated to be around £9 billion in 1994, of which 72% was associated with day visitors, 22% with UK holiday makers and 6% from overseas tourists. The countryside leisure sector supports an estimated 354,000 jobs making it similar in scale to both the rubber and plastics, and transport and aerospace industries (source: "*The economic impact of recreation and tourism in the English countryside*", Rural Development Commission and the Countryside Commission, 1997).

4.2 A growing proportion of household expenditure is now devoted to leisure activities. Indeed, households now spend more on leisure than on food, housing or transport (source: Office for National Statistics, 1999). Leisure is predicted to rise to a third or even a half of total household spending.

4.3 There is growing interest in and recognition of the importance of the inter-relationship between visitors to both the coast and countryside and their contribution to national, regional and local economies. High quality natural environments and wildlife attract visitors to rural areas where they spend money on local goods and services, in turn providing income and employment. For example, an RSPB study on the Norfolk coast in 1999 estimated that visitors to prime wildlife sites spent £21 million locally. Those wanting to see birds and other wildlife spent £6 million in the area, supporting an estimated 135 jobs. Wildlife tourism can extend the tourism season and reduce seasonal unemployment.

4.4 Traditionally, rural and coastal tourism and recreation has not been a major political issue. However, the introduction of a statutory right of access to open land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 generated a heated debate about property rights on the one hand and the rights of individuals and communities on the other. The Foot and Mouth Disease crisis during 2001 also became a major public and political issue with broad estimates of the total cost to the economy being in the order of £1.6 billion, equivalent to 0.2% of GDP. The Liberty and Livelihood March in September 2002 highlighted in part some of the tensions between landowners and countryside visitors, with concerns being expressed that the countryside is becoming a 'theme park' and playground for the urban masses.

- 4.5 Issues that might change the sector in the next five years include:
- 4.5.1 The Government's medium to long term response to the Foot and Mouth crisis and in particular its thinking on how rural tourism and countryside recreation can be integrated with other rural policy areas including food, farming and protection of the environment;
  - 4.5.2 The new access provisions under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This could have implications for countryside management and consequential impacts on countryside agencies and possibly lead to increased competition for resources between access and conservation management;
  - 4.5.3 Possible changes in the institutional framework of the 'countryside leisure' industry and, in particular, the tourism and recreational responsibilities of the main players. For example, many in the tourism industry have been pressing for the English Tourism Council to have a marketing as well as a strategic role, especially in the wake of FMD;
  - 4.5.4 Devolution and the trend towards regionalisation and regional government. The work of the Regional Development Agencies and Regional Tourist Boards in promoting the rural economy and social regeneration is likely to be a key force for change;
  - 4.5.5 The promotion of more environmentally sustainable transport as a means of addressing issues associated with noise, pollution and congestion from leisure travel. This is likely to lead to the increasing application of restrictions on the use of private motor vehicles in protected areas such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In order to minimise environmental problems in these areas, and to encourage greater use of environmentally-friendly transport options, packages of measures are likely to be developed including traffic management schemes, reduced speed limits on country lanes, tranquil zones, charging for use of certain roads, park-and-ride schemes and the use of 'Rambler' buses and other public transport initiatives. Resistance to such proposals is likely from local businesses but research has revealed that in the North York Moors, for example, the introduction of a Moorsbus network has saved an estimated 700,000 miles of car journeys;
  - 4.5.6 The growing emphasis on the benefits to the nation's health and general wellbeing from rural tourism and recreation and opportunities to enjoy access to the countryside. Improved health and longer life expectancy are also contributing to an ageing population;
  - 4.5.7 Changes in personal mobility, disposable income, leisure time and flexible working patterns. Evidence is already emerging that as a result of these changes people are taking more short breaks and 'flitting' between different hobbies and leisure, tourism and recreational activities;
  - 4.5.8 Further financial pressures on farm businesses, especially in the wake of Foot and Mouth which could lead to greater diversification and an increased number of proposals from landowners for tourism and recreational development;
  - 4.5.9 Influences exerted through the media, such as new television programmes or websites or the publication of books, guidebooks, or magazines which could stimulate an interest in a particular sport or recreational activity.

## **5. Nature conservation issues**

- 5.1 Land, air and water-based tourism/recreational activities can have a range of impacts on biodiversity both direct and indirect, positive and negative, primary and secondary, short-term and long-term. Because there are benefits and disbenefits involved, the relationship between tourism/recreation and nature conservation is not one-sided or straightforward. It is often difficult to attribute damage or disturbance effects to one activity where a range of activities may be taking place, such as on a water-body or on the coast, and it can often be difficult to assess the long-term impacts of tourism and recreational activities. Any adverse impacts are usually localised and of a temporary nature. They are dependent on many factors including topography, the kinds of species and habitats present, the time of year, weather conditions and the number of people involved and their behaviour. There are complex interactions involved here and in many situations, research and actual evidence of adverse effects is limited. Research associated with the implementation of the CROW Act may help in this respect.
- 5.2 Nevertheless, impacts on wildlife and natural features do occur and can be widespread. They fall into two main categories, firstly direct impacts resulting from human activity and secondly, development to accommodate such activities. Annex 1 summarises the main adverse effects from a range of recreational activities. Direct impacts include disturbance to fauna, especially to ground-nesting and over-wintering birds, and the trampling and erosion of vegetation and soil. Development associated with tourism and recreation can have a number of impacts including the loss of habitats and species, by the potential demand for improved and enlarged facilities and infrastructure including roads and car parks. This is especially the case in coastal areas where land-take can result from new holiday accommodation, new facilities and related infrastructure. These developments are generally well-controlled through the planning system, Environmental Assessment and the Habitats Regulations, though the cumulative effect of small-scale developments is of some concern. Car travel to tourism and recreation sites in the countryside can create localised problems through congestion, pollution, noise effects and damage to roadside verges that are often of nature conservation interest. It can also lead to pressure for more road building and increased infrastructure and associated facilities including signing and car parking.
- 5.3 The relationship between tourism/recreation and nature conservation need not necessarily be negative or conflicting. Indeed it may be positive and reinforcing. Thus, providing opportunities for tourism/recreation may well be of benefit to other non-recreation interests e.g. economic returns for farmers, landowners and local communities and businesses which may be directed back into nature conservation, especially where visitor-payback schemes are in operation. As a growth sector in the national and many local economies (up until the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2001 at least) tourism, sport and recreation are major 'engines' for greater prosperity and increased wealth, and provide opportunities for better management and enhancement of the natural environment, including wildlife and geological sites.
- 5.4 Improved education and public appreciation of the needs of nature conservation can be achieved through increasing opportunities for people to visit the countryside and experience nature conservation firsthand, and by providing more environmental interpretation. Benefits can also accrue through new leisure or tourism/recreational developments, such as golf courses or gravel pits used for water-sports, offering scope for habitat creation and restoration.
- 5.5 The solution to resolving any potential conflicts between tourism/recreation and nature conservation lies in the following:



- the greater use of Environmental Assessment (and in the future Strategic Environmental Assessment) to avert the damaging effects of tourism and recreation facilities and to regulate the spread of such facilities;
- stricter control over large scale tourism and recreational developments through the planning system;
- management planning techniques such as the dispersal of visitors, zoning in time or space, traffic management and the use of permits and fees;
- dissemination of good practice policies and principles via the provision of information and advice, networks, liaison groups and codes of practice in order to improve the understanding of the relationship between tourism/recreation and nature conservation.

## 6. Sectoral objectives

6.1 English Nature's vision is to sustain and improve the wildlife and natural features of England. We believe that everybody should be able to enjoy directly a greater wealth of wildlife and natural features and strive to pass on a rich and diverse natural heritage to future generations. Unsustainable use of the environment degrades the quality of our wildlife and natural features and the quality of peoples' lives. Our vision (see Annex 4) is for a tourism, recreation and access sector which promotes sustainable development and environmentally sustainable practices. This means that the sector needs to avoid damage to important and irreplaceable wildlife assets, it needs to minimise and compensate fully for other unavoidable effects, and needs to make a significant contribution to the delivery of UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets and objectives. With regard to the last point there is considerable scope for the tourism and recreation industry to 'champion' individual habitats or species within the BAP process.

6.2 English Nature's agenda can be summarised as:

Through proactive work and policy influencing, responses to consultations and legislative developments, and input to site specific casework, we will:

- continue to promote opportunities for increasing public understanding of nature conservation and the appreciation of wildlife and geological assets through activities on our suite of National Nature Reserves, particularly the 'Spotlight' NNRs, through Local Nature Reserves, our Reserves Enhancement Scheme and other grant schemes, such as Wildspace !;
- establish a wildlife and geo-tourism initiative which will include developing a tourism sector BAP, investigating visitor payback schemes and undertaking research into visitor expectations and motivations;
- continue to promote the idea of standards for accessible, natural greenspace so that everyone can enjoy green areas near to their homes;
- continue to support the national target for rights of way being legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised, and to improve access on NNRs, where appropriate, for wheelchair users and those with other special needs;
- use the Countryside Recreation Network to inform, develop and promote English Nature's policies on tourism, recreation and access;

- work with the Countryside Agency, national park authorities and other access authorities concerning the introduction of a statutory right of access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, seeking to integrate nature conservation and access wherever possible, but ensuring that nature conservation should have primacy wherever they prove irreconcilable;
- seek to influence the policies and practices of relevant Government Departments, the regulatory authorities, the governing bodies and the recreational providers so that they give greater weight to biodiversity in their decision-making processes;
- work with strategic allies and partners, especially DEFRA, DCMS and the Countryside Agency, and where appropriate the governing bodies, to develop and disseminate good practice, in particular the use of management techniques for minimising damaging impacts and regulating third party activities in sensitive areas;
- work with companies within the sector who own and manage land of nature conservation interest to ensure that any SSSIs they own are managed in a positive way and that they contribute to the delivery of Natural Area objectives and targets;
- encourage others to undertake research to achieve a better understanding of potential impacts and, where appropriate, carry out research ourselves.

6.3. There is a range of current protocols and standards aimed mainly at countryside users and bodies involved in providing opportunities for countryside recreation. The main one is the long established 'Country Code' which is produced in a leaflet form and is also available on the Countryside Agency's web-site. Another is the Code of Practice on Conservation, Access and Recreation previously issued by DETR, the Welsh Office and MAFF, which includes guidance to water companies and the Environment Agency on conservation and access issues. Some sports, such as canoeing, mountain biking, off-road four wheel driving and paintball games have codes of conduct for participants in such activities in order to minimise impacts on the environment. English Nature supports the use of these codes and has worked in the past with a number of organisations to produce such guidance, examples being leaflets produced jointly with the British Horse Society and the UK Paintball Games Federation. There are current Statements of Intent between English Nature and the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, British Waterways, Forest Enterprise, the National Park Authorities and the National Trust, all of whom have a strong interest in tourism and countryside recreation.

6.4. Beyond this the main opportunities for influencing the sector are through DEFRA/DCMS, and particularly the Countryside Recreation Network (CRN) which we continue to part-sponsor @ £5k per annum. CRN provides a forum for engaging on a regular basis with the key players in countryside and related recreation matters. The Network has three main aims:

- a. to promote information exchange relating to countryside recreation, and to foster general debate about relevant trends and issues;
- b. to encourage co-operation between members in identifying and promoting the need for research related to countryside recreation, to encourage joint ventures in undertaking research, and to disseminate information about members' recreation research programmes;
- c. to spread information to develop best practice through training and professional development in provision for and management of countryside recreation.

CRN enables the staff of member agencies to liaise with each other and to reach out to other organisations and interested individuals through a full programme of meetings and workshops, an annual conference and a regular newsletter, “Countryside Recreation”.

- 6.5 External information sources include the “*Leisure Day Visits*”, the report of the 1998 UK Day Visits Survey, the report of the House of Commons Environment Committee’s 1995 inquiry into the environmental impact of leisure, “Countryside Recreation Futures: A Literature Review for CRN”, 1999, a range of Countryside Agency publications and various reports into the consequences of FMD. Internal sources include the Position Statements on access and recreation, and the Species Conservation Handbook.

## **7. Priority Actions for 2000-2003 and supporting key messages**

### **Priority Actions**

- R1 Providing further advice to DEFRA and the Countryside Agency on the implementation of a statutory right of access to the countryside under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;**
- R2 Developing our policy on sustainable tourism and implementing a wildlife and geo-tourism initiative through which English Nature will be able to make a direct contribution to post-FMD rural recovery;**
- R3 Influencing in a reactive way the policies and practices of relevant Government Departments, the regulatory authorities, the governing bodies and the tourism/recreational/access providers so that they give more weight to biodiversity and geological conservation in their decision-making processes.**

## 7. Summary of key shapers, key players and English Nature lead teams/individuals for each priority action

Priority action	Key shapers	Key players	English Nature lead teams/individuals
R1. Providing further advice to DEFRA and the Countryside Agency on the implementation of a statutory right of access to the countryside under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000	DEFRA  Countryside Agency  National Park Authorities  Local authorities	CLA/NFU  The National Trust  The Ramblers' Association, Open Spaces Society  RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts	Environmental Impacts Team (Graham Bathe)  Access Project Officers in local teams
R2. Developing our policy on sustainable tourism and implementing a wildlife and geo-tourism initiative through which English Nature will be able to make a direct contribution to post-FMD rural recovery	DCMS, DEFRA  English Tourism Council  Countryside Agency  Regional Tourist Boards; Regional Cultural Consortiums  National Park authorities	The National Trust  English Heritage	Environmental Impacts Team ( David Markham)  Cumbria (Ian Soane), Northumbria (Richard Hall) and Cornwall (Stephen Warman) : each has money for tourism-related projects
R3. Influencing in a reactive way the policies and practices of relevant Government departments, the regulatory authorities, the governing bodies and the tourism/recreational/ access providers so that they give more weight to biodiversity and geological conservation in their decision-making processes.	DEFRA/DTLR/DCMS  English Tourism Council  Countryside Agency  Sport England  National Park Authorities	The various governing and representative bodies	Environmental Impacts Team (David Markham)  Regional Co-ordinators/Regional Policy Officers

**Expected nature conservation gains:**

Wildlife and geological features are effectively conserved with reduced incidence of temporary disturbance, prevention of permanent damage and provision of opportunities for people to enjoy and appreciate our natural heritage.

**Action:**

Rural tourism/recreation is an increasingly popular pastime which is likely to grow significantly in its extent and intensity in the next few years, particularly in coastal areas and close to towns. The interaction between tourism and the natural environment occurs across all Natural Areas so managing impacts from recreation is an issue for all English Nature Local Teams. Most of the damage caused to SSSIs is temporary and localised, although there is the potential for widespread disturbance beyond special sites.

## Annexes

### Annex 1. Summary of impacts on nature conservation from a range of leisure activities

Activity	Potential impact
Angling	Disturbance to wildfowl or nesting sites; damage to bankside vegetation
Caving	Limited damage to geological features; disturbance to bats
Climbing	Disturbance to cliff-nesting birds; removal of vegetation
Golf	Demand for water abstraction; habitat modification; ancillary development
Motor sports	Damage to vegetation
Off-road cycling	Damage to vegetation; conflict with other users
Orienteering	Localised damage; disturbance to nesting birds
Riding	Trampling; vegetation loss
Sailing	Disturbance to overwintering and breeding waterfowl
Walking	Damage to upland vegetation on key routes
Water ski-ing	Disturbance to feeding birds

Source: Sidaway R (1991), *Good Practice for Sport and Recreation*, Study 37, Sports Council, London.

### Annex 2. Disturbance effects from coastal leisure activities (largely related to birds)

Activity	Time of year	Potential effect
Aircraft	Breeding season	a) Increased effect of abandoning/predation of eggs/chicks. Abandoning of breeding sites.
	Passage Wintering	b) Reduction in feeding and roosting time. Energy reserves depleted in search for alternative sites.
General beach recreation	Summer	Public use of beaches in breeding season (April-July) limits sites available to some birds eg terns, little ringed plover, oystercatcher
Small, powered craft	All year	Disturbance to birds feeding and roosting and to seal colonies.
Sailboarding	All year	As above
Vehicles	Breeding season	See a) above (more localised)
	Passage	See b) above (more localised)
	Wintering	See b) above (more localised)
Walking	Breeding season	See a) above (more localised)
	Passage	See b) above (more localised)
	Wintering	See b) above (more localised)
Wildfowling	Passage	Localised disturbance to feeding and roosting birds.
	Wintering	Death of quarry species.

Source: English Nature (1995), Extract from English Nature's evidence to the 1995 inquiry by the House of Commons Environment Select Committee into the environmental impact of leisure activities.

### Annex 3. Physical damage (trampling and erosion) from coastal leisure activities

Activity	Sensitive habitats/species	Potential impact
General beach recreation	Cliff tops, shingle, sand dunes	Localised erosion leading to: 1. Destabilisation of dunes. 2. Loss/modification of clifftop grasslands through trampling, leading to erosion. 3. Preventing shingle plants completing life cycle eg. Shore dock, sea pea. Trampling limits the distribution of shingle vegetation, not the geomorphological structure.
Vehicles	1. Shingle 2. Sand dunes 3. Saltmarshes 4. Maritime grassland and heath, beaches	1. Destruction of shingle vegetation and of geomorphological structure (irreversible). 2. Destruction of dune vegetation and initiation of erosion (reversible but erosion can be widespread). 3. Localised destruction of vegetation and in some cases erosion. 4. As for 3 above (but less significant/widespread)
Walkers	Any habitat on seawalls  Sand dune communities	1. Localised trampling and erosion (may not be significant, except on clifftop paths due to narrow, linear nature of habitat) 2. Damage to sea wall vegetation.

**Source: English Nature (1995), Extract from English Nature's evidence to the inquiry in 1995 by the House of Commons Environment Select Committee into the environmental impact of leisure activities.**

## **Annex 4**

The following is an extract from English Nature's response to the Government's sustainable development strategy consultation in 1994.

### **Subject Area : Tourism and Recreation**

#### **Damaging practices/trends**

- Increased visitor pressure from greater access and more recreation in the countryside leading to environmental deterioration and wide ranging but not major impacts on nature conservation
- Inappropriate new/ancillary development coupled to tourist/recreational facilities leading to direct impacts on nature conservation
- Wide environmental effects from more traffic in the countryside (eg increased pollution and demand for more roads)
- Demand for development of facilities from specialist uses eg marinas, golf courses, causing land-take in prime areas

#### **Opportunities to enhance nature conservation**

- Improved education and awareness through more interpretation with spin-off benefits for nature conservation more generally
- Demand management to be applied when planning recreational facilities
- Linkage to wider countryside management schemes to enhance the countryside from tourism, recreation and nature conservation
- Scope for habitat creation and restoration as part of a development (eg with golf courses)
- Potential for diversion of income (eg from access agreements or development of sports/recreation facilities) back into nature conservation. Scope for cross-compliance and grant-aid/subsidies from EC)

#### **Vision for 2010**

- Recognition that a diverse and attractive countryside is good for tourism and recreation and nature conservation
- Management planning to reduce conflict between users
- Wider use of techniques such as zoning and exploration of new techniques such as Limits of Acceptable Change
- Establishment and dissemination of good practice



- More education, interpretation and an improved information base
- In essence countryside activities and facilities should be planned and designed in such a way which allows participation of increasing numbers of people without detriment to the natural resource on which the activity relies

### **Limits/targets/enhancements**

5 years

- Stricter control over large scale recreational developments. Local authorities to make very clear what will or will not be allowed
- Managers to give more attention to interpretation of natural resources - also zoning in time and space particularly on water
- More countryside enhancement schemes associated with new recreation and tourism developments
- Changes in attitude to and demand for new tourist/recreational facilities, enhanced by better information at all levels on impacts on the nature conservation resource caused by recreational use or specialist development
- Continuing central and local policies restricting large land-take development and formalising land management
- Greater use of environmental assessment to regulate spread of recreational facilities

10 years

- A national appreciation of the environmental capacity of tourism and recreation coupled with policies which reflect this
- Quiet enjoyment of the countryside enhanced by changes in other practices - agriculture etc - and by opening up of the land through managed access
- Incorporation of good practice in design and build stages of development