

Corporate Outcome D: People feel welcome in the National Park and have the opportunity to participate in recreational activities that enhance the quality of their lives by ...

- 1. Providing recreational opportunities to key audiences particularly to children, young people and under-represented groups from within the Park and from surrounding urban areas (Priority level 2)*
- 2: Providing a network of statutory and permissive routes, access to open country and other relevant opportunities (Priority level 3)*
- 3: Influencing partners and land managers to improve appropriate accessibility and opportunities for recreation (Priority level 3)*

Over 31,000 customers used the Authority's recreational facilities during 2008/09 (including cycle hire and guided walks/ events). Children and young people accounted for 9.1% of users, minority ethnic groups 4.6%, people with a limiting long term illness or disability 3.6% and people from deprived areas we are working in 5.0%.

Activities focused on key target groups included 10 fully supported walks for groups with special needs (in partnership with local health authorities) and 15 'next steps' walks designed as a 'bridge' between the fully supported walks and the mainstream guided walks as well as over 250 mainstream guided walks.

Supporting this work was maintenance of the rights of way and access network, with 90% of footpaths and other rights of way easy to use. Over £30,000 was targeted to undertaking a comprehensive programme of path improvements in partnership with Highway Authorities. We worked with water companies on over 40 projects such as Artists in the Forest and Springwatch.

The Authority developed a strategy for managing off-road vehicular activity in partnership with key partners and continues to develop management plans for the 8 priority routes identified in the Strategy.

A Recreation Strategy and action plan for the National Park nears completion, following extensive consultation with partners, the public and user groups. This will form a focus for the Authority's future activity in this area, as well as that of our partners.

Our work with Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council to deliver improved recreation opportunities on routes both inside and outside the National Park faced some unavoidable delays but work is progressing and will be carried forward into 2009/10.

Looking ahead to 2009/10

We will be further focusing our activity to increase the proportion of usage of our facilities from among our target audiences. With the completion of the Recreation Strategy, we will also be able to review the recreation mix we are delivering.

Key actions for 2009/10 include:

- *Completing the recreation Strategy and action plan and begin implementation (L1) PIP 1.1a/3, 3.4a/1,2*
- *Provide a cycle hire service with particular promotion to our priority audiences (L1) and review the effectiveness of the service (L2) PIP 4.3b/1*
- *Provide a programme of guided walks, targeted at our priority audiences (L1), including further development of the supported walks with a wheelchair walk (L2) PIP 3.4a/3*
- *Manage maintenance of the rights of way and access network, targeting at least £50,000 of resources (L1)*
- *Continue implementing the strategy to manage off road vehicle use (L1)*
- *Build on partnerships with water companies and the National Trust to enhance recreation opportunities (L2) PIP 3.4a/3*

Recreational Motor Vehicle Use: Operation Blackbrook

'Operation Blackbrook' combines the efforts of police, Authority staff, and vehicle user groups to curb inappropriate and illegal vehicular activity in the National Park. Operations are held every month or so, have achieved considerable publicity, and have been successful in reducing the number of complaints received about this issue.

Day long initiatives with representatives from the Authority, the Highway authority and the police give advice and information about the best ways of minimising the disruption caused to residents and other users of the land to the riders or drivers of the vehicles as well as the negative impact on sensitive areas of the Park (for example, one location was near Castleton which contains an archaeological site on English Heritage's "Heritage at Risk" list).

Rather than enforcing the law, the operation is designed to engage 4x4 drivers and trail bikers in a friendly way to give them information to help them act responsibly. This joint operation is proving a great success to gain support from the off road drivers or riders. At the same time villagers in the local communities know that the issue is being taken seriously and the partners in the operation are working together to investigate any issues that 4x4 or trail bike use might cause for them.

A section has been created on the Peak District National Park Authority website at www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/vehicles to give advice to motorists and residents about the issue. It includes maps of areas where drivers and riders should avoid, details of how to report problems and case studies of areas where issues have been successfully managed.

For 2009/10 routes are being electronically logged to determine use levels and patterns to help inform the police operations, and monitors general use levels of sensitive routes. New signs are being erected on unsurfaced highways by Peak District staff, on behalf of DCC Highways, to inform users of legal status, and dangerous/problematical areas. These signs are intended to reduce conflict between users, and encourage safe and appropriate behaviour.