

BREAKOUT SESSION

Topic 1

Measuring the Impact of Recreation on Forests

Lead Facilitator- Simon Smith – GIS Planning Forester Forestry Commission

Facilitators: Rene Henkens, Julia Branson, Helen Chalk, Sarah Colas

Key Discussion Points

1. What do you believe to be the main impacts from recreation?
2. How can we measure each of these impacts?
3. How do you measure the relative impacts of different activities?
4. What kinds of indicators? What kinds of data need to be collected?
5. How do you assess the benefits of recreation against its impacts?

Topic 1-Measuring the Impact of Recreation on Forests

1 - What do you believe to be the main impacts from recreation?

What are the impacts of recreation?

- *Disturbance to habitats, wildlife and farming; pollution, litter, dog waste, noise, drop of recreation quality, etc. Different impacts by recreation type, e.g. cycling and climbing. Waterbodies and habitat islands are more susceptible to impact, e.g. Jet skis impact on anglers. People usually leave litter in urban environment (car park) rather than in the forest itself. Increased traffic, pollution from cars, reduced air quality.*

Are the impacts only negative?

- *Not necessarily. Erosion is an impact, but it benefits some species.*

Who is concerned by these impacts?

- *The researcher, the managers (for biodiversity conservation, timber production, hunting, health and safety) or the visitors and users (impacts on the sites or conflicts between users). What about the carrying capacity concept, is it useful in practice? Open sites have perceptually different carrying capacities to woodlands, which impacts on where people visit.*

Why do we get impacts from recreation?

- *Precise measurements provide an evidence base to show users that their activity is having an impact. Can be used target education to where the impact is.*

How do we reduce these impacts?

- *Messages to the public are better coming from other groups and not the land manager (e.g. Kennel Club and not the Forestry Commission).*
- *Need to encourage people to make change behaviour without them realising it. For example make alterations to tracks to discourage use, using log or rock barriers. Hard to change established behaviour.*
- *People are happy for protective measures for habitat and wildlife to be put in place as long as they have no direct impact on them.*

2 – Why do we measure each of these impacts?

Is it important to have a precise measure, or do we want an assessment to limit or avoid effect?

- *Precise measurements provide an evidence base to show users that their activity is having an impact. Can be used to target education where the impact is and increase public awareness.*

- *Both scientific and perception analysis are needed to support change in behaviour. Helps to inform where to target spending and justify management decisions.*
- *To find out why people come, as most don't visit to see the wildlife. The more you understand about an audience the more information you have that may help to change behaviour. Other country parks areas can be created that people can visit closer to home.*

3 -How to measure impact?

Which tools to use? How?

- *GPS, questionnaires, car counters, observations, models?... Phone survey? Internet? Leaflets?*

Do we want a direct measurement of impacts (trampling, erosion, picking, fauna, interaction with other users) or indirectly by counting visitors and analysing recreation uses and its dissemination inside the forest and natural areas? Analysis can be qualitative/ quantitative.

- *Noise monitoring, visual intrusion.
Carrying capacity for a site- what are critical numbers before impacts are unmanageable or people go elsewhere?*

Is it useful to have a separate measurement of the different uses or is it better to have a global assessment of recreation use?

- *Monitoring is a lengthy process, and large sample sizes are needed.*

Would general data be acceptable (e.g. from another location) or do you need local data?

- *Separate sites have different characteristics. Whatever indicators and data collection methods used, need to ensure study is repeatable.*

What kinds of indicators will convince stakeholders of impacts on conservation from recreation?

- *This depends on what impacts you are looking at, for example the nutrient status of soil, bird numbers*

4 - What kinds of indicators? What kinds of data?

- *Need data to answer issues managers have to face, but also dealing with stakeholders and general public interest. Not possible to create generic list suitable for all forests as data depends on what impacts you are looking at, for example nutrient status of soils, bird numbers. Qualitative and quantitative; maps, statistics, graphics.*

Can we compare results (maybe with additional results from qualitative surveys) and modelling methods? How can they be complementary? Which results? Which data for the models and how to collect them? How to compare, is it possible to transfer result to other sites?

- *Some data is transferable, as it indicates trends, for example disturbance to nesting birds from recreation. Whatever indicators and data collection methods used, need to ensure study is repeatable.*

5 - How do you assess the benefits of recreation against its impacts? Which means/resources are required? (technical, human, financial)

- *Difficult to research, as there are different funding streams for environmental and recreational research. Need to disseminate results of research effectively.*
- *Many studies may be being repeated, and projects that are funded are not necessarily useful for the practitioners on site. There is a need for a central repository of information on recreation/ biodiversity*
- *Budget. Time must be spent co-ordinating funding from different sources.*
- *Program of work, time available, partners and skills base. Need good communication between different partners for joint projects, and within individual organisations.*
- *Time spent co-ordinating funding from different research funds*
- *Volunteers are good resources, but need to be managed by professionals.*

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Topic 2 Channelling Recreation & How

Lead Facilitator- Christelle -ONF

Facilitators: Alain Freyet, Daisy Copeaux, Joseph Zwaenepoel, Peter Thaxter

Key Discussion Points

1. What methods can be used to influence the way people use the site for recreation?
2. What are the main issues with implementation of these methods?
3. How do you monitor the success of these methods and for how long?

1. What methods can be used to influence the way people use the site for recreation?

- *Close the site all together.*
- *Move the heart of the site (e.g. the entrance, car parking, leisure areas, pathways etc).*
- *Create new attractive sites in order to spread the public or encourage them to use these new sites rather than the sensitive ones.*
- *Markings/Signage/waymarking – on the ground, on trees, sign posts, using arrows, colours etc.*
- *Marking/delineating forbidden areas through signage or barriers, fences etc.*
- *Ensuring there is a lack of facilities in the areas where you want to keep visitors away from and good facilities in areas that are more robust.*
- *Widen certain paths to encourage visitors to use these rather than others – e.g. to allow 2-way movement.*
- *Utilising vegetation as a natural barrier.*
- *Zoning of the area – in certain areas/sites seasonal closures or restrictions could be introduced etc.*
- *Introduce road closures to limit access to certain areas.*
- *Improve access to preferred/robust areas.*
- *Reduce the size of some car parks to reduce the number of visitors that can park there.*
- *Have a physical designated ‘entrance’ to encourage people use this and not just enter wherever they feel like. Also need to give good directions to trails etc from car parks.*
- *Restrict the use of some pathways – e.g. make them walking only pathways.*
- *Charge for access and parking in sensitive areas*
- *Create areas of interest (view points, attractions, interpretation boards, wildlife information panels, woodland activity points etc) within robust sites.*

2. What are the main issues with implementation of these methods?

- *People use the sites for different activities, in different ways and for different reasons. Therefore it is important to understand and cater for the specific needs of all users – What do they need to be satisfied? What are they looking for in the site? What attracts them to one site more than another? Do they choose different sites for different activities? What is their attitude?*
- *Do we need different kinds of visual marks and signage to cater for different kinds of visitor?*
- *It would also be useful to initially observe peoples’ use of the sites, the directions they go etc.*

- *It is then important to understand what types of activity are not compatible with sensitive sites – are these occurring there? How can we target these activities to reduce their effect?*
- *It is very important to communicate and engage with the public on decisions and to improve education and visitor stewardship, especially locals (as there are often more problems with locals than with tourists or non-local visitors) – through local and national media, through rangers and volunteers, public events, focus groups, working with schools, leaflets etc.*

3. How do you monitor the success of these methods and for how long?

- *Field observations and surveillance (e.g. through surveys, GPS tracking – beware of cost! – are there possibilities to use volunteers).*
- *Evaluation of public satisfaction (e.g. through surveys, uptake of information, feedback from events etc).*
- *Counter devices – e.g. cycle/car/vehicle counters put into roads at car parks of sensitive sites to determine any changes in volumes of traffic accessing the sensitive area.*
- *Introduce an Internet feedback/comment system?*
- *Evidence of habitat and species recovery in sensitive areas (e.g. through species counts and surveys etc).*

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Topic 3 Engaging the Public in Forest Management

Lead Facilitator- Martin Fitton – Consultant FC

Facilitators: Florence Deronce, Anne Francoise, Victoria Edwards, Edouard Jacomet.

Key Discussion Points

1. Why involve the public in forest management decision making?
2. Who (in terms of the public) should be involved in forest management decision making?
3. In which areas of forest management is it important to involve the public?
4. Problems faced in engaging the public and ways of overcoming these.
5. What are the most appropriate methods for involving stakeholders?

1. Why involve the public in forest management decision-making?

- *The public are stakeholders – they use the forest and therefore have a vested interest in its management. Seeking and taking into account public opinions and points of view may help people to accept forest management decisions made because they feel they have been part of making that decision. If a decision is taken without involving the public they may refuse to accept/follow the decision or they can ignore it.*
- *If the public have been a part of the decision then they must also take responsibility for the decision – rather than just the managing authority having all the responsibility.*
- *Listening to the public also means that you can meet their demands better because you understand their needs and wishes. A lack of involvement can lead to incorrect policy that is not adapted to the people's demands, which could cause significant problems/opposition.*
- *The legal and political frame of the country, that is, democratic, means that public engagement tends to be expected.*
- *Public engagement and communication encourages working together (it could generate more creative solutions), and enables authorities to get across messages (e.g. of sustainability). It also helps the public to be better informed about the work of the forest managers, the work they do (e.g. harvesting processes etc), and all the important issues that need to be considered when managing a forest when you want to promote and encourage recreation, but protect habitats and wildlife.*
- *Forest management cannot succeed without it – it is necessary and helps to avoid conflicts.*

2. Who (in terms of the public) should be involved in forest management decision making?

- *It may depend on the management focus – e.g. for recreation, the people involved should represent all the different kinds of visitors.*
- *Young people (e.g. school age) should be involved more to encourage responsible behaviour from an early age and because they could take messages back to their parents.*
- *Local residents should also be involved in decision making, as they are concerned about the visiting public – e.g. about traffic levels, noise etc.*
- *On the one hand we should understand the expectations of the wider public. On the other hand, the wider public are often not aware of the local issues, where the local public are.*
- *Communities should be involved e.g. Ile de France should be involved in management in Fontainebleau as this is where most of the week-end and holiday visitors come from.*
- *Scientists can also help decision making through steering groups.*

- *If issues deal with international problems, international associations should be involved.*
- *When a problem arises the solution should be found with those that are linked to the source of the problem.*

3. In which areas of forest management is it important to involve the public?

- *It is important to involve the public in the consultation process for management actions e.g. when closures are suggested.*
- *Consultation often occurs when a problem or issue is raised that conflicts with public opinion – Why not develop consultation before the problems occur so that they don't occur in the first place and so dynamic management can be implemented.*
- *Management of the forest edges should involve nearby communities, especially where they are causing some impacts in these areas – there is a need to work together to solve them.*
- *The public should be involved in improvements, not just when there are problems.*

4. Problems faced in engaging the public and ways of overcoming these.

- *Sometimes it is difficult to get the involved in discussions – few people concern themselves with ecological issues – those that do often have strong opinions and may be activists or extremists. We should also be seeking the opinion of those that are not represented but perhaps more representative of the average visitor to the forest (e.g. general local public, tourists etc).*
- *We really need to think carefully about how we engage the public's interest – being provocative and threatening might engender greater involvement!*
- *It may be difficult to have representatives from all user groups involved in discussions – who will represent the needs of the “absent” groups – e.g. the wider public, tourists, wildlife? – perhaps there is a need to involve large representative organisations (such as the RSPB) so that wildlife needs are included.*
- *People may have unrealistic expectations about what the forest can provide or what the land managers can do – this must be managed.*
- *Public workshops need to be carefully planned, organised and thought through to have maximum effect.*
- *It is often difficult to inform the main users, who often visit the forest, because they think they already know everything.*
- *It may be easier to work separately with different user groups as this could limit conflict (problems are often understood differently by different users and they each have different ways of tackling them), but this means that*

the different user groups do not hear and learn about the opinions and perspectives of other groups.

5. What are the most appropriate methods for involving stakeholders?

- *Use technology to reach wider audiences and generate more engagement – e.g. contact with young people via the internet.*
- *Establish forums for each forest with information and discussion boards on the internet.*
- *Talk about global/pan European initiatives in a top down approach to stimulate local interests in Forestry Commission Disseminate information about good practice at points of user contact (e.g. at livery yards).*
- *Use visualisation techniques to help forest users see how a forest can change over time under different situations (e.g. 3D imagery of scenarios if nothing is done about recreational impacts or global warming, or visualisations of what the forest looks like at different stages of the harvesting process) – education, education, education!*

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Topic 4 Future Research and Collaboration

Lead Facilitator- Alison Field – FC Project Development Manager

Facilitators: Bruce Rothnie, Celine Maurer.

Key Discussion Points

1. Priorities for future collaborations and projects. What are the most important areas of future research to support responsible and sustainable management of sensitive landscapes?
2. Who are future partners?
3. What are main obstacles to delivery?

Topic 4 – Future Research and Collaboration

1. Priorities for future collaborations, projects and research.

- **Policy.** *Build clearer targets and policies for recreation provision - there are strong nature conservation policies and legalisation, but nothing comparable for provision of public access. Need to build stronger policy links between public health and social benefits of outdoor recreation.*
- **Evidence.** *Need to build stronger evidence base about recreation activity and its impacts on nature to test existing assumptions – this evidence needs to be gathered across a range of landscape types and conditions. Can we measure carrying capacity of different landscape types? There also needs to be a continuity of monitoring to assess whether impacts increase cumulatively over time. Can we also investigate why people select certain sites and their preferences for landscape types? A future project may start to pull together existing knowledge about behavioural activity in different landscapes.*
- **Quality Experiences.** *Future recreation provision should work on quality of experience rather than increasing numbers of visitors to countryside sites.*
- **Extending Opportunities.** *Can we extend provision of access to alternative sites to reduce pressure on sensitive sites? Can we learn from the relationship of landscape type and user behaviour to help design and provide new places for outdoor recreation? We need more sites and more choice. We need to understand needs of public and manage outdoor spaces to meet those needs and those of future generations. Should provision be improved and concentrated closer to where people live?*
- **Encouraging Access.** *We need to analyse how to provide incentives to landowners to provide access and create attractive landscapes for access. Are existing providers lacking skills to encourage and manage access? Can these skills be brought in from other sectors?*
- **Climate Change.** *Is there a link between climate change and predictive modelling of access? Will leisure activities change with climate change? Any future modelling of recreation needs to be flexible to adapt to trends in outdoor recreation.*
- **Consciousness raising for young people about conservation issue.** *Developing different actions which allow land managers to reach children and young people : CD to distribute to schools located next to the forest.*

- **Developing programs such as volunteering.** *Sharing knowledge; for example, the New Forest volunteer program could be exported in France; mutual support about advantages and drawback concerning organisation, motivation, behaviour in the long run.*
- **Reconcile Recreation with Wood production.** *To think ahead about future movements of urban people towards natural areas and a growth in the demand for wood energy. To develop and test out one or more strategies in order to allow these two functions to coexist.*
- **Methodology to assess the robustness of an area.** *Widen the research about the impacts of the planning on the long run, for example those looking for raising the sites robustness. When should we favour special equipment instead of access prohibition for a certain area?*
- **Better promote existing knowledge.** *Develop exchanges between land managers. Develop information and communication (for example, in the case of public channelling, many techniques are already known, but too little information is exchanged).*
- **Recreation management technique**
 - *anticipating future issues:*
 - *special equipment after climate disturbances*
 - *landscape role in recreation management*

2. Who are future partners?

Continue strong relationship that has developed between two state forest services in France and UK, extending beyond the special link between the New Forest and Fontainebleau

Tourism sector, local authorities and media, education sectors, psychologists (academic), other designated landscapes across Europe; local businesses; recreation businesses

Community participation at the outset – involve local people in shaping provision, studying issues and suggesting solutions. Investigate innovative ways of encouraging involvement. Use volunteers to monitor actions and build ownership for recreation provision and management.

Any project with too many partners can be difficult to develop co-ordinated action, but perhaps a national project co-ordinated through a network of organisations with similar issues may be beneficial (eg Countryside Recreation Network in UK?)

3. What are main obstacles to delivery?

- *Developing a better understanding on the factors that affect people's choice of site and routes*
- *How do you get the key people involved in developing new ideas and programmes?*
- *Need to link projects to strategies at higher, political level and demonstrate strong link with social agenda*
- *Projects need to be embedded within policy and strategic spatial planning – links to provision of greenspace around towns*
- *Need to measure satisfaction as well as behavioural change*
- *Understanding potential benefits to business and tourism partners*
- *Co-ordinating communication campaigns*
- *How do you get people enthused to be involved and contribute?*
- *Difficult to get people engaged with forest issues, unlike provision of other social services for example.*
- *Need to lobby for funding for countryside access by linking benefits with other social agendas and climate change*
- *What is the better scale to develop a recreation policy ?*
- *Which level of decision ? networks ? stakeholders ?*
- *Need innovative ways of sharing measures/interpretation*
- *How do you encourage people to pay to visit special sites?*
- *More practical examples, agreed and monitored scientifically, are needed to inform future policies and actions*