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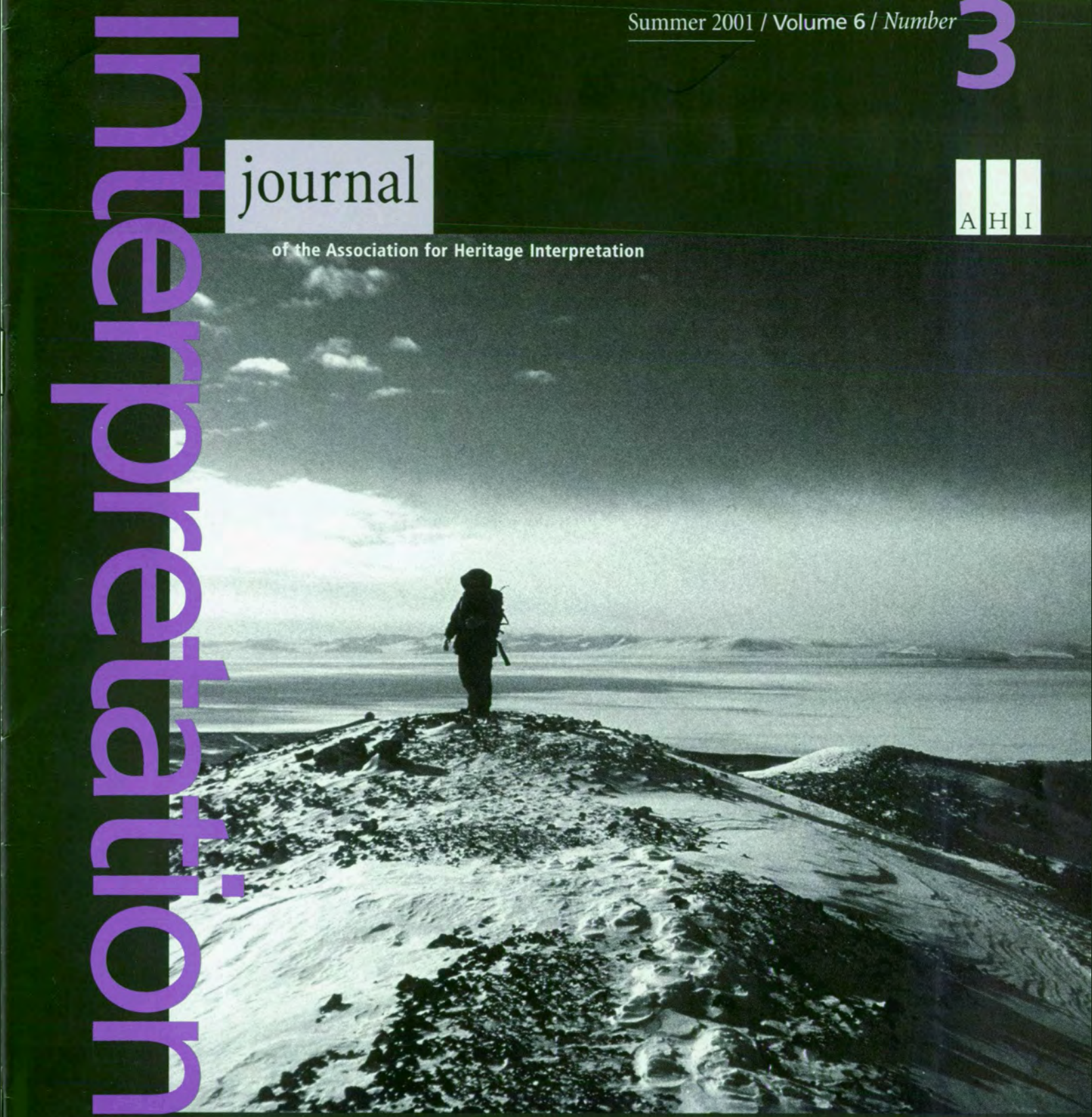

Interpretation and sustainable tourism

Positive action for a sustainable environment

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Interpreting art
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For more information about the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI), send an email to admin@heritage-interpretation.org.uk <mailto:admin@heritageinterpretation.org.uk>, write to the Administrator, AHI, Cruachan, Tayinloan, Tarbert PA29 6XF or telephone / fax 01583 441114.

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What is sustainable tourism?

Sustainable tourism is an ideal we cannot reject but what does it mean in practice and what does it mean to interpretation professionals?

Definitions

The English Tourism Council gives five different definitions for sustainable tourism and two for sustainable development. This one encapsulates the thinking:

'Tourism that meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future' World Tourism Council

The World Conservation Union, 1991, succinctly describes sustainable development as follows:

'Improving the quality of life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems'

While the Native American Chief Seattle gives us the most evocative and memorable description of the way we should be living sustainably:

'We do not inherit the world from our ancestors: we borrow it from our children' Journal of Heritage and Environmental Interpretation, Dec 1996.

So what does it mean to us as interpreters meeting the needs of tourists and host communities while trying to preserve the very resource on which the tourism depends? There is no doubt in anyone's mind that tourism needs to be developed sensitively and managed wisely to avoid damaging the very assets it depends on.

Where can interpretation help?

As interpreters we have it in our hands to inform and educate our visitors, both on site and through the information they receive before they make the decision to visit. We are in a unique position to influence attitudes and behaviour of visitors and have a multitude of communication channels at our disposal, from simple leaflets to electronic mail and websites. For instance, have you ever thought about the images used on your marketing literature? Do they strengthen positive environmental and cultural messages? Do they promote walking, cycling and green transport?

We can target our information to reach the different types of visitor. One key area of influence which tourism attractions often overlook is young people. Children care passionately about the environment and have a sophisticated understanding of concepts such as biodiversity and quality of life. They learn about the key concepts of sustainable development in school. Topics such as quality of life, citizenship and stewardship, interdependence, diversity and needs and rights of future generations are covered within the National Curriculum. Children will often influence the choice of visit and will pester parents to follow advice on recycling, green transport and recommended routes: believe me, I am a parent, I know!

Sustainable thinking is about investing in the long term future and that may require more emphasis on collecting data in a systematic manner than has been the case to date. All interpretation projects should be preceded by market research to find out what level of understanding your visitor comes with and how you need to pitch your information. Any site management plan needs information on effects of visitors to drive management actions.

We should all be working closely to embrace and empower the local community at a tourist destination so that they benefit positively from the influx of visitors and enjoy a quality of life. Interpretation has a role to play here. Who writes the information and agrees the projects? What involvement does the local community have? Be experimental. Be bold in policy formulation and promotion. Encourage visitors to think, discuss and act sustainably.

This issue of the journal shows just how much is happening in sustainable tourism and interpretation. The debate has recently benefited from guidelines in the English Tourism Council's Sustainable Tourism Strategy, *'A Time for Action'*. The strategy is backed up by a set of National Sustainable Tourism indicators. Below I show how the three objectives described in the document have relevance to interpretation and the work that is highlighted through the articles in this journal.

Objective 1

Protect and enhance the built and natural environment

- Promote sustainable themes through publicity material. David McGlade describes promoting the code of respect in his article about Hadrian's Wall
- Develop visitor management plans and produce interpretation that helps manage visitors. John McVerry explains how the National Trust's changes to visitor management have improved the conservation of the house at Dyrham Park.
- Emma Stewart describes the Antarctic Heritage Trust's 'code of conduct' devised to protect the explorers' huts.

- Help inform visitors to make better travel choices. Matthew Ward describes the steps the National Trust took implement a green transport plan for Prior Park.
- Increase tourism's contribution to the upkeep of the environment. Explaining to visitors how their contributions are used can encourage donations.
- Promote design and planning to reduce the impact of tourism development. Here we should be ensuring new visitor centres and visitor facilities are designed sensitively. A good example is the first 'green' study centre at Studland Bay built by the National Trust. It uses power from a wind turbine and solar panels, self composting lavatories and heat from a wood burning stove, using wood from the estate. In this journal, Rob Robinson discusses balancing conservation with the demands of public access on archaeological sites.

Objective 2

Support local communities and their culture

- Encourage local labour recruitment. There are many jobs in the tourism industry where it is of benefit to recruit local labour i.e. for guided walks and visitor centre staff
- Encourage visitors to buy locally. Andrew Nixon demonstrates how the local economy benefits in the Romney Marsh Countryside project
- Raise awareness and encourage partnerships to ensure tourism benefits the local community and visitors. Anna White describes the involvement of the local community in the Hareshaw Linn project
- Make destinations accessible. Interpretation staff must remember the needs of all visitors for intellectual access as well as physical access
- Contribute to local cultural distinctiveness.

Objective 3

Benefit the economy of tourism destinations

- Understand the needs of the visitors to ensure they return and recommend
- Purchase goods and services locally. Caroline Warburton describes sustainable tourism projects in Scotland
- Invest in training
- Spread tourism more evenly through seasons.

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure tourism is sustainable and we as interpreters have a vital part to play.

English Tourism website: www.wisegrowth.org.uk

Ruth Taylor is Interpretation Officer for the National Trust (Wessex Region).

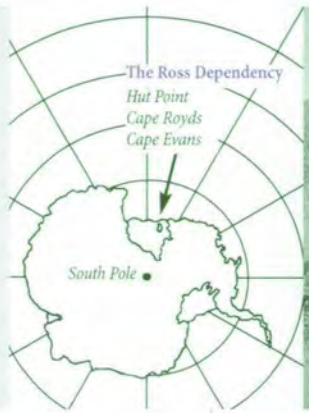
Principles for sustainable tourism

(From Tourism and the Environment, 1991 Maintaining the Balance: Report of the Tourism and Environment Task Force)

- The environment has an intrinsic value which outweighs its value as a tourism asset. Its enjoyment by future generations and its long term survival must not be prejudiced by short term considerations
- Tourism should be recognised as a positive activity with the potential to benefit the community and the place as well as the visitor
- The relationship between tourism and the environment must be managed so that the environment is sustainable in the long term. Tourism must not be allowed to damage the resource, prejudice its future enjoyment or bring unacceptable impacts
- Tourism activities and developments should respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited
- In any location, harmony must be sought between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community
- In a dynamic world some change is inevitable and change can be beneficial. Adaptation to change, however, should not be at the expense of these principles
- The tourism industry, local authorities and environmental agencies all have a duty to respect the above principles and to work together to achieve their practical realisation.

Simple lessons from Antarctica

Emma Stewart recounts how conservation and tourism are kept in balance in the world's most inhospitable environment



BY KIND PERMISSION OF ANTARCTIC HERITAGE TRUST

EMMA STEWART / GD STEEL

'These simple lessons are summarised as protection of place, projection of wonderment and preservation of identity'

Above, from left: The New Zealand Antarctic Heritage Trust looks at 34 historic sites under New Zealand stewardship in Antarctica; Scott's Discovery Hut at Hut Point (1902); Inside of Scott's Discovery Hut

In this article I distil three simple lessons gleaned from the most remote site of interpretation on this globe - the heritage huts in the depths of Antarctica. These simple lessons are summarised as protection of place, projection of wonderment and preservation of identity. I suggest that these lessons can be applied in the UK as we consider sustainable and innovative forms of interpretation.

Great adventures

Ross Island was the setting for some of Antarctica's greatest explorations in the early 1900s. The historic sites and monuments that remain from this period are a valuable record of those past 'heroic' adventures. The Antarctic Treaty and Protocol on the Environment require that these historic sites be preserved and protected this responsibility is undertaken by the New Zealand charity, the Antarctic Heritage Trust. The Trust aims to preserve and protect the human endeavour of Antarctica. According to the experts who are currently working on preserving the fabric of these buildings they believe it is a small miracle that these huts still exist. They were built to last one expedition but are still standing almost 100 years later surviving the ravages of the inhospitable Antarctic climate. The photographs depict the three sites that I have been fortunate enough to visit at various times over the past four years.

Protection of place

Visiting, if not making a pilgrimage to these huts features highly amongst those who find themselves in Antarctica either on scientific expeditions such as myself or as one of an increasing number of tourists to this region. In the 2000 season approximately 870 people visited Scott's Discovery Hut at Hut Point; 1125 people visited Scott's Hut at Cape Evans and 650 people visited Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds in the Ross Island region of Antarctica.

The Antarctic Heritage Trust has designated each of these huts a 'carrying capacity' - somewhere between 8 and 12 people depending on the size of the hut. This controlled level of entry ensures that physical impact is minimised but also the 'intimate' feeling of the huts is not lost. The huts are locked and before entry is permitted each member of the party must be briefed on the Antarctic Heritage Trust's 'code of conduct' devised to further limit possible adverse effects of visitation. This code of conduct is explicit, straightforward and up front:

- Reduce floor abrasion - thoroughly clean grit, ice and snow from boots before entering
- Salt particles accelerate corrosion of metal objects - remove any clothing wet by seawater and any salt crystals from boots
- Handling artefacts causes damage - do not touch, move or sit on any items or furniture in the Hut
- Many areas are cramped and artefacts can be accidentally bumped - do not wear packs inside the Huts

'The huts are locked and before entry is permitted each member of the party must be briefed on the Antarctic Heritage Trust's 'code of conduct"

- When moving around the sites take great care not to tread on items that may be obscured by snow
- Fire is a major risk factor - use of combustion style lanterns, naked flames or smoking in or around the Huts is strictly forbidden
- Please record visitor names in the book provided

This is not just a list of 'can't do's' but importantly a note as to why visitor actions could be potentially harmful. Clearly the aim of these guidelines takes us back to one of the original tenets of interpretation - to protect the resource itself.

> *'Not the least of the fruits of adequate interpretation is the certainty that it leads directly toward the very preservation of the treasure itself, whether it be a national park, a prehistoric ruin, an historic battlefield or a precious monument of our wise and heroic ancestors. Indeed, such a result may be the most important end of interpretation, for what we cannot protect we are destined to lose'* Tilden (1957:37).

'It is simply incredible to comprehend that men were willing to risk so much in pursuit of scientific discovery'

Projection of wonderment

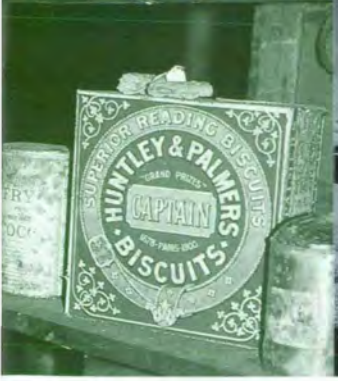
There is a tremendous sense of wonderment when experiencing these huts. It is simply incredible to comprehend that men were willing to risk so much in pursuit of scientific discovery, and of course, in pursuit of the Pole or other epic feats of adventure. But on the other hand their feats and dreams seem so familiar and certainly the corroded tins of Golden Syrup and boxes of Huntley and Palmer Biscuits reminds you that these folk were here only a few short conversations ago. It is almost as if you can reach out and touch them. The Antarctic Heritage Trust has been meticulous in cataloguing the remaining artefacts but have followed a careful policy of leaving artefacts 'as was' and leaving the wonderment to do much of the interpretation.

Questions which inevitably arise are answered either by those around you (who have perhaps visited before or those who have read more than you) or by the Antarctic Heritage Trust Representative. Some literature is provided including a simple A4 sheet showing the layout of the hut and mapping its surviving contents such as seal blubber, stores and scientific equipment. In addition to this navigational aid, a brief explanation of how different expeditions used the huts is provided. Visitors are encouraged to return these papers for reuse. The Antarctic Heritage Trust also produces a booklet that introduces each of the huts and their surroundings which is available from their offices in Christchurch, New Zealand. Although this combination of interpretive mechanisms may appear rudimentary and quite the opposite of innovative, this lack of 'clutter' is absolutely right for this environment. From my experiences of visiting these huts, the sense of place is almost too personal to be interrupted by other people's words at the site itself and further investigation, if so desired, can come later.

Further insights into the realms of Antarctic adventures can be found back in warmer climates such as at the International Antarctic Centre in Christchurch, the Canterbury Museum also in Christchurch and, amongst others, the Kelly Tartans Experience in Auckland. At the International Antarctic Centre, for example, they use interactive technology to encourage visitors to find out about the people who live and work in Antarctica today at the New Zealand Base (Scott Base). Visitors are able to handle the polar survival gear they wear and explore by web-cam Scott Base itself. For many this insight is the closest that they will ever get to Antarctica but for those who have visited it is a further enrichment of their experiences. There is also a plethora of web and book based information recalling the feats of the heroic era, which as a result of visiting becomes avid reading.

Preservation of identity

It is the memory of the human characters of these places, not just the expedition leaders, but the carpenter, the artist and the zoologist, that remain with the visitor. Their possessions and identities are inscribed in the fabric of these huts - literally in some cases. The way in which the Antarctic Heritage Trust has left personal artefacts in poignant places in the huts leaves you with the feeling that these people have 'just popped outside' and will return at any moment. For example, in Wilson's quarters (the




Above, from left: Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds (1908); A Huntley & Palmer biscuit tin; Hut Point, Scott's hut at Cape Evans (1911); Above Wilson's bunk at Cape Evans

medic, zoologist and artist on Scott's ill-fated expedition) the shelves are full of potions and tonics that he presumably used as part of everyday life on the ice. For me I was touched by this presence so strongly that I felt I was almost intruding on their personal space. It is this way of simply harnessing visitor emotion about people, which brings home the old adage that 'people relate best to people' and as interpreters we forget this at our peril.

There is further evidence to support the 'human interest' claim, as many who visit Ross Island want to see the working of the current day Antarctic Bases, such as the nearby American Base (McMurdo) and the New Zealand Base (Scott Base). Visitors lucky enough to gain entry to these Bases cannot fail to be struck by the living quarters, the level of technology and the luxury of modern equipment that provides a stark contrast in polar survival to their predecessors.

Conclusion

I have yet to mention the word 'sustainable' but it is implied in all aspects of The Antarctic Heritage Trust's approach to the preservation and protection of the historic huts and monuments in their care. The Antarctic Heritage Trust is passionate to ensure that the huts remain part of our global Antarctic inheritance. And there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that those who visit come away with changed lives and outlooks (who am I to argue?) to the extent that we take on, almost, an ambassadorial role in the future protection of the continent. What better evidence of the much quoted extract from Tilden's text '*Interpreting Our Heritage*' (1957:37):

> *'... my heartiest thanks go to whoever it was that phrased: through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection.'*

Of course, in the UK we have our treasures too, both in terms of the natural environment and human inheritance. We have our own 'Antarctics'. So perhaps then we can learn, or be reminded, of some simple messages that arise from this very special piece of British heritage at its most remote and uncompromising outpost in the southern seas. There are three key lessons:

- to encourage the protection and nurturing of the place that is being presented
- to project and instil emotion and ideas about the place that is being visited
- to preserve the memory of human character and identity that is being viewed.

If interpretation explicitly sets out to address these three areas then surely interpretation, in its many guises, has a critical role in the pursuit of sustainable tourism.

Useful Web Sites

http://www.iceberg.co.nz/
http://www.heritage-antarctica.org/
http://www.mastromedia.com/antarctica/history/history.htm/

Emma J Stewart is a Senior Lecturer in leisure and tourism at the University of Glamorgan and consultant. She has visited Antarctica on five occasions undertaking social science research in conjunction with Lincoln University, New Zealand.

Interpretation: a magnificent

John McVerry explains how working across different disciplines can help to cope with a country house not designed for thousands of visitors

'Staff were observing an increasing number of visitors coming into the house, necks still throbbing from the stress of the 90 mile an hour world of the motorway'

We are told that as long as the curators, conservators and interpreters work closely together, there is no need at all for any conflict across the disciplines. This means working closely together from the earliest ideas sessions, through the design, the writing, training and delivery of any activity.

At Dyrham Park in South Gloucester, National Trust staff were fortunate enough to be able to put this theory to the test between 1996 and 2000, when the property was 're-launched'.

Road rage in the park

Traditionally, visitors hurtled off the M4/A46 straight down the park, parked on the grass right in front of the building and were catapulted into the most environmentally sensitive part of the house. This may have been fine with the traffic speeds of the 1960s, but by the mid 1990s property staff were observing an increasing number of visitors coming into the house, necks still throbbing from the stress of the 90 mile an hour world of the motorway. By staying in their cars right up to the front door, there was no chance for people to adjust to the gentle pace of the country house. Nor could they gain any real appreciation of what they were going to see, or why the nation, though the Land Fund, had chosen to save Dyrham as an icon of the Britain that men and women had fought to save between 1939 and 1945.

As I said, all visitors entered the house straight into the leather-lined East Hall, right next to the Tapestry Drawing room and the room containing the magnificent State bed. The 50 lux illumination (maximum recommended light level for fragile textiles) made the visitors feel as though they were going pot-holing, rather than visiting a great house. As the East Hall at Dyrham is a significant historic interior, the curators fought off any explanatory notices and signage which might have alleviated the visitor's feeling of confusion and disorientation. Meanwhile, the conservators despaired at the frequency of air-change and the dust swirling in through the front door, coming to rest on the 17th century leather and textiles.

Confusion and conflict

From this point on, the visitors passed from one historic space to another, without ever having the chance to gather their wits and find out what this place was all about. Adding to this confusion, the route contorted around several cul-de-sacs - also meaning that some areas received 160,000+ footfalls from Dyrham's 80,0000 visitors. The result was that many people left the property suitably impressed, but not sure why, never having been sure of what they were seeing, why they were seeing it, and often, thanks to the (necessarily) low light levels, unsure what they were supposed to have seen.

The car park at Dyrham sat right on top of the shallow-buried remains of the great Dutch-influenced water gardens that flourished briefly at Dyrham in the early 18th century. For as long as anyone could remember, there had been a desire to rectify this, but the steep slopes of the park made any alternative site for the car park difficult for the able-bodied visitor, and totally impossible for those with any disability. The only viable option was to move the car park right up to the top of the park, into a much less vulnerable area, well clear of the 300 year-old deer herd. However, this solution meant a long-term commitment to funding a shuttle bus, which was in itself a decision needing considerable confidence and managerial bravery at a time when large capital expenditure and little operational commitment was the fashion.

In 1994, the region allocated staff time and regional funds to a comprehensive review of Dyrham and the visitors' experience. The fundamental decision was made to remove the car park to the top of the park, serviced by a fully accessible midi-bus.

All agendas were aired

This decision allowed us to review every aspect of the relationship between the property, the Trust and our visitors. With eager anticipation we had a brainstorming meeting when all departments were invited to come and present their agendas up-front and from the start. This enormous list was refined into essentials and desirables and then made over to the small team of Historic Buildings Representative (the Trust's equivalent of a curator) the Interpretation Officer Ruth Taylor, the Property Manager Chris Curtis, and Buildings Surveyor, Tim Cambourne. This group tried to come up with a solution that would meet all the essentials and as many of the desirables

conservation tool?

Above: 'A view down a corridor' by Samuel van Hoogstvaeten illustrates an enfilade - a suite of rooms ordered to suit 17th century social requirements

as possible without losing the qualities of Dyrham that we all loved.

An over-riding constraint at Dyrham is that when the property was bought in 1957, the Ministry of Works converted much of the building into flats to ensure a steady income for the property. In addition, the show areas were decided right at the beginning of the process and only the contents necessary to show these areas was purchased at auction. This means that there are no fallow areas of the house, no opportunities to shift the emphasis away from 1710 and no indigenous contents in store. An all encompassing opportunity though is the amazing set of records, the originals of which are held at the Gloucester Records Office, which allow almost any area of potential interest to be explored and presented verbally, in print or electronically.

From cream tea to PhD

Prompted by the Interpretation Officer, we agreed that all the available information would be layered. We wanted all visitors to have the chance to get to know the key facts about the place: how it came to the Nation and why and what is the essence of Dyrham - in other words, the points coming out of the Statement of Significance (see box, page 11). We decided that this information was to be free and in your face as it benefits no-one to have visitors bringing inevitable wear and tear without understanding and enjoying their visit. This basic free layer would be augmented by subsequent layers (each of increasing complexity) to allow everyone the chance to get the information they want - from those wanting a day out and a cream tea, to those studying 18th century Inventories for their PhD.

To address the conservation and the curatorial factors we decided to bring all visitors into the house via the original 1700 entrance on the West Front. This would bring all visitors around the house, giving them an idea of the scale and extent of the place. It would also introduce them to the garden and orient them as far as the loos, shop, exit and restaurant are concerned. A small information office in the courtyard offers a second chance to buy the main souvenir guide, the children's guide, the park and garden guide and - for the first time - the audio wand.

The various levels of interpretative material are explained in the box on page 11. To achieve a variety of language and mood for each layer, no one author was allowed to write more than one. The authors were then briefed as to the purpose of their section and given a comprehensive tour of the property, the Statement of Significance and a CD full of transcribed documents. They were also given the phone numbers of the curator and the researcher and then sent away to interpret the information for their particular audience. The result is that we feel that the information is properly presented for each audience and 'on message'. The information contained in each is accurate and the significance of Dyrham shines through. It also means that the audio wand was written by a script writer, the children's guide uses appropriate language for its intended audience and the technical description of the State Bed on the CD-ROM is aimed at the expert.

'When people are going round an enfilade backwards though, explanation becomes nigh-on impossible!'

What the hell's an enfilade?

For the curator, the 'new' entrance allowed the visitors to be taken round the house in a logical way - logical chronologically as well as socially. The precise social shibboleths of the 17th century Court; the nuances of meaning of the enfilade are far removed from the modern psyche, and are difficult to explain, but critical to explaining a house like Dyrham. When people are going round an enfilade backwards though, explanation becomes nigh-on impossible! So the revised route had to give a logical, explicable progression round the building which allowed the story of Dyrham and its creator William Blathwayt to be told with some clarity.

The new route placed the rooms with the tapestries, bed and leather half way round the house - giving us the opportunity to bring the light levels down gradually as people approached the fragile areas. The dust levels in these rooms has dropped dramatically. To rid ourselves of the final cul-de-sac, further protect the State Bed and add enormously to the depth and breadth of potential interest in Dyrham, we took the decision to take visitors through the back-closet, down a narrow, but mercifully shallow staircase into the Victorian kitchens.

Keeping it relevant

Opening the kitchens offered the greatest opportunity

at Dyrham. For the general visitor, there is a fascination with the servicing and running of the country house, and many of our older visitors still have memories of kitchens being run on 19th century lines. Anglo-Dutch political history is not part of the current National Curriculum, but 19th century domestic and social history is. Thus by opening the kitchens we were able to keep Dyrham relevant to the significant local school population (being 8 miles from Bristol and 10 from Bath). Furthermore, the kitchens were to be a re-construction, allowing our Education Officer Susan Gay a much freer hand in devising imaginative use of the spaces and allowing much variety in costumed and hands-on interpretation events. It also gave the Property Manager a whole section of the house that, unlike the show rooms above, was not particularly sensitive and could be opened far more.

'The key to this harmonious project . . . was that no discipline worked in isolation at any stage'

The Ministry had not bought any of the kitchen equipment in 1957 - indeed there was probably not much left to buy. However, there was an incredibly full inventory of the kitchens, equipment and food taken in 1871, following the death of Colonel Blathwayt, the moderniser of Dyrham in that year. Kitchens of any age are much more generic than reception rooms and we employed the eminent domestic historian Dr Peter Briers to act as curator for this element of the project, buying and re-creating equipment as necessary to meet the letter of the 1871 inventory.

Finally the visitors' exit via the Tenants' Hall (the original 1700 kitchen) which is used for hands-on use of copies of some of the archives and for temporary exhibitions. The charming 19th century dairy with its ploshing fountain and re-used Delft tiles is also seen before visitors end up back in the courtyard with the garden, shop, loos and restaurant to hand.

Of course there was an awful lot of minor building work and minor re-arranging to achieve all this, but the effect we wanted to achieve was that the old friends of Dyrham would perceive very little change, whilst the first-time visitor would feel warmly welcomed. From the first we resolved that we did not want to just say welcome, but to extend the encompassing welcome of a truly gracious host. We wanted to make our visitors feel comfortable, honoured and immediately at ease; for everything to be where they expected it to be (or easily found) and for their questions to be answered without their having to make a big deal out of asking.

Below: Delft tiles in the Dairy

We're no angels

The key to this harmonious project - no, we're not angels, but there was a strong inter-disciplinary respect though the whole process - was that no discipline worked in isolation at any stage. The archaeological conservation of the garden/park only happened by inaugurating the shuttle bus. The bus service would not work if people weren't told why they were parking out of sight from the house. The Trust now has a purpose designed (and very successful) recruiting point in the reception building in the car park and every visitor is given, by welcome leaflet and panels, the six essential points of Dyrham that justify its preservation. We are able to take advantage of the time people spend on the bus by telling them what the various interpretation media available offer them and by explaining to them why they are going through the courtyard to enter the house from the far side. Entry from the West Door allows a far better conservation environment for the most fragile parts of the house, and allows the light levels to be managed such that people can see the textiles when they encounter them.

The route is more logical and people are clear as to why they are going round the house in this way. The kitchens are an enormous resource for the Education Officer and the Property Manager and give huge pleasure to the majority of our visitors, but they were only made possible by research and curatorial expertise. The shop and restaurant are doing well, because people feel at home and comfortable in the unhurried atmosphere that has come with the banishing of the motor cars.

Come to Dyrham and see

All aspects are closely interwoven and mutually dependant and we believe (and visitor feedback justifies this belief) that for the Dyrham project, the most valuable conservation tool was the interpretation. The biggest aid to the interpretation was its juxtaposition with the curatorial needs and effort and the impetus for the curatorial drive was the need to improve the conservation of the archaeology of the park and the textile - it really does work - come and see for yourself.

Above: The West Front (now entrance)

The interpretation layers

Panels	free	To enable every visitor the opportunity to gain an understanding of what they have come to see and why it has been preserved for them
Welcome leaflet	**free**	**Orientation and to advertise the available interpretative material**
Souvenir Guide	£2.50	Colour guide of the house and gardens giving the social history and addressing the question 'Why?'
Garden and Park guide	**£1.00**	**Leaflet giving walks and explanation of the estate**
Children's guide	£1.95	As per the main guide, but focussed on the 8-12 year-old
Audio wand	**£2.00**	**Interactive audio information on every room and picture and almost every object in the house**
Muniment exhibition	free	Themed, changing selection of the archives
Archive folders	**free**	**Themed selections of copies of documents allowing hands-on exploration of the records**
Room stewards	volunteers	Give introductory talks and answer visitors' questions
Live Interpretation	**free**	**'Event' interpretation to bring the property alive and enable interaction with visitors answering questions**
Braille guide	free	Available on loan for braille readers
Large print guide	**free**	**Available on loan for the visually impaired**
CDRom	£9.99	Off-site interactive giving full details on every aspect of the property and its development. This includes full transcriptions of all 8 historic inventories and many of the records

Statement of Significance

Each National Trust property, in line with international requirements, has a Statement of Significance. This is a short statement giving the essence of a property. It concentrates on the spirit and unique qualities that cause the place to be in care and which are as easy to destroy through ignorance as the fabric.

Dyrham Park's Statement of Significance:

Through a process of careful maintenance and dynastic inertia, Dyrham has survived as a rare, largely untouched example of Dutch-influenced taste of the late 17th century. Its gentle existence has resulted in the survival of an historic Country House, complete with records, contents, buildings, gardens and deer park, standing witness to 250 years of unruffled security and tradition of the English Landed Gentry. Conceived as a seat for future aristocrats, generations of Blathwayts, whilst failing to achieve the social and political ambitions of the builder, preserved his creation until the Nation, through the Land Fund, took over the task of preserving this house and its setting in its entirety - material and atmospheric - as a symbol of why the fallen of two world wars had made their sacrifice.

John McVerry is the Historic Buildings Representative (Curator) for the National Trust's Wessex Region.

Planning for pressure

Rob Robinson looks at balancing conservation risks with the demands of public access on archaeological sites

'It is crucial that site managers and owners plan for visitor pressure before it has a permanent impact upon the site'

'Visitor management is really about site management. Good site management regulates or directs the way in which the visitor interacts with the site'

Planning for pressure

Archaeological sites, like any heritage attraction, face the challenge of balancing access for visitors with the need to preserve the asset. Sustainable tourism is much more than a buzz word for archaeological sites, where necessity dictates that the sites must be carefully managed if they are to remain as attractions and potential sources of information into the future.

Prevention not cure

All too often the impact of visitors at archaeological sites is not realised until it is too late. It is crucial that site managers and owners plan for visitor pressure before it has a permanent impact upon the site. Such a pro-active form of visitor management should be based upon solid research, to gain a real understanding of what the resource comprises and why it is valued. This should be carried out before thinking strategically about how access and benefits can be maximised at the resource without damaging it.

Issues at archaeological sites

There are two important aspects common to archaeological sites. Firstly, the site and its immediate setting have significant potential as a future source of information on past human activity. Secondly, substantial interpretation is often needed in order for visitors to understand the significance of the upstanding earthworks or remains. It is also important to note that many of the issues associated with public access to archaeological sites can be applied to any site or resource, whether it is of historical, ecological or social value.

Effects of visitor pressure

There are three main ways in which visitors can directly or indirectly impact upon archaeological sites. Visitors can:

- Erode the historic fabric - the most serious and generally an irreversible impact
- Alter the site's character - impacts such as crowding or inappropriate interpretation and facilities
- Undermine the financial viability of the attraction - the lack of sufficient visitors can result in a lack of resources to maintain the site, which can potentially increase its rate of decay.

Minimising visitor pressure

There have been numerous articles and papers on managing visitor pressures at historical and natural sites (see Interpretation, December 1996, Carrying Capacity), and there are many management tools for minimising visitor pressure. These include interpretation to highlight the most robust areas or zoning to disperse visitors across a wider area. Although each site requires an individual response, the encouragement of visitors to act responsibly can be applied across the board.

Visitor management is really about site management. Good site management regulates or directs the way in which the visitor interacts with the site. Some responsibility for the site's preservation lies with the visitor, who should be informed and inspired to act in a responsible way. But it is the site manager's responsibility to provide this information, and to ensure that visitors are not presented with easy opportunities to cause accidental or deliberate damage.

For example, if enough people shelter in the shade of a standing stone, a hollow will form. Standing water will then fill the hollow and, over a relatively short period of time, water and frost will penetrate the stone, which can cause it to crack and ultimately become a 'lying stone'. The site manager can provide a sheltered area for visitors, but this is only part of

K. HENDERSON

Right: Some level of visitor management is often necessary to keep Britain's standing stones standing upright

K HENDERSON

R ROBINSON

Above: Inadequate car parking can be unsightly, dangerous and cause erosion; Above right: Historical evidence, tranquility and isolation? Or simply a view point for the Loch Ness Monster?

the solution. The visitor must also be informed about the nature of the site, what they can do to preserve it and why it should be preserved.

The importance of understanding

Any visitor or site management plan should be based on a clear understanding of the resource and why it is of value, in order to manage it effectively. This basic conservation philosophy, promoted by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, is frequently overlooked.

For archaeological sites it is important to collate what is already known about the site, and assess the research potential of areas in which little is known. This is not only to establish its historical or academic value, but also its value as a visitor attraction. This will normally require primary research, where visitors are asked why they visit a certain place, what they particularly value about it and the factors that limit or compromise their enjoyment.

Different people will undoubtedly value a place for different reasons. Much of the success of a management plan will therefore depend upon the harmonising of these values and uses. Once a clear understanding of the needs of the visitor and the needs of the historic or archaeological fabric is established, these can be addressed against the threats to the site. Realistic plans can then be put in place to maximise throughput and visitor enjoyment while minimising visitor impact. Importantly, the success - or otherwise - of these mitigating measures must be monitored, in order to understand their effectiveness in managing visitor pressure.

Towards a framework

A simple framework for minimising visitor pressure is therefore:

understand → plan → act

In reality this process is more complex, because action should be followed by Monitoring, Evaluation and Review (UPAMER). Without monitoring, evaluation and review, the cycle will not successfully respond to any changes in visitor numbers and needs, the conservation requirements of the site or the effectiveness of the mitigating measures.

Summary and conclusions

Excessive visitor pressure can irreversibly damage archaeological sites. However, if managed effectively, bringing larger number of visitors to an asset and providing them with both opportunities to spend money and an understanding of the site and its significance, can help to guarantee the future survival of the asset. The needs of the asset must always be balanced with those of the visitor and site managers should understand how to accommodate the needs of one without compromising those of the other.

Understanding these needs is an important starting point for any strategy to address visitor management. This will enable informed and considered design and planning, which can make a substantial difference both to the visitor experience and to the protection of the asset.

Rob Robinson is a Research Consultant with PLB Consulting Ltd specialising in strategic planning for the historic environment.

'Any visitor or site management plan should be based on a clear understanding of the resource and why it is of value, in order to manage it effectively'

Where every footstep counts

David McGlade examines the long term view of the effect of tourism on Hadrian's Wall, a World Heritage Site

'How we respond to the present situation, in our attempts to square the circle between the competing needs of tourism and conservation, will demonstrate our value judgments and willingness to respect not only the past but also the future landscape'

'In the wake of this new status the Wall, already a popular destination for visitors, has undergone a seismic shift in the way that it is managed and presented to the public'

'Every Footstep Counts' in the quest to respect the unique archaeological landscape of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. Too many visitors in the wrong place or at the wrong time of the year can cause irreparable damage to this most fragile of environments. To borrow from Confucus, 'manage it with a view to the future or find sorrow near at hand'.

'Every Footstep Counts' is also the title of the World Heritage Site's new code of respect leaflet. In the light of the unfortunate events since Heddon-on-the-Wall hit the national headlines with the first outbreak of the foot and mouth disease in February, it is edged with a piercing irony; any thoughts of a press launch have been well and truly shelved for the time being.

A double broadside

The foot and mouth epidemic has delivered a double broadside to the rural economy of Cumbria and Northumberland with income from tourism, much of it farm based, suffering in equal measure. This year, for small businesses in particular, may be the worst in living memory. The developing Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail, scheduled to open in June 2002 but likely to be delayed, has itself suffered a setback with all practical and other fieldwork curtailed until further notice.

Paradoxically, however, when the epidemic has been finally eradicated, every footstep will count towards regenerating the Wall's economy and re-establishing the interdependence between farming, landscape, recreational walking and tourism. The Trail itself will eventually provide a bridgehead for walking based tourism, oxygenating the Wall and its corridor with an arterial network of associated recreational routes feeding off the main path. If there was ever any doubt about these linkages they have been graphically illustrated by recent events.

A window on the past

At the same time the excesses of over promotion should be guarded against, the code of respect's original conservation messages still hold true and stand up to scrutiny. The Wall is a living, farmed and constantly changing landscape, it also provides a window on the past, a glimpse of a foreign country which is still far from fully understood. How we respond to the present situation, in our attempts to square the circle between the competing needs of tourism and conservation, will demonstrate our value judgments and willingness to respect not only the past but also the future landscape.

Built for eternity?

Some first time visitors to the Wall are awestruck at the achievements of the Roman surveyors, engineers and builders of almost two thousand years ago, so much has survived that they might imagine that it was built for eternity. However, while much survives both above and beneath the surface, as a priceless cultural resource it remains fragile, easily damaged and, like anything that we value, needs to be treated with respect.

The Wall today

Today, Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and its complex landscape of Roman earthworks, forts and milecastles present one of the most important archaeological remains anywhere in the world. International recognition of the site's importance and uniqueness was conferred in 1987 when UNESCO inscribed it into the exclusive list of World Heritage Sites. In the wake of this new status the Wall, already a popular destination for visitors, has undergone a seismic shift in the way that it is managed and presented to the public.

The challenge facing the Wall's managers is to involve the wider community, visitors and locals alike, and engage them in the conservation process. A busy summer season comprises tens of thousands of individual decisions about destinations, timing, mode of transport and so on. Influencing these individual choices so that their visit might have a positive effect upon the landscape rather than a negative one is the aim of *'Every Footstep Counts'*. The leaflet is the result of eighteen months of discussion and consultation with dozens of organizations and agencies concerned with the management and promotion of the Wall. Hadrian's Wall is also the only World Heritage Site in the UK to have such a code.

Time to ring the changes

UNESCO's inscription of the Wall and government approval in 1994 for the creation of the National Trail marked a watershed in its management. Government, local government, tourism, archaeological and nature conservation interests are beginning to work together

Above: Retaining the sense of place - the Wall in its green sward setting; Above right: Rights of Way have now been diverted off the Wall

and coordinate their efforts with signs of strategic planning and better use of resources. The key to success in a multi-agency approach is identifying common ground and attempting to work towards a convergence of objectives, the aim being to achieve a balance between the competing needs of tourism, conservation and the host community. At the heart of this must be a willingness to tackle, in concert, some of the more intractable issues that threaten the Wall's welfare.

It never rains but it pours!

Although the centuries old tradition of robbing stone from the Wall for building farmhouses and field walls has come to an end, today it is the northern climate that is contributing to a new problem. In common with many regions in Europe today, Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site is experiencing changing weather patterns with rainfall in recent years frequently exceeding the long term mean.

On its own rainfall should not be a problem but when large numbers of people walk on wet ground, on land hitherto without any form of official public access and on soils that are prone to seasonal waterlogging in the wet winter months, archaeology and footpaths can easily become damaged. Farmers understand the trafficability (the ability to use machinery on land) of soils and the principle applies equally to recreation. There is a limit to the amount of pressure that ground will take when it is saturated with water.

'Farmers understand the trafficability (the ability to use machinery on land) of soils and the principle applies equally to recreation. There is a limit to the amount of pressure that ground will take when it is saturated with water'

A long green path

A simple solution, perhaps, would be to build a stone path alongside the Wall, this would certainly increase the Wall's carrying capacity and possibly help to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). An important decision has been taken, however, to which all of the major organisations concerned with the Wall's management and conservation, including English Heritage, have agreed as a common objective. It is considered that the best way of protecting the Wall and its earthworks, as well as any buried archaeology which may be only centimetres below the surface, is to maintain it in a natural grass setting.

A step in the right direction

The maintenance of a green sward was actually a condition of the government's approval for the National Trail and since 1995, when its implementation began, it has enthusiastically worked towards this goal. The Trail's origins go back to the *Dart Report (1974)* which documented the problems of overcrowding and erosion associated with largely unmanaged honey pot sites. The Hadrian's Wall Consultative Committee's response, *The Strategy for Hadrian's Wall (1984)*, made several recommend-ations that continue to influence the Wall's management to this day. In particular is the creation of a continuous footpath between the Tyne and the Solway, shadowing the historic line of the Roman Wall, which also measures to spread the visitor load.

A case study in countryside management

Hadrian's Wall Path is in the enviable position of enjoying a Wall-wide remit with the ability to influence its management with a consistency of approach, no stone is left unturned in the challenge to manage the path holistically and sustainably. Managing the Trail within its recreational corridor, creating a stable of circular routes designed to spread the visitor load further; detailed management planning; monitoring and the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) approach to visitor pressures are all integrated together. The Trail also participates within the Local Interpretive Planning (LIP) process, one of English Heritage's initiatives, in the drive to educate and inform visitors and locals alike about the Trail and its aims. Some observers have remarked kindly that it is a case study in countryside management.

Two's company. . .

It is thankfully not alone, however, when it comes to discussing the catalogue of recreation management issues. Grassland management, soils, LAC's, erosion control and LIP's can be tiresome concepts to the uninformed and most organisations are reluctant to engage themselves beyond a superficial grounding unless they absolutely must. The Trail forms part of an important triumvirate that shares a vision of sustainable tourism within the World Heritage Site.

The creation of English Heritage's co-ordination unit in Hexham in 1995, and the subsequent publication of the World Heritage Site Management Plan the following year (now under revision) brought

Above: Earthworks and footpaths are most vulnerable to erosion in the winter

for the first time a strategic approach to the Wall and its hinterland. That it continues to influence local and regional opinion formers is illustrated by the regional planning guidance document for the north east which instructs local planning authorities to take the Plan's policies into account when considering development proposals. The unit is now the first port of call for advice and enquiries within the World Heritage Site.

The co-ordination unit also acts as secretariat for the World Heritage Site Management Committee, promotes the establishment of LIP's, handles the statutory casework associated with applications for Scheduled Monuments Consent and in 2000 appointed an earthworks research officer. The latter also liaises closely with the National Trail Development Officer with the establishment of the LAC committees. Two minds are always better than one.

Three are even better. . .

The Hadrian's Wall Tourism Partnership, likewise, offers advice and support to the Trail with access to information and marketing channels, it also actively participates with the LAC committees. This is crucial because without a concensus with the tourism side visitor management strategies are rendered useless. Since 1995, for example, the Tourism Partnership's support has been instrumental in negotiating the diversion of several miles of footpath from the top of Hadrian's Wall. Similarly, topics have been discussed at the LAC forum which would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

'This is crucial because without a consensus with the tourism side visitor management strategies are rendered useless'

The winter message

Communicating the winter message to visitors is perhaps the most formidable challenge facing the Wall's managers but without it the aim of maintaining its sense of place as a green sward would be even more daunting than it already is. The Wall's soils, in a nutshell, need a rest in the wet winter months because, as already explained, this is when their carrying capacity is considerably reduced. In LAC speak any signs of compaction or bare soil at this time of year is a cause for concern, especially if large numbers of people continue to visit vulnerable sites.

The winter message, therefore, is about explaining the fragility and sensitivity of the soils during the winter and persuading visitors to visit, for example, the more robust paying sites and encouraging walkers to avail themselves of the large selection of circular walks situated within the Wall's corridor. The extract from '*Every Footstep Counts*' illustrates three of the most important messages, from a total of ten, to be found within the DDA compliant leaflet.

'Communicating the winter message to visitors is perhaps the most formidable challenge facing the Wall's managers'

The support of both the Tourism Partnership and English Heritage is instrumental in transmitting the message. It does not ask people to stay away from the World Heritage Site during the winter months but asks them to consider the effect that their visit might have on the welfare of the ancient monument. The triumvirate hopes that environmentally aware visitors will make more informed decisions about where and how to visit the Wall; if the ground is wet, in other words, they are asked to consider visiting another site.

A step into the future

The National Trail will breathe new life and bring significant benefits to the economy of Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. It cannot afford, however, to ignore the onerous responsibility of managing the path sustainably and without compromising the integrity of the historic landscape; English Heritage, UNESCO and the archaeological community at large will subject the project to close scrutiny. The project needs to maintain a consensus with a wide constituency of interests who need to engage with the thought process. How we recover from the foot and mouth crisis, maintain the right balance between economic development, promotion and conservation, will test the resolve of all concerned. '*Every Footstep Counts*' is only a start.

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David McGlade is Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail Development Officer.

No parking

Matthew Ward looks at what happened when the only motorised access to Prior Park was by public transport

After prolonged negotiation the National Trust finally took on responsibility for Prior Park Landscape Garden in May 1993. There followed a period of hectic activity to carry out vital repairs to the Palladian Bridge and dams. During this period of major engineering the only public access was in small prearranged parties. A lot of work was also carried out to clear the undergrowth and re-establish the paths, followed by laying of a new path surfaced with local quarry waste.

'This problem was turned into the positive decision to open the garden without a car park'

Public access

It was decided to allow public access as soon as these disruptive activities were over and so the inevitable question was asked 'where is the car park going to be?' Nowhere was obvious as there is only limited space in the area nearest to the entrance off the road.

This problem was turned into the positive decision to open the garden without a car park and encourage visitors to arrive by public transport, on foot, taxi, bicycle or with a coach party. There has been a growing trend towards encouraging visitors to arrive at National Trust properties by means other than their own cars and here was an opportunity to insist on this being the case. If such a scheme could work anywhere then surely it was here as a bus route passed by the gates and the garden is about a mile from Bath city centre for those fit enough to walk.

'Many saw it as a bold move, a strong local lobby did not believe it could work'

The debate

When the scheme was announced the reaction was mixed. Many saw it as a bold move, a strong local lobby did not believe it could work. They were afraid that people would turn up in their cars anyway, park in the local streets and cause problems in those areas.

The opinion of local councillors was also split and when it came to granting permission for Prior Park Landscape Garden to open, the vote was very close. A trial period of two years was set for the National Trust to prove that the scheme could work. Conditions were set, the National Trust was to pay for double yellow lines to be painted on Ralph Allen Drive and all visits were to be monitored to determine the means by which people were choosing to travel to the garden.

The garden finally opened in July 1996.

The trial period

During these two years 48,756 visitors passed through the gates, 40% arrived by bus, 45% on foot, 6% with a coach party, 2.5% used one of the three disabled parking spaces we have, 1.5% arrivedin taxis and the rest by bicycle, train, boat (on the canal) and motorbike. Careful records were kept for presentation to the council planners when they came to reconsider the National Trust's case. It did not take long to prove that people were willing to make the effort, leave their cars behind and get here by other means. The local councillor who opposed our opening changed his mind and has become a great ally.

Much work has been done to publicise the scheme and distribute a leaflet entitled 'Prior Park. How to get there'. As with many cities, Bath has horrendous traffic problems and the positive aspects of our scheme were soon being held up as a model of sustainability. We still get enquiries from interested bodies in this country and abroad.

We offer an incentive to all those who spend money to get to us, by bus, coach party or taxi. One pound off the admission for non-members or £1 voucher for National Trust members can be used against the price of our guidebook, a purchase at the NT shops in Bath and Dyrham Park or a cup of tea at Sally Lunn's tearoom in Bath.

During the trial period further restoration work was put on hold although there was plenty to do to consolidate the work already carried out, especially planting and improving the pasture and woodland. It was a period of uncertainty which we are pleased to be through.

The final approval

The application to have the trial clause removed from our permission to operate finally went to a meeting of the planners in November 1998. It went through smoothly, largely thanks to our now supportive councillor. Congratulations were offered to the National Trust for the initiative taken and thoroughness of its public relations work. The following evening the *Bath Chronicle* ran an editorial that stated 'Today's news that the garden has won permanent planning consent also puts the seal on a textbook marketing and public relations campaign by the National Trust.

Above: The experience from Prior Park proves that it is possible to operate a property where the only motorised access for visitors is by public transport

Several people were involved in this campaign but the contributions of Celia Mead, Public Affairs Manager for Wessex (and Bath resident) and Liz Roberts, Area Manager for Somerset deserve special mention. Their belief in the system and determination to win over public and bureaucratic opinion made all the difference.

In December the National Trust received awards from the West Country Tourist Board and Bath and District Business Environment Association in recognition of the success of the scheme and there are other awards we are being considered for.

The future

It is difficult to say whether we would have had many more visitors if a car park could have been installed. We are happy to continue as we are. Our advertising is aimed at tourists who flock to Bath's many attractions as well as National Trust members who just need encouraging to make that extra effort to visit.

The next phase of restoration will concentrate on the area known as the Wilderness where several features have been lost - the Serpentine Lake, Gothic Temple and Grotto. Plans are being drawn up by Corinne Renow-Clarke, Landscape Designer, and with a back-up document these will be used to present to possible bodies for funding.

The restoration may have happened sooner, had we not been forced to go through proving the Greener Transport policy, but it was a useful exercise and has led to a scheme which is a significant step in changing the car orientated nature of most visits to National Trust properties.

Matthew Ward is Head Gardener, Prior Park, Wessex.

This article first appeared in 'Views' 30 summer 1999.

Marsh magic

Andrew Nixon demonstrates how an environmentally sensitive site withstands tourism and uses it to benefit the local economy

Situated over the Kent-Sussex border the Romney Marsh Natural Area covers 33,000 hectares of low lying land that extends into the English Channel. It includes the river valleys of the Rother, Brede and Tillingham and the shingle foreland of Dungeness. A large part of the region's tourism is from overseas visitors due to its close proximity to the Folkestone and Dover Ferry Terminals and the Channel Tunnel. It is a clearly defined region set apart from the rest of the south east and the vast horizons and large open skies are often said to give a magical quality to the area.

The Romney Marsh Countryside Project (RMCP) was set up in June 1996 to care for the special landscape and the wildlife of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness. The RMCP has a role to play in the regeneration of the Romney Marsh Area through promotion of sustainable tourism and facilitating local community landscape and wildlife enhancement projects.

Interpretation and green tourism

The RMCP has the opportunity to work with various forms of interpretation. Whether it's the production of leaflets and interpretation panels, giving talks or guided cycle rides, each have their relative merits in the promotion of sustainable 'green' tourism. Both tourists and residents may want to learn more about an area and pitching it at the correct level is not

'The potential of the large expanse of the Romney Marshes for walking and particularly cycling had largely been overlooked'

always easy. If you want to inform or educate, it needs to invite those visitors who may not be interested in wildlife or features of historical interest, particularly in areas that are environmentally sensitive.

Sustainable green tourism has been a growth industry for a number of years and it's value in many areas of the country is now of paramount importance to the local economy. Interpretation plays a key role in the promotion of green tourism but the interaction and economic benefits are often difficult to assess and quantify. Assessment of these benefits is particularly important to organisations like ours when justifying the work we do. When considering promotion of green tourism it is important to know the assets within your area, particularly those that have been overlooked by existing tourism. The Romney Marsh has traditionally been associated with coastal tourism and Dungeness. The potential of the large expanse of the Romney Marshes for walking and particularly cycling, had largely been overlooked along with the exploitation of its long and fascinating history.

'Layout, space and images whether photos or artwork play a large part in the effectiveness of any interpretative literature'

On the trail. . .

Initially we targeted the promotion of walking on the Romney Marshes. Our response was the production of the '*Magic of Romney Marsh*' walks pack of nine self-guided trails. The pack was not only aimed at the holistic promotion of walking and green tourism on the Romney Marsh but also at supporting the businesses and services within the walking routes. The trails have proved very popular with a reprint of 2,500 within two years.

The walks pack was followed by the '*Romney Marsh Meanders*' cycle pack of five self-guided trails. We kept the same layout and format as for the walks pack with artwork by eminent local artists. Like the walks pack it also contained trails starting and finishing at various locations across the Marsh, taking the opportunity to highlight train stations, bus stops and local businesses whilst also providing information on how to get to and from the area.

Each pack retails for £2.95. We are a non-profit making organisation and so this money is set against the cost of production. The packs are distributed to various outlets including all local Tourist Information Centres, book shops and the visitor centres at the Dungeness RSPB and Dungeness Nuclear Power Station. Together the two packs were awarded a commendation by the AHI Interpret Britain award scheme and continue to sell well both locally and regionally.

The most recent project we have completed is the '*New Romney Town Trail*' that has been well received. It consists of two interpretation panels at separate locations in the town and a free leaflet. One panel depicts a storm in the 13th century and the other a modern day view of the town through the eyes of a seagull. New Romney is situated on the busy coastal road popular route with tourists. The Town Trail was created to encourage more people to stop and take a short pleasant walk to discover the history and stories of the Marsh town and support local businesses.

Perfect panels

For us, fixed interpretation refers primarily to outdoor display panels that provide information on the immediate environment. To date we have designed twelve interpretation panels. Nine separate panels based on four designs were put in place along the coastline to provide information on the wildlife, history and sea defences. Another eight panels were designed for Dungeness to provide information on the wildlife and the fragile nature of the habitats and what the public can do to protect it.

However, it is important to consider the location of any signs or interpretation panels. At very popular locations it is possible for areas to suffer from too much signage, giving rise to a cluttered look to the countryside. Similarly, where several long distance trails happen to overlap, waymarking posts can become covered with an untidy assortment of disks and stickers

Layout, space and images whether photos or artwork play a large part in the effectiveness of any interpretative literature. Over the years we have come to rely on individual designers and artists who deliver high quality products and keep all of the interpretative information within one stylistic family. The process usually starts with our ideas and text that they then develop. Local artists such as John Cann now produce the majority of our artwork, and we often rely on him to create more than a direct artistic representation but also to capture and interpret a theme or event in history.

Far left: The annual Cyclethon event; Above: A Wintry Marsh Scene by local artist John Cann

Above from top: A Seashore 'Smuggling Run'; St Rumwold's Church

'Parents who wouldn't normally participate in countryside events are also encouraged to become involved through their children'

Ghostly goings on

It is our belief that the best form of interpretation is through leader based events. These bring the project face to face with the public that allows us to communicate on issues in which groups are particularly interested. We lead approximately 50 events a year averaging 35 people on guided walks and 26 on bike rides. Events with leaders are important for improving the quality of the stay for many tourists and help to draw visitors away from honey pot coastal sites and out into the more remote areas and villages of the Marsh. An additional benefit over fixed interpretation is that event themes are flexible and can be related to recent topical events. We try to make our events light-hearted and a large proportion is aimed at children - ghost walks generally being the favourite. People like to be entertained and we find that children's events are very engaging allowing us to put across an educational message in a fun way. In addition, the parents who wouldn't normally participate in countryside events are also encouraged to become involved through their children.

The value of interpretation

It is relatively straight forward to get an idea of the value of guided walks and cycle rides. At the start of each event we gather information such as the number of people attending, where they come from, how many of our events they have attended and where they heard about them. This sort of information is vital if we are to tailor our events to be more effective and enable us to target a wider audience. In addition, by using our attendance figures and knowledge that an average cyclist or walker spends approximately £30.55 and £5.65 a day in the local area respectively, we can estimate that our events have brought £5,957 into the local economy over the last year.

For fixed interpretation and our walks and cycle packs, the value to green tourism is far more difficult to determine. The interpretation panels that we have produced are unlikely to draw people into an area. However, it is certain that in areas of fragile habitat such as shingle ridges and sand dunes, interpretation plays an important role in protection through education and thus helps to preserve or even 'improve' the site. In addition, good facilities improve the quality of their visit and encourages them to come again or recommend the area to others.

What does the future hold?

We have numerous interpretive projects either ongoing or planned for the near future. We are planning a new walks pack of ten self guided trails based around the 28 mile long route of the Royal Military Canal that borders the Romney Marsh. This historic feature was built as a defence against Napoleon (but also has strong links with the Romney Marshes history of smuggling) and is now a haven for wetland wildlife. The canal path itself also makes an excellent long distance trail. The new packs will be of the same format as previous publications. We also hope that we will be able to replace or upgrade the existing interpretive panels along the route and create a Royal Military Canal website.

A new cycling leaflet predominantly promoting the Romney Marsh section of the SUSTRANS National Cycle Route 2 will be produced later this year with distribution of 20,000 copies. The leaflet will encourage individuals to not only use the route but also promote the Marsh as a place to stop and stay. The route runs from Dover to Portsmouth and it is anticipated the cycle route will be busy and popular with the overseas visitor.

In addition we have recently completed our website which gives an introduction to the history and wildlife of the area as well as information about the work of the project and details of all events. We hope that the website will reach a different section of the public and provide farther reaching promotion of the Romney Marsh. The web site can be visited at www.rmcp.co.uk.

The RMCP is sponsored by Shepway District Council, English Nature, Environment Agency, BNFL Magnox Generation, British Energy, Kent Rural Development Area and South East England Development Agency.

Andrew Nixon is the Green Tourism Officer with the Romney Marsh Countryside Project.

Sustainability in Scotland

Caroline Warburton looks at plans to make Scotland's tourism more sustainable

Sustainability is a commonly used word nowadays. We have sustainable transport, sustainable agriculture, sustainable forests, sustainable energy, sustainable technology, and sustainable buildings. Even sustainable art and sustainable lifestyles. Everything it seems has to be sustained.

Tourism's growth has been dramatic and rapid. Sustainable development within the tourism field has become more high profile, at a local, national and international level. This article looks at some of the efforts being made in Scotland to make visitors and the tourism industry more sustainable and also to consider the role which education and interpretation can play in achieving this goal.

'Participation and awareness ran through the priorities and it became clear that education, interpretation and involvement by visitors and local communities were central to truly sustainable tourism'

Tourism, a global industry

World wide, tourism has increased exponentially over the last decades and is now arguably the largest industry in the world. Increased leisure time and availability of air travel have opened up new, sometimes fragile, areas to tourism opportunities. In many developing countries, where primary industries are in the decline and global markets intensify, tourism is heralded as the saving grace.

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (unofficially titled the Rio Earth Summit) brought sustainable development to global attention through Agenda 21.

In response, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) drew up nine priority areas for action, all of which looked towards sustainability in the tourism sector. Participation and awareness ran through the priorities and it became clear that education, interpretation and involvement by visitors and local communities were central to truly sustainable tourism.

Tourism in Scotland

Over the past 30 years, there have been dramatic changes in the tourism industry in Scotland, not least a growth rate of 43%. In 2000, tourism in Scotland had a turnover of £2.51 billion per year, which was 5% of the economy and 8% of the workforce (STB, 2000).

Tourism in Scotland is a complex industry comprising some 20,000 businesses. The large majority of these are small enterprises, although a number of major companies and public sector agencies are also involved. Tourism embraces a very broad spectrum of activities, from transport to retail, but its relationship with the environment is the one most vital to a healthy industry.

In 2000, the Scottish Executive published '*A New Strategy for Scottish Tourism*'. This document set out plans for the future of tourism in Scotland, highlighting training, e-commerce and quality assurance. Targets set in the strategy are to increase the number and economic value of tourist trips by 3%. With such predictions it raises issues of whether Scotland, and in particular Scotland's natural heritage, can sustain this level of growth.

Tourism and the environment

Scotland's environment is no less complex than the tourism it supports. Scotland's natural heritage is made up of a mosaic of ecosystems, some rare and fragile, others more robust, many of which have life cycles measured in centuries. Meanwhile, the built heritage and antiquities that form part of the fabric of our towns and cities are subject to the ever-increasing pressures of everyday use.

Environmental quality underpins much of what is good about Scotland, and is clearly valued by visitors. Research consistently shows that the natural environment is the key reason why people visit. A recent survey for the Scottish Tourist Board and Scottish Natural Heritage on visitor attitudes found that 49% of visitors surveyed stated that the natural environment was the main attraction of Scotland (System Three, 2000).

In an increasingly urban society the desire to escape to the wilder parts of Britain (and beyond) is growing. This movement brings in much-needed revenue for communities living on the peripheries but also puts an added strain on the diminishing natural environment. Visitors tend to be attracted to sites offering the unusual and the rare but it is precisely these sites - old buildings, mountains and wetlands - that are most susceptible to the impact of visitors.

Considerable work has gone into ensuring that these sites are interpreted in a way that does not alter the environment detrimentally. There are some excellent interpretation centres, offering visitors the chance to learn about these sometimes rare habitats and creatures whilst ensuring their impact is minimal. The use of CCTV in particular has enabled

tourism AND THE ENVIRONMENT
SUSTAINING SCOTLAND'S NATURAL ADVANTAGE

TEF

Above, from top: The logo for the Tourism and Environment Forum; The Trossachs Trundler encourages visitors to view the region by bus

'Sustainability is an important message but visitors should not be made to feel guilty about their actions'

people to see elusive wildlife through a camera without the need to get close to them.

The RSPB led the way with the Osprey Centre at Loch Garten, the Peatland Centre at Forsinard in Caithness and the Vane Farm Centre based on the geese at Loch Leven in Fife. The private sector has followed - the boat operator taking people to see the seabird cliffs of Shetland, the boat operators running trips to see the dolphins of the Moray Firth and the interpretation centres such as the Ardnamurchan Wildlife Centre.

With so many small businesses the economic impact which tourism could potentially have on a community is enormous but, as the recent foot and mouth disease outbreak has shown, when the countryside is out of bounds tourism in rural communities takes a tumble. The key is to balance two key factors, bring revenue to local communities through tourism yet at the same time maintain the quality and diversity of the natural environment. This is the goal: sustainable tourism in Scotland.

Awareness and action

In recent years the Tourism and Environment Forum has achieved a great deal in assisting the tourism industry to move along a more sustainable path. A key to this is awareness raising and education, both for the tourism industry and also the visitors themselves. Interpretation has a vital role to play in this.

Sustainability is an important message but visitors should not be made to feel guilty about their actions. Clever interpretation can have a significant impact on people's actions not only on holiday but when they return home too.

The Trossachs Trundler

The Trossachs Trundler is a good example of sustainable tourism. The majority of tourism journeys in the UK are car-based. For tourism to become more sustainable, the amount of pollution from transport needs to be reduced. But encouraging people out of their cars is not an easy task especially with inclement weather and a limited public transport system.

The Trossachs Trundler was brought out of its retirement to encourage visitors to leave their cars and visit the region by bus. The service offered a fixed route and passengers could alight at any of the stops around the circuit throughout the day. All the information about the service was contained in a clear and easy-to-read leaflet which could be picked up at Information Points around the area.

Five thousand visitors used the service in 1999. With only one vehicle, the frequency of the service was limited and there are plans to increase it. Visitors need confidence that the service is reliable and frequent. It is estimated that the frequency needs to be increased by three times to be effective.

Dolphin Space programme

The Moray Firth is home to a small population of bottlenose dolphins. Over recent years the area has become known for some of the best shore-based dolphin watching sites in Europe. In response to an increase in people visiting this area in the hope of seeing dolphins, the number of commercial dolphin watching boats in the Moray Firth has risen from one operator in 1990, to nine operators in 1996.

Well planned trips provide a source of revenue for local businesses, and an excellent educational opportunity for disseminating information about dolphins and other wildlife as well as the marine environment in general. An interesting and informative cruise should also raise public awareness of the need to safeguard cetaceans and other marine life in a healthy environment. However poorly managed cruises can disturb and even endanger the very animals upon which this activity depends.

In 1995 the joint partnership of Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Wildlife Trust and the EU LIFE programme initiated a voluntary Accreditation Scheme and Code of Conduct for dolphin watching boats in the Moray Firth. This innovative effort called the '*Dolphin Space Programme*' (DSP) was developed and implemented locally on a co-operative rather than statutory basis. The main objective being to reduce disturbance from dolphin watching boats and recreational craft i.e. to give the dolphins space.

The profile of the dolphins was raised by the involvement of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society through an 'adopt a dolphin' scheme. Twenty thousand members of the public adopted a Moray Firth dolphin of which 86% said that they would try and visit the area to see the dolphins for themselves.

MARY LEGG

Above: The high quality natural environment of Caithness is being marketed to attract more visitors to the area

It was predicted that an additional 21,000 bednights were created as a result of the scheme with an accompanying £600,000 in expenditure (Arnold, 1997).

The Accreditation Scheme leaflets and posters carried a distinctive dolphin logo and a number of eye-catching dolphin photographs together with the slogan 'Watch How You Watch'. A certificate, plaque and stickers were given to each accredited operator together with a comprehensive resource pack on the wildlife and environment around the Firth. Operators were encouraged to provide information to passengers and interpret the marine environment. A Wildlife Newsletter aimed at visitors was published. The newsletter was distributed widely and drew people's attention to the varied opportunities to see wildlife around the Firth, as well as accredited dolphin watching operators and sites on land from where the dolphins could be seen.

Although the Scheme has raised the profile of the dolphins and undoubtedly brought tourist revenue into the area, its on-going success rests on the continued support and commitment of all involved.

Caithness Wildlife Tourism Project

The Caithness Wildlife Tourism Pilot Project grew out of the identification of several deficiencies in the current delivery of wildlife tourism in Scotland. The overall aim of the project was to harness more effectively the wildlife and high quality natural environment in order to attract and retain visitors to the area; thereby improving the profitability of tourism business, creating employment and better meeting community and conservation aspirations.

This was addressed through the following tasks:

- Encouraging training, networking and product awareness
- Improving small scale infrastructure at key wildlife sites
- Encouraging the development of packages and itineraries
- Improving the marketing of wildlife tourism products.

Initial activities created a backdrop for the development work and events for example, a workshop for wildlife tourism professionals (both private and public sector) provided the opportunity to discuss the way tourism in the area could be developed in light of the other regional efforts. A visitor survey looked at why people visited the area, i.e. assessing the market. There were also meetings with various stakeholder groups in order to ensure that their opinions and ideas were incorporated in to any plans.

As a result work is underway to upgrade paths and signs, proposed itineraries for the region have been drawn up, a website is being developed to promote the Caithness region further afield as well as a larger visitor survey is planned for the summer. Also the local college has received EU funds to develop tourism training for local people, of which sustainable tourism will be a key component.

These projects may be diverse both in location and topic, but address the same issue - that is to work towards sustainable tourism. All this takes time and sustainable development is not something that can be successfully implemented in a hurry. It cannot be imposed from above and needs to have the support of the people it affects. The local community must adopt the process and feel that it is something worthwhile continuing with.

'The local college has received EU funds to develop tourism training for local people, of which sustainable tourism will be a key component'

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Caroline Warburton is Project Officer for Tourism and Environment Forum, a joint initiative by the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Nobody does it better

Anna White discusses sustainable tourism via community involvement and interpretation on the 'Hareshaw Linn Project' in the Northumberland National Park

'A Village Appraisal highlighted the need to improve the path and bridge in Hareshaw Linn, to allow easier access and enjoyment of the trail'

'A wealth of wonderful tales emerged that included collecting wild food, lovers' trysts and childhood adventures. . .'

Understanding and appreciation of a natural site is vital for sustainable tourism and no one can tell that 'site story' better than those living on its doorstep. A wealth of resources were made available for interpretation on this community based project, and together with conservation, the Northumberland National Park Authority aimed to increase the quality of the visitor experience.

The Victorian beauty spot

Hareshaw Linn is an attractive wooded valley in Northumberland National Park near the village of Bellingham. The winding riverside path, build by hand from river stones in Victorian times, takes you through rich woodland filled with rare ferns, mosses and lichens. The path crosses six bridges and leads to an exquisite 30ft waterfall at the end of the trail.

The National Park now manage the Linn though it has previously had numerous owners and many uses. Over the last 150 years it has been mined for minerals and was the site of an early hydro-dam which is now a scheduled monument. 'The Bandstand' area near the waterfall, once a site for music and picnics during Victorian times but now covered in moss, makes an attractive place to rest.

In 1996 a Village Appraisal highlighted the need to improve the path and bridge in Hareshaw Linn, to allow easier access and enjoyment of the trail. The conservation project received funding from Northumbrian Water Environmental Trust and Objective 5b. The interpretive budget was a generous £33,000. An interpretive plan was commissioned after which work began in 1999 steered by the Bellingham Community Trust working in association with the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA). An oral historian was contracted followed by a freelance interpreter to work on the project. Sustainability was upper most in our minds when beginning the project.

Project aims

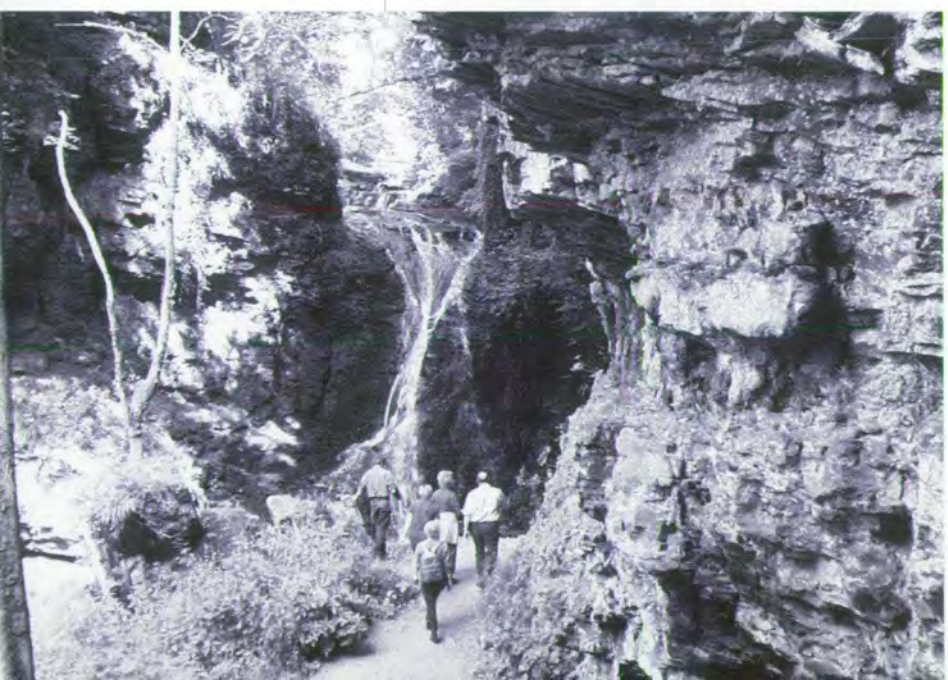
For conservation :

- Repairing sections of pathway
- Conserving the Hareshaw Dam
- Improving the woodland.

For interpretation and access:

- Working with community
- Making the area accessible for visitors and local people
- Increasing visitors' 'sense of place' through shared stories about the community's relationship with the Linn
- Increased understanding and thus care of the natural qualities of the Linn
- Enhancing awareness leading to marginal increases in visits, benefiting the local economy and giving a higher quality of experience.

To summarise we aimed to enhance the resource, improve visitor access and work closely with the community on the interpretive and educational elements of the project. But how should £33,000 be spent in what is already a naturally beautiful site?



Don't forget to ask

We asked the people of Bellingham how they wanted to see interpretation develop. The local steering group liked our idea of starting with an oral history project to find out more about the village's relationship with the Linn.

Bellingham folk were suspicious of the project at first that became more understandable when we discovered the strength of feeling for the site. A wealth of wonderful tales emerged that included collecting wild food, lovers' trysts, childhood adventures such as making crystal wireless sets, and bows and arrows out of hazel sticks using tree resin for the tips. Unique stories like these provided the basis for some excellent interpretation.

We continued to seek local opinions throughout



Opposite page: The Linn; Above from left: A 30 foot waterfall at the top of the trail; Many stories from the oral history project focus on memories of playing as a child in the Linn; The band which once played at the 'Bandstand' in Hareshaw Linn

the project at '*Cheviot Gatherings*', based in a local pub. What transpired was that the qualities they most valued was the natural beauty, wildlife, tranquillity and wilderness. What they most feared was over commercialisation, too many people, loss of serenity, litter and pollution.

Interpreting the Linn

As project co-ordinator I believe passionately that in order to interpret a natural site that locals feel so strongly about, you need to view it as you would your favourite area of countryside and only then you can see it through their eyes. Surprisingly, this doesn't mean your wildest ideas as an interpreter won't get realised. In fact ideas evolve, refine and when mixed with 'the melting pot of community ideas' create innovative results.

Because little on-site interpretation was appropriate on this site, most of the interpretation was developed off-site creating people centred interpretive projects in the village and beyond. These projects acted as a catalyst for spin-offs such as assisting leisure, boosting the local economy and utilising the community skill base. It also created a sense of pride, understanding and appreciation of the Linn by linking the interpretation into existing needs. . . vital lest local people ask 'do we want all this fuss'!

Working with a sculptor, the local youth group built a number of simple seats on site. The local writing group created a collection of poems inspired by the Linn. A local school designed banners and produced rap music based on the Linn. Working with a writer, musician and director the local drama group produced an inter-generational play '*Sticks and Stones*', based on the oral history of the area. The performances were popular both in Hexham and Bellingham, widening the appreciation and understanding of the site via a different media and also led to additional funding of £12,000 through the Countryside Agencies Local Heritage Initiative.

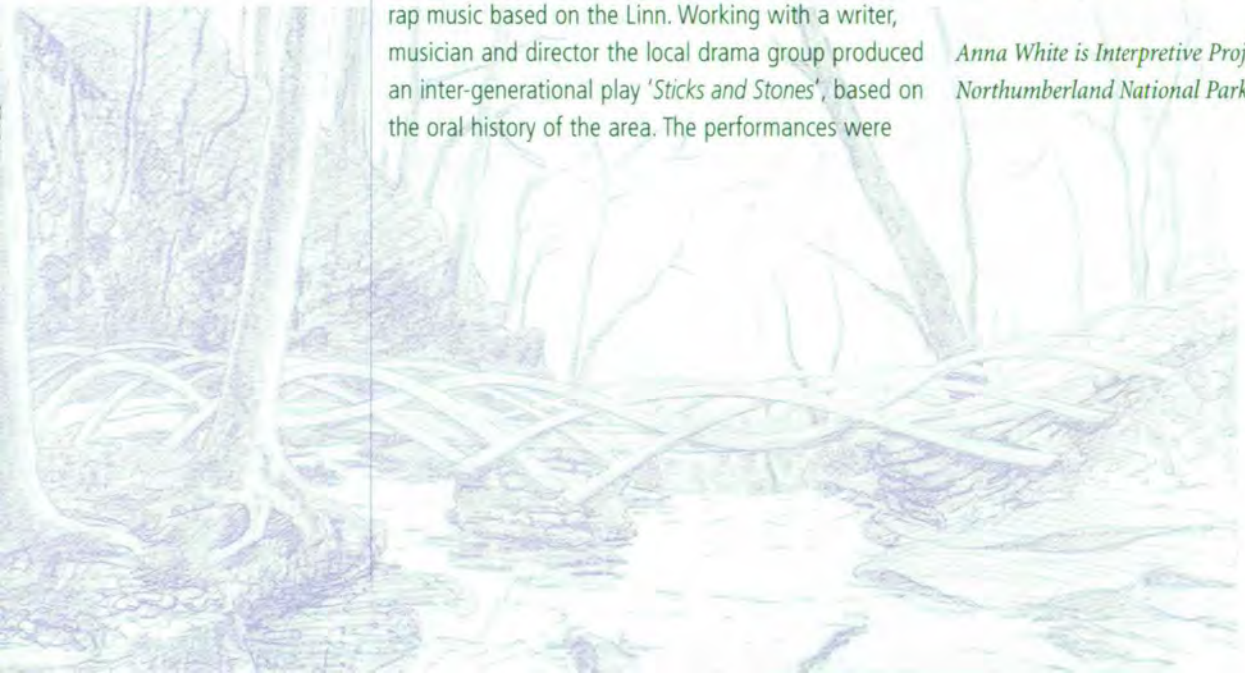
Sustainable tourism in a local resource

After a meeting with the local community and Bellingham Trade and Tourism Association, we began the design process of the leaflet and panel. An interweaving of the oral history with facts about site features and fairy story type illustrations of the social history made appealing designs for the interpretation. Themes showed visitors how all types of people had and continue to have enjoy and shape Hareshaw Linn. A bridge, designed by a sculptor to reflect the natural and flowing designs of the woodland, and more seats are due to be installed later in the year - the foot and mouth crisis permitting. In the long term the community now have additional resources to encourage tourists to their area. The local heritage centre has even requested to use some of the material collected from the project for a CD ROM to be used in their new heritage centre.

Sustainable tourism can benefit enormously from local stories and steering. You gain good favour, rekindle community spirit and develop a long term approach to tourism focused on value not volume. The results are powerful themes and messages to capture and inspire even the undiscerning visitor and create quality visitor experiences.

Anna White is Interpretive Projects Officer for Northumberland National Park Authority, Hexham.

Below: Sketch of the '6th Bridge' by sculptor Keith Barrett



Points of view

David McGlade looks at the implications of sustainable tourism on good business practise

'*Sustainability is about caring for our resources, using them wisely for future generations*' David Bellamy, (Foreword to this year's *Festival of the Countryside in Wales* magazine).

David Bellamy's vision really is as simple as that. As a foreword to the Festival of the Countryside that claimed to be the longest running sustainable tourism project in the country, some fifteen years,
it must make good business sense. If, by acknowledging the linkage between environmental (landscape, nature, heritage) and business capital, and by integrating tourism with the wider spectrum of countryside and conservation interests, then sustainable tourism projects can make a long-term contribution to the economic, social and environmental well being of a region.

The emergence in recent years of sustainable tourism initiatives and accreditation schemes that reward their green credentials, illustrate an increasing awareness in marketing terms alone of the value of attracting environmentally aware, often higher spend, visitors. Sustainability, however, is not simply another attachment to the marketing mix, a word to be exploited when considered expedient; raising expectations only to disappoint the environmentally aware (often overseas) visitor will do more harm in business terms than good. Instead, claims about sustainability need to be robust, well thought through and capable of standing up to scrutiny.

While the concept is easy enough to understand, the challenge of translating it into practice requires considerable commitment. There is an awareness by rural enterprises of the importance of managing tourism projects sustainably; energy audits, recycling schemes, better information about local walks and sourcing quality products locally all help to maximise the visitor experience, but other ideas can take more convincing. With a few notable exceptions, for example, voluntary visitor pay back schemes, a practical channel for tourists to contribute to the conservation of the places that they visit, are notoriously difficult to establish. Is this inertia evidence that promoting sustainability is as much about the cultural change process as anything else?

Promoting sustainable tourism, therefore, involves challenging value judgments and attitudes, not only those of visitors, but also the tourism sector itself. Comprised of thousands of individual decision-makers, the task of influencing such a fragmented sector is a formidable one. The partnership approach is the standard response but agreeing aims and objectives and finding common ground takes time and partners work to different time frames, another weakness.

The litmus test for tourism businesses in sensitive areas, perhaps, is the issue of carrying capacity at certain countryside sites. The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) approach offers a consensus based solution and creates linkages between agencies and individuals but, again, LAC conferences imply commitment and business lead-in times can be difficult to synchronise to those geared towards conservation objectives.

All in all, therefore, the road ahead is a challenging one. The pavement memorial to the nineteenth century architect Richard Grainger, who designed the now famous Grainger Town area of Newcastle upon Tyne, daily reminds passers-by of his vision. There is a resonance with his 150 year old message, today set in bold steel letters, it parallels our own contemporary aim of delivering sustainable tourism development. 'The past is my present to your future.'

David McGlade is Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail Development Officer.

Below: How can interpretation allow people to express their own connection to special places?

Yvonne Hosker asks how people define their favourite landscape

I think most British people have a very strong sense of and attachment to our various landscapes. I also believe that many of us have 'favourite' landscape type - places in which we feel most comfortable or think are most aesthetically pleasing. This both fascinates and excites me. Let me tell you why I think this.

I did some work a couple of years ago as part of the consultation for the DETR proposals to Government on Access to Open Countryside. It's now just gone through parliament as the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill . We were trying to find out 3 things: whether people could identify open country;

Far right: People have a strong sense of their right to access to open country

how they came to their definition, and; whether they could find access land on a map. We did this by firstly showing a series of photos of landscape types and asking them to score as open, not open or mixed/not sure; secondly in depth discussions about why they rated certain landscapes as open or not; and thirdly a map test to find and plan a route to access land.

What came out of this research was that people define and recognise open country by:

- Landscapes features - lack of fences, roads, walls or farms
- Its visual appearance - moorland, heath, downland, mountains and woodland
- Perceived ease of access - existence of paths and feelings of confidence and safety in walking in some places. This was often linked to who owns or manages the land - e.g. National Trust, Forestry Commission and National Park land is 'OK.'

What interested me most about this work was people's strong sense of land ownership and acute awareness of their rights of access. They would not walk in areas where they were unsure of whether they could legally go. Both Marion Shoard and Caroline Harrison have written about our long history of land ownership and the effect it has on our perceptions of our rights of access.

My second point about 'favourite' landscapes is very much as personal thing. I know that I, and many of my friends, have places in Britain or elsewhere that we love and feel at home. It may be the Scottish Highlands, the limestone dales of Yorkshire or the fens of East Anglia. Similarly, I know people who hate and positively feel uncomfortable on the moors of Lancashire and Yorkshire, for instance, or even any countryside at all! We also know that as a society our perceptions of attractive landscape have changed over the last few hundred years. Places that we have designated as protected areas on landscape quality grounds were once regarded as fearsome, ugly and downright dangerous.

This sense of belonging isn't always about where you were brought up or choose to live. Another theory linking to this was prompted by a conversation over a bottle of wine with some Canadian friends. This was about the difference in sense of history between Britons and European Canadians (forget for now the peoples who were there first). This is about the confidence that we Brits have about being here for thousands of years, having seen and done it all and made the mistakes. I suspect the French and Spanish share our long settled sense of being in the same place because of borders which changed little (compared to most European states). This seems very different from the newness of much of North American settlement and the almost naïve approach to landscape that seems to result. Sure, there are other factors at play - population densities, very different set ups for national parks etc. However, I wonder did the Europeans who went to N. America shed the weight of their long sense of belonging and does this result in their 'try anything once' and 'everything is possible' approach to life ?

So what has any of this got to do with interpretation and visitor management ? To be honest I'd rather leave that up to you to decide. For me, I'm currently getting to grips with a big interpretation / visitor management project and will no doubt struggle with these questions:

- How to encourage visitors away from a popular and well used site. The wider landscape has an equally long and fascinating story to tell but it's not so obvious.
- How to help visitors feel comfortable and welcome in this landscape which might not be the one for which they have a preference.
- How to let the landscape speak for itself and not tell visitors too much about why it's significant.
- How to allow people to express and experience their own spiritual connections to this special place and keep interpretation out of their way.

As regards the relevance to sustainable tourism I think there could be two things worth considering:

- How do we encourage and support local people to develop and manage the 'tourism product' particularly local stories and perceptions of places and events; and:
- How do we help visitors (or locals) enjoy a landscape or history with which they're not comfortable or have difficulty in connecting with

My memorable story to do with the first point comes from the Western Isles. Whilst working with local people on themes and stories for an interpretive strategy I can remember the Director of Tourism

talking at great length about how as a child she had spent lot of time sitting and playing out on the bog. She understood that to most people, outsiders in particular, bogs appear unattractive and boring but to her the bogs of Lewis are still magical places. During the same process of deciding on the subject matter for interpretive stories local people unanimously agreed on the special 'essence' of Western Isles - they wanted to tell visitors about the quality of the light and links to the relationship of land and sea.

My thoughts on the second point revolve around recent immigrants to Britain, particularly people who came from the Asian sub continent. I have heard it said, and repeated without question, that the main reason why many British Asians and their families tend to visit and use the countryside less than white British people is that they associate countryside with the past and poverty and want to get on with their new lives. I'm sure there are, in fact, many more practical as well as cultural factors influencing people's recreational behaviour and some more learning on the part of interpreters to be done.

I have many similar experiences when working with communities on decision making, planning and implementing all kinds of environmental, interpretive or tourism based projects. The lessons are quite simple: to listen and understand that someone else's version of events or view about what is significant can be valid and is often exciting and refreshing. As interpreters we all know this - there is usually no one truth or story about a place or event. I'm pleased to say that I see much evidence out there of interpreters working in just this way. Secondly, the 'recipients' of our interpretation will filter what we tell them through their cultural background and existing knowledge to eventually construct their own meaning of what we've presented to them

One final story: Whilst walking in the forests of Cyprus we followed a nature trail for some miles and came out on to a ridge from which there was a lovely view down into the valley and across the island. There in front of us was a wooden sign saying 'Beautiful view of the Stavros Valley' - I wish I'd taken a photo to remind myself if ever I feel tempted to point out to visitors that something is beautiful.

So, have you finally decided on your favourite landscape or place? Trying asking people over that bottle of wine or dinner - it may be an interesting conversation, especially if you get on to why they think that!

Yvonne Hosker is an independent facilitator who works in the fields of interpretation, community consultation and equalities issues. She can be contacted on 0161 432 5951.