

# **'I like to think when I'm gone I will have left this a better place'**

Environmental volunteering: motivations, barriers and benefits



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The environmental volunteering sector in Britain and abroad could benefit from the findings of this research which was undertaken to provide a better understanding of the motivations for, barriers to and benefits of environmental volunteering for volunteers and the organisations that manage them<sup>1</sup>. In addition to reviewing the literature, quantitative and primarily qualitative approaches were employed to address this aim. Primary interview data were collected between August and October, 2007, and involved 12 organisations across Britain comprising a total of 88 volunteers (volunteering for 10 different organisations), 11 national/regional organisation representatives and 15 local organisation representatives.

Traditionally, environmental organisations have focused on environmental management to improve the state of ecosystems and biodiversity. Environmental volunteers play a vital role in supporting organisations to achieve this objective and the desire to improve landscapes and live more sustainably are strong motivating forces for many volunteers. The interest in environmental volunteering is increasing in part due to growing community concern over climate change and other environmental threats and people are realising they can play a positive role through actions such as reducing material gain, recycling, choosing alternative transport options and environmental volunteering. In some regions of Britain the demand for environmental volunteering has exceeded organisations' capacity to manage the numbers of willing contributors. More could be done if resources were increased to support the organisations and their volunteers. Environmental volunteering not only benefits the environment but also the associated communities and volunteers.

The research found that volunteers are not only motivated for environmental reasons but also by the personal benefits they gain from the outdoor opportunities and the social nature of environmental activities. Volunteers learn new skills and meet others while improving their health, well-being and quality of life. Environmental volunteering offers a range of opportunities to suit people with diverse interests and abilities. The environment provides a common language for all and a shared purpose independent of gender, ethnic background, age, physical ability, mental functioning, socioeconomic status or knowledge of environmental management. The diverse nature of volunteers provides organisations with a myriad of skills to draw from while also challenging organisations to accommodate differences in the backgrounds, abilities and interests of the volunteers. Organisations need to ensure they involve volunteers in decision-making while providing them with a range of opportunities, choice, rewards, recognition, flexibility, support and adequate resources to complete the environmental activities.

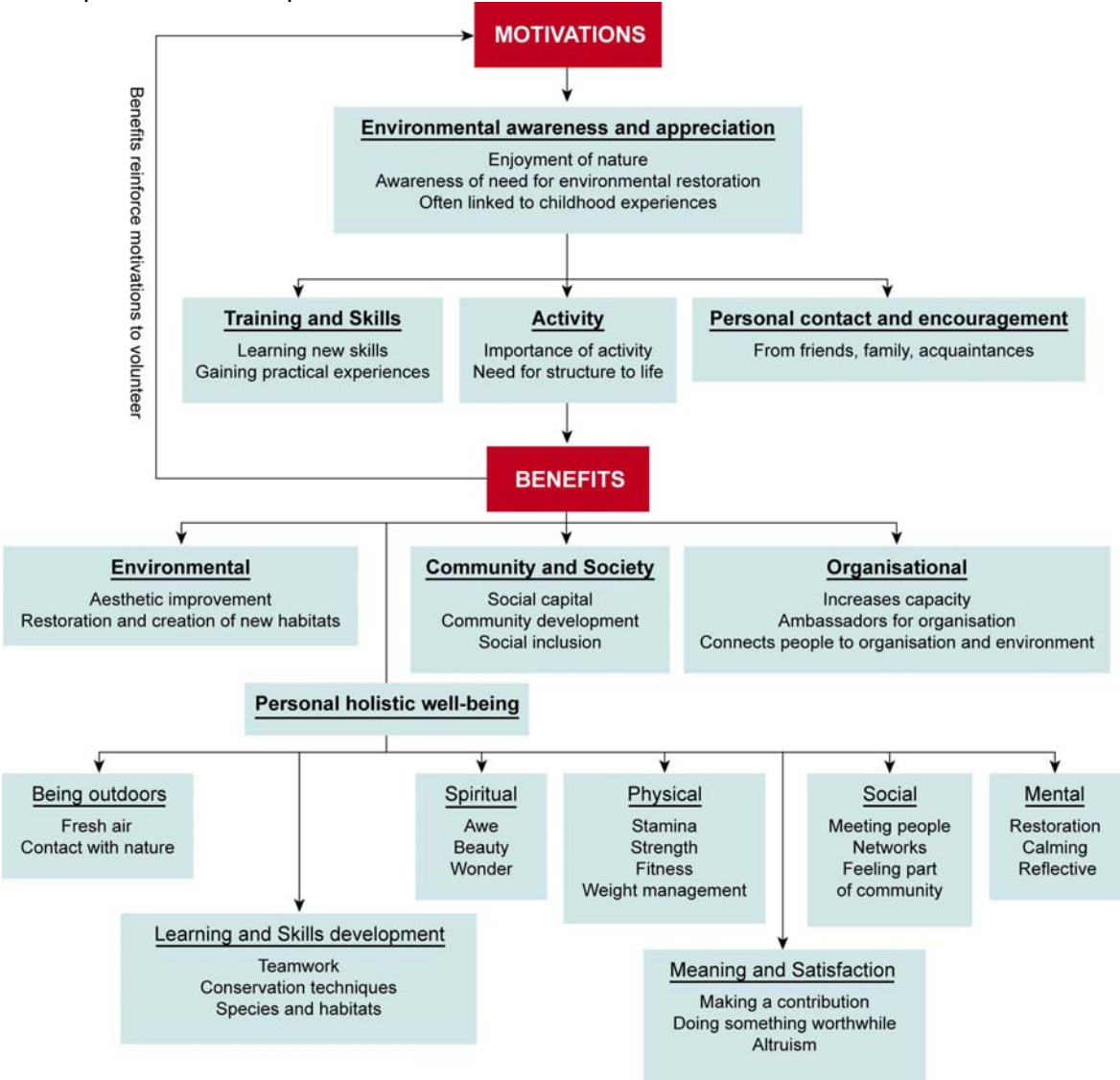
In addition to the personal benefits gained by volunteers, communities also benefit from environmental volunteering with improved cohesion and access to green spaces. Organisations that foster broader and deeper community involvement in decision-making and participation will be in the best position to increase capacity, respond to change and sustain a vital role in the community. This involves developing partnerships with local volunteer centres, other environmental organisations and other sectors within the community. Partnerships have become an increasingly important aspect of contemporary volunteering practices. This reflects a new focus and collaborative dynamic in the environmental volunteering sector. It provides opportunities to move beyond traditional types of volunteering and volunteers who have an interest in the environment; to reach new groups who may have specific needs and aspirations such as attaining improved mental and physical health, social connections, skills and abilities, and a greater purpose in life. The sector is also increasingly focused on the delivery of a range of broad government agendas including community development, health, and education and skills.

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<sup>1</sup> An eight page summary of the research findings are available at <http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/fr/INFD-7GDHD3>

The conceptual framework below outlines the key motivations and benefits identified through the research. The motivations highlighted in this framework are based primarily on the findings from individual volunteers. Environmental awareness and appreciation provided an overarching motivation for many (although not all). The benefits section outlined in the framework are those identified by volunteers and organisational representatives (both national and local) and focus on benefits to the individual person, to the environment, to local communities and wider society, and also benefits to the organisations that manage and develop volunteers. The benefits people described were not hierarchical they related to the context in which people volunteered and to their own previous experiences. The volunteers generally talked about the benefits they gained in a number of ways rather than stating that one benefit was more important than another.

There appears to be a continuum from what could be termed the more altruistic aspects of volunteering through to volunteering that is focused on gaining new skills that will lead to future employment. This broad spectrum of volunteering can be viewed as both a potential strength and weakness. Its strength lies in the wide range of opportunities that are on offer to people with a range of abilities; however a weakness is that this variety is potentially difficult to manage and can be confusing to those who have not volunteered before. It also makes it harder to publicise and promote a coherent picture of what environmental volunteering is. Implications and potential ways forward, based on the findings of the research, are discussed in Chapter 12 of this report.



## 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

This research was undertaken with funding from the Scottish Forestry Trust (SFT) and Forestry Commission (FC), with considerable in kind support provided by Deakin University in Melbourne Australia and Forest Research, the research agency of the Forestry Commission. Researchers, Mardie Townsend and Matthew Ebden, from Deakin University have explored volunteering in a number of contexts in Australia (Townsend and Ebden, 2006). A partnership between Deakin University and Forest Research was created and it was decided to research volunteering issues in Britain and explore the motivations to volunteering, and the benefits that people can gain from it. Volunteering has risen up the political agenda in Britain over the past few years and therefore due to mutual interests between researchers this was seen as a timely point at which to undertake a research project in Britain. Although there has been a growth in the literature on volunteers and volunteering this has not been synthesised and integrated to easily enable organisations to access and utilise it. Little of the work is specifically related to volunteering in the natural environment. Research concerning the motivations for environmental volunteering and volunteers' perceptions of the benefits they gain will enable organisations and land managers to develop strategies that can attract and motivate volunteers. The original focus of the research was on volunteering in woodland; however after initial discussions, web and literature searches, it was agreed with the SFT that environmental volunteering was a more appropriate focus for the study as many organisations that manage volunteers do so in a variety of habitats including, but not limited to, woodlands.

The aim of the research was to provide a better understanding of the motivations for, barriers to and benefits of environmental volunteering for those volunteers and organisations involved. Through a mixed methods approach with emphasis on qualitative aspects, context specific and bottom up explorations were undertaken of environmental volunteering to explore relationships between different benefits and motivations. The original idea of the work was to focus on those who volunteer; however after discussions amongst the researchers it was decided to gain an understanding from organisational representatives of some of the key issues connected with developing, running and managing volunteers. To do this the researchers included interviews with representatives of organisations at a local level (those leading the volunteer group) and interviews with representatives of organisations who manage volunteers at a national level, to gain an understanding of strategic and policy issues.

This research focuses on formal volunteering taking place through government, non-government and charity organisations. The research is focused on environmental volunteering that takes place outdoors and involves primarily practical conservation work. Environmental volunteering can include both indoor and outdoor activity, the primary focus being an interest in the environment and nature in urban or rural areas.

This research explores the benefits to the organisations that manage volunteers and to the volunteers themselves. It also discusses the potential benefits of environmental volunteering to local communities and society. The challenges of recruiting and managing volunteers are also discussed. Links to policy agendas in Britain are made, and to a range of relevant theories, including theories of social capital, values, and community development.

### 3. BACKGROUND: DEFINITIONS, DEBATES AND POLICY

Volunteers provide a major source of labour in the service sectors of many nations, and without them many service organisations would be unable to function effectively. In the United States of America (USA), for example, the efforts of volunteers were valued at \$272 billion (Rotolo and Wilson, 2006a). In the current political and economic climate in Britain the government is devolving responsibility to local levels and to volunteers for a range of activities. The voluntary sector is seen as a strategic partner in the delivery of services of many government departments. A recent audit of public sector support for volunteering in Britain highlighted the enormous economic significance of volunteering and the importance of government investment to enable the full benefits to be realised (Institute for Volunteering, 2005).

Research indicates that 38% of the adult population in the USA is involved in volunteering (Ruiter and De Graaf, 2006). According to Eisner (2005) the number of volunteers in the USA is increasing, with larger numbers of Americans volunteering each year since 2002 (perhaps in response to the 2001 terrorist attacks). However, this *'multiple-year climb in civic engagement is extremely unusual'* and can be expected to reverse over time (Eisner, 2005 p.51). While Australian data suggests that between 33% and 41% of adults are involved in volunteer activities (Pope, 2005) data from three waves of the European Values Surveys/World Values Surveys indicate that, in the 53 countries included, volunteering rates vary from as low as 5.5% to 74.2%; for the United Kingdom it suggests that 16.6% of the adult population is involved in volunteering (Ruiter and De Graaf, 2006). However differences in survey methods and questions can lead to the presentation of different figures. Kitchen (2006) found that 44% of people in England and Wales took part in formal volunteering at least once in the previous twelve months. Recent research commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage found that a sample of 204 'volunteer involving' organisations in the natural heritage sector in Scotland involved over 23,000 volunteers and achieved over 91,000 hours of voluntary effort in an average month. The value of this was calculated at over £14,246,706 per annum (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2007).

Accordingly, issues relating to volunteering are very important and building sustained involvement through volunteering is seen as key to addressing a range of government priorities such as fostering social justice, enhancing biodiversity, building communities and improving health. Information about the motivations for environmental volunteering and volunteers' perceptions of the benefits they gain would enable organisations to develop strategies to attract and motivate volunteers.

The Scottish Executive produced a Volunteering Strategy in 2004 that sets out how it will work with the voluntary, public and private sector to provide volunteering opportunities and encourage and support existing volunteers. It highlights the importance of volunteers and the contribution they make to society as a whole. What has not been much studied in Britain is practical volunteering in woodlands and green spaces and what motivates people to get involved, stay involved and what benefits they may gain from this. Those who recruit and manage volunteers could gain valuable insights into how to attract new volunteers and maintain the interest of their existing volunteers through a more comprehensive understanding of why people volunteer.

### 3.1 What do we mean by volunteering?

The volunteering code of good practice defines volunteering as *'an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives'* (Home Office, 2005 p. 4).

However, there is a range of meanings and definitions of volunteering and these can be different between diverse countries across the globe. The diversity of understandings of volunteering is highlighted by the sheer number of definitions of volunteering. For example, volunteering has been variously described as:

*'an unpaid activity where someone gives their time to help a not-for-profit organisation or an individual who they are not related to'* (Volunteering England Information Team, 2006).

*'any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organisation'* (Wilson, 2000 p. 215).

*'unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group'* (Wilson et al., 2005 p. 32).

*'effortful, sustained, and non-remunerative'* (Clary and Snyder, 1999 p. 156).

*'pro-social behaviour, a sustained commitment to helping others, involving personal sacrifice to the volunteer'* (Black and Living, 2004 p. 526).

*'long-term, planned pro-social behaviour, especially behaviour intended to benefit strangers'* (Gillath et al., 2005 p. 425).

*'ongoing activity aimed at improving the well-being of others'* (Mowen and Sujan, 2005 p. 170).

Stebbins (2004 p. 5) defined volunteering as *'uncoerced help offered either formally or informally with no or, at most, token pay done for the benefit of both other people and the volunteer'*. This definition was based on the findings of Cnaan et al. (1996, cited in Stebbins, 2004 p. 4) who had identified four dimensions of volunteering: *'free choice, remuneration, structure and intended beneficiaries'*. Within the scope of this definition, Stebbins identified three main forms of volunteering: *'serious, casual and project-based'* volunteering (p. 5). Serious volunteering was seen as requiring the development of *'special skills, knowledge and experience'* (p. 5); casual volunteering was seen as being more short-lived with no particular specialist training required; and project-based volunteering was defined by Stebbins (p. 7) as a volunteering activity which is *'short-term, reasonably complicated, one-off or occasional, though infrequent [and which] requires considerable planning, effort and sometimes skill or knowledge'*.

Another framework for understanding volunteering comes from a report on Volunteering and Social Development for the United Nations Volunteers (Davis Smith, 1999). This report discussed what might be included in the term volunteering, and a conceptual framework was developed.

Five elements to the framework were identified by Davis Smith (1999) and are presented here with environmental volunteer examples:

## 1. Reward

It is argued that most volunteering is not purely altruistic but that it includes elements of reciprocity and exchange. For example volunteers can be rewarded through training and reimbursement of expenses or by an honorarium. The key aspect of volunteering is that it is not done for financial gain. For example, Project Scotland<sup>2</sup> young volunteers receive subsistence funding to undertake full time placements for a range of organisations.

## 2. Free will

The idea is that there should be no compulsion to volunteering. However there may not necessarily be clear boundaries; for example in Offender and Nature Schemes<sup>3</sup> a prison officer can identify an offender who they put forward to get involved in the scheme. The offender may feel unable to decline. However the majority of offenders in the schemes want to get outdoors and gain real benefits from getting involved. The key issue is that there should be no coercion to volunteering.

## 3. Nature of the benefit

There should be someone (or something) who benefits from the voluntary activity other than the volunteer themselves; which differentiates the activity from leisure. The idea is that there is a beneficiary, group of people, or the environment that benefits other than, or in addition to, the volunteer or people known to the volunteer.

## 4. Organisational setting

Voluntary activity can take place through a formal organisation (charity, public or corporate) or on an informal one to one basis such as helping a neighbour.

## 5. Commitment

Is a certain level of commitment required? Some volunteering is regular and long term while other volunteering may only include a single day's activity; however it is suggested that the commitment of volunteers should be allowed to range from a high level to sporadic engagement. An interesting issue concerning time and how long people should volunteer for is the Big Garden Bird Watch organised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in which people are asked to spend one hour in their garden on a particular weekend of the year (annually) and count the number of birds and different species they see. At present the RSPB does not class this as volunteering

The detailed definitions and frameworks for understanding volunteering set out above illustrate the challenges of deciding what might be included in the term. For example, the Davis Smith definition specifies some level of commitment from volunteers, whereas the Stebbins definition allows for 'one-off' volunteering with no longer term commitment.

In 1996, Volunteering Australia conducted a national consultation which resulted in the development of a definition and principles of volunteering in Australia. The resulting definition varied from those detailed above in that it specified that volunteering is undertaken '*in designated volunteer positions only*' (Maher, 2005 p. 3). In discussing this particular element of the definition, Maher (p. 4) states:

*'Ensuring that volunteers have position descriptions which are written specifically for them ensures that both paid and volunteer staff are aware of the differences between their respective roles. A position that is defined as volunteer marks a number of things':*

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<sup>2</sup> Project Scotland is a volunteer placement programme for 16-25 year olds. The young people receive a subsistence allowance for undertaking a minimum of 30 hours per week of activity for between three and twelve months.

<sup>3</sup> These are schemes in which prisoners and probationers undertake practical environmental volunteering work to gain new skills that may lead to future employment as well as a range of other benefits.

1. That there is clarity between the two roles
2. That the organisation acknowledges those differences
3. That both roles add value to the organisation and its mission.

Such an approach may alleviate concerns expressed by some that volunteers may undermine the job security of paid workers.

Eleven principles of volunteering were articulated, many of which reflect the ideas outlined above in the other definitions (Box 1).

**Box 1: Principles of volunteering (taken from Maher, 2005 p. 3)**

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- Volunteer work is unpaid
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the not-for-profit sector only
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers and do not constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

A distinction is sometimes made between ‘formal volunteering’ and ‘informal volunteering’. Formal volunteering takes place through groups, clubs or organisations whereas informal volunteering is activity that takes place independently of these structures, by the individual (Kitchen et al. 2006; Low et al. 2007). Maher (2005 p. 3) notes that:

*‘One of the main differences between the two is that formal volunteering is carried out through a not-for-profit organisation or project, while informal volunteering is a more fluid activity that occurs without the protection of incorporation and the standards of organisational practice’.*

Davis Smith (1999) suggests that in industrialised countries there will, primarily, be more formal volunteering structures and more of a focus on philanthropic volunteering than in non-industrialised countries.

**3.2 Policy context surrounding volunteerism in Britain**

According to the Institute for Volunteering Research *‘the context for volunteering is changing rapidly through globalisation, technological and demographic change, and the political drive to promote voluntary action as central to civic responsibility and democratic regeneration’* (Gaskin, 2004 p. iv; IVR, 2004). Linking civic responsibility and social inclusion in this view of volunteering is aimed at engaging those who are currently disengaged, and who are not viewed as contributing to society. In other words volunteering is seen as a solution for some of society’s major social and economic problems (The Commission for Future of Volunteering, 2008a). Volunteering has also been highlighted as essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Volunteers, 2003). According to Burns (United

Nations Volunteers, 2003 p. 21) '*Volunteering is no longer seen as a nice to have optional extra, but as the must have building block of communities and civic society*'. Davis Smith (1999) identifies the major benefits of volunteering as economic and social capital. Volunteering makes an economic impact, although very little is known about the scale of this. The approach to identifying this is usually to find out how many hours people are volunteering and convert that into an average wage as though they were an employed person. The term social capital is used to describe the social networks, contacts and relationships that people have. Volunteering makes a contribution to social capital through reciprocity and by building trust between people. However, what is the contribution of volunteering to people's well-being, their identity both individual and collective? Can volunteering bring people and communities together? What impact does environmental volunteering have on conservation and biodiversity? These are some of the questions that are of interest in current environmental volunteer agendas.

Volunteering has been high on the government's policy agenda for a number of years and millions of pounds have been provided for initiatives such as the Experience Corps funded by the Home Office that aims to involve volunteers over the age of fifty in using their experience and skills for the benefit of local communities. 'V', an independent charity, has also been set up to champion youth volunteering in England. Volunteering England was set up to rationalise volunteering infrastructure, create a database of volunteering opportunities and modernise local volunteering development agencies. Volunteering Wales carries out similar work as does Volunteer Development Scotland. 'Do-it' was launched in 2001, supported by the Cabinet Office and Volunteering England; it is a national database of volunteering opportunities in the United Kingdom (UK). The volunteer opportunities come from local volunteer centres and these centres can upload vacancies on to the database (Do-it, 2008).

In 2004 the Russell Commission was set up by the then Home Secretary (David Blunkett) to develop a national framework for youth action and engagement. The focus for the government was to increase civic service and youth volunteering. Research was undertaken to explore volunteering issues and benefits relating to young people; and a consultation was launched calling for responses from young people, voluntary and community sector organisations and businesses. The recommendations of the Russell Commission were released in 2005 and included raising awareness of volunteering, improving quality of advice about volunteering, celebrating the achievements of those who volunteer, providing a range of opportunities including overseas opportunities, and increasing the number and diversity of young volunteers. (Russell, 2005). Funding was made available to recruit one million new young volunteers and 'V' (mentioned above) was created with the aim of getting more 16-25 year olds to volunteer.

A Commission on the Future of Volunteering was set up in 2006 to develop a long term vision for volunteering in England as part of the legacy of the Year of the Volunteer in 2005 which aimed to raise awareness of volunteering and increase the numbers of people who volunteered. The vision of the commission is '*that volunteering becomes part of the DNA of society – it becomes integral to the way we think of ourselves and live our lives, and we are inspired to contribute in this way*' (The Commission on the Future of Volunteering, 2008 p. 2). However the Commission emphasises that volunteering faces a number of challenges such as: declining trust in institutions; risk averse attitudes; cash rich, time poor society; and a lack of neighbourliness and community. Despite this, the Commission believes that many of the obstacles to volunteering can be mitigated or removed to enable a broader range of people to get involved.

Within the Cabinet Office is the Office of the Third Sector; *'government defines the third sector as non-governmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperative and mutuals'* (Communities and Local Government, 2008). The Office of the Third Sector's vision is *'of a society where voluntary activity flourishes and where all individuals and communities are enabled to play a full part in civil society'* (Office of the Third Sector, 2008). Another new programme is the GoldStar volunteering and mentoring exemplar which was a £5 million 2 year programme launched in November 2005. This was focused in England and on spreading good practice throughout the voluntary sector in terms of recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers. Forty-six exemplar projects have been funded in the priority regions of London, North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humber. GoldStar also involves dissemination of good practice through conferences, and publications.

The Volunteering for All programme was set up in 2006 with £3 million and two years in which to identify and tackle barriers to volunteering, fund exemplar volunteering opportunities and fund work to raise awareness of voluntary activity (Cabinet Office, 2008). The programme aims also to meet the Public Service Agreement target of increasing volunteering by adults at risk of social exclusion in England. There is a specific focus in the programme on people with limiting long term illness or disability, those without formal qualifications, and Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

In Wales, grants allocated from the Russell Commission implementation budget are being administered by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action to increase youth volunteering options and pilot opportunities for the 'less usual' volunteer. The Minister for Health and Social Services has approved funding for a development officer to take forward the 'Volunteering for health and social care' partnership project. This fits into the Welsh Assembly Government's Building Strong Bridges (BSB), as well as the Russell Commission initiative. The BSB publication (NHS Wales, 2002) outlined and identified opportunities to improve and strengthen links between the National Health and the voluntary sector. £3 million was provided to support action and after an evaluation another £3 million was made available over three years from 2006. BSB identified the need to appoint a national facilitator and local health and social care facilitators for every local health board to improve working between the voluntary and statutory sectors.

According to Volunteer Development Scotland (2003 p. 1) *'volunteers make a substantial contribution to life in Scotland through engaging with voluntary, community and public sector organisations, and by being active in their own communities of interest and place. This contribution has an important role to play in helping to shape Scotland as an active, successful and socially just society'*. Issues of volunteering are currently politically important as building sustained involvement through volunteering is seen as key to addressing a range of government priorities such as social justice, biodiversity, building communities and health.

All of the above highlight that the British Government, Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government are providing financial support to build the capacity of the voluntary sector; raise awareness of the importance of volunteering; and make people aware of the range of opportunities that there are, as well as encourage more people within society to volunteer. However, the question remains: where does environmental volunteering fit into this?

#### 4. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERING'?

As well as fulfilling the criteria for volunteering in general, 'environmental volunteering' has additional aspects which relate to the context in which it is undertaken. According to a Scottish Government report (Scottish Government, 2007 p. 6), environmental volunteering can be defined as *'the engagement of volunteers to achieve environmental gains'*. The report goes on to note that the common feature distinguishing environmental volunteering from other types of volunteering is the environment. Church (2007 p. 5) refers to *'practical environmental action'*. A Volunteer Development Scotland report (2006) uses the term *'volunteering in the natural heritage'* which it defines as *'activities which encourage and support the conservation and improvement of, education and learning about, access to, and enjoyment of the countryside, coastal waters and green spaces around cities and towns'*.

Volunteering in the environment<sup>4</sup> takes place through many organisations in Britain such as the Forestry Commission (FC), the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Natural England (NE), Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), National Trust (NT), Groundwork (GW), The National Trust for Scotland (NTS), Border Forest Trust (BFT) and the Wildlife Trusts (TWT), as well as many others. National and regional organisations are involved as well as small local groups and associations. This voluntary activity takes place in a wide range of habitats including woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, urban parks, green spaces, country parks, green infrastructure or coastal areas as well as a range of indoor environments. National surveys on volunteering or those that include questions on volunteering sometimes have an environment category. The percentage of people stating involvement in this category is, however, generally low. Recent government citizenship surveys suggest that there are changes to volunteering taking place, such as a lack of growth in regular volunteering, even though the total number of volunteers appears to be increasing (Ockenden, 2007). There are more opportunities for one off volunteer activities and there appear to be more people who want to engage in short term or time limited volunteering (Ockenden, 2007). A large scale volunteer survey in 2006/7 in England of 2,700 adults (aged 16 and over) found that 95% of regular volunteers were positive about their volunteering experience (Low et al., 2007). Eight per cent of current volunteers who answered the survey were volunteering in the category known as 'conservation, the environment and heritage sector'. More men than women were volunteering in this sector, and those with higher socio-economic status were more likely to volunteer in this sector.

Within environmental volunteering there has been a shift away from a traditional view and approach to volunteering that was based primarily on those who had a specific interest in the environment and whose image was that of white middle class volunteers who like to get muddy. Today there is a much broader view of environmental volunteering and a greater appreciation of the wide range of benefits that can be gained by volunteers, as well as a more diverse range of people volunteering. There has also been a move to a stronger environmental volunteer programme in urban areas, and community action and development. More recently there has been a focus on health and well-being. The Green Gym run by BTCV highlights this link specifically and encourages people to think about volunteering as a way of getting fitter and becoming healthier. Doctors can refer their patients through the GP (General Practitioner) referral scheme for exercise to the green gym or other outdoor activity, as well as to a leisure centre. The Tomorrow Project report

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<sup>4</sup> Recently defined by the Countryside Recreation Network report (2008) as volunteering in the natural outdoors.

(Countryside Recreation Network, 2008) highlights that many players are involved in outdoor volunteering including resource providers, regulators, funders, policy makers, government, intermediaries as well as the volunteers themselves.

Environmental volunteer activity can fall into a number of different categories and involve a diverse range of people and groups; not all of the activities will necessarily take place outdoors. The range of activities is outlined in Table 1. The research in this report however focuses on practical environmental volunteering outdoors. The types of activities that are carried out can include restoration of degraded habitats, clearance operations of rubbish or invasive species, conservation of existing habitats, maintenance of amenities such as footpath and trails, the creation of new habitats and habitat networks, and potentially the creation of new cultural landscapes. The work undertaken by volunteers is often much needed and important work that would often not have been undertaken if volunteers did not get involved. Ryan et al. (2001) suggest that many of the improvements made in environmental quality over the preceding decades have been made by volunteers.

**Table 1: Types of volunteer activities people can get involved in with environmental organisations**

Office and administrative activity	Including fund raising, coordinating other volunteers, recruiting volunteers, creating and sending out newsletters.
Education/training and awareness raising activities	Including community and family activities, preparing information, creating newsletters, promotional work, working with schools or leading walks and community outreach.
Campaigns	Campaign work – writing to organisations, members of parliament, raising awareness about key issues, political lobbying.
Practical activities/habitat management  (these are broken down into sub-groups here, as this research primarily focuses on practical conservation activities)	Including managing or improving habitats, checking the boundaries of sites particularly those with fencing, improving or creating access, construction or gardening for wildlife, clearing rubbish, planting trees. This can take place through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Volunteer holidays – spending time away (often for a week or weekend) with a group of other people undertaking a range of practical conservation work. Sometimes volunteers have to pay to be part of a working holiday; this will cover food and accommodation costs.</li> <li>b. Residential placements – spending time living at a specific site e.g. a nature reserve, undertaking warden or ranger duties or working within a particular organisation.</li> <li>c. Day activities that can take place on a weekly or monthly basis</li> <li>d. One off day activities such as tree planting or litter picking.</li> <li>e. Project based activity – where funding is available</li> </ul>

	<p>to carry out a particular project over a specified time scale which may be a few weeks/months or years.</p> <p>f. Full time placements – e.g. Project Scotland which is a new type of volunteering that offers full time (30 hours minimum per week) placements. These last between three months and a year and involve young people aged 16-25 who receive an allowance and can get financial support for their future.</p>
Biological recording - citizen science activity	Including surveying sites and habitats, counting wildlife and managing data, inputting survey data on to databases. The British Trust for Ornithology has a long history of engaging people to collect information on birds. Tree Wardens who monitor trees within a specific area would also fall into this category.
Property and leisure activity	Assisting in built properties i.e. National Trust houses, manning tea rooms, restaurants, visitor centres.
Health focused activity	Green Gym and the Walking the Way to Health Initiative (England) or Paths to Health (Scotland) all involve volunteers. BTCV run the Green Gym and volunteers carry out practical tasks but are made aware of the physical and mental health benefits of the activities and warm up and cool down for each session. Walking the Way to Health and Paths to Health generally involve volunteers leading others in health walks to improve or maintain fitness.
Governance and participation activity	Including becoming involved in decision-making processes about the management or conservation of the environment. This could be through being involved in a Community Woodland or potentially being involved with a FC forest design plan. It may involve sitting on a steering committee for an environmental community group or social enterprise.
Ranger or warden activity	Individuals take on the role and tasks of a typical ranger or warden e.g. FC New Forest Volunteer Ranger Service.

The above table links in with the modes identified by Measham and Barnett (2007 p. 7), who suggest that there are *‘five principal modes of environmental volunteer activity: activism, education, monitoring, restoration and sustainable living’*. However, they go on to point out that *‘any single volunteer programme or group may engage in more than one mode of activity in any given context’*. Volunteer Development Scotland (2006 p. 18) classified environmental volunteering activities into four types: *‘practical work, biological recording, education/training/awareness, and organisational support’*.

### **Activism**

Brunckhorst, Coop and Reeve (2006 p. 265) highlight the importance of *‘civic engagement in local affairs, including resource use issues’*. According to Measham and Barnett (2007 p. 1), volunteering *‘represents an important means of participating*

*in civil society*'. Environmental volunteering through activism offers 'a *pro-active approach to bring about change and empowerment*' (Bell, 1999, cited in Measham & Barnett, 2007 p. 8). The Wesley Mission Sydney report (Hoogland, 2001) quotes Davidson (1997 p. 248) as saying 'it is what a person does rather than what they get which makes them a citizen'. Activism may occur at a variety of levels, ranging from local (for example, action groups campaigning on local environmental issues) to international (for example, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth campaigning on whaling). In many countries, including Australia and Canada, environmental activists have been involved in voluntary activities designed to change forest policies and management practices (McFarlane and Hunt, 2006).

### **Education**

The study undertaken by Measham and Barnett (2007) identified that education was seen primarily as volunteers assisting with community education. They give the example of 'Friends of Lane Cove National Park' [which] are focussed on community education through the use of interpretive displays and hosting workshops' (p. 9). However, one of the groups in their study also highlighted volunteers' skill development as an important aspect of their activities. This is similar to the 'Employability' impact of environmental volunteering highlighted in the Scottish Government (2007) report. Other writers put the different aspects of learning under the banner of broader titles such as the 'education/training/awareness' classification within the Volunteer Development Scotland (2006) report. Gooch (2004), for instance, highlights the role of Landcare groups in Australia in both raising individual and community awareness and developing individual skills.

### **Monitoring**

Environmental monitoring (or 'biological recording' as it is termed by Volunteer Development Scotland) is another important aspect of environmental volunteering. According to Savan, Morgan and Gore (2003) the US EPA keeps records of over 700 such programmes. Cohn (2008 p. 193) claims that between 60,000 and 80,000 volunteers participate in the 'annual Christmas bird count', undertaken by volunteers of the National Audubon Society in the USA. In Australia, volunteers with the Australian Threatened Bird network contribute on average 2550 hours per year on census and surveys of birds (Weston et al. 2003). The benefits of involving volunteers in environmental volunteering are obvious. Cohn (p. 193) state that: 'Using volunteers...allows scientists to gather data on a larger geographic scale and over a longer time period than is possible in more traditional scientific research'. However, a key issue often raised in relation to volunteer environmental monitoring (also referred to as 'citizen science' (Cohn, 2008 p. 193) is the question of data reliability. This highlights the importance of appropriate training and the development of appropriate research protocols for such volunteer researchers (Cohn p. 194). Ellis and Waterton (2004) raise questions about the intersection between volunteer identities and expectations with those of biodiversity policy makers with whom they may be collaborating. They highlight the need for both volunteers and policy makers to reflect on and recognise the perspectives and 'knowledges' of the other in order to optimise the outcomes from such volunteer involvement.

### **Restoration**

Perhaps the most obvious form of environmental volunteering is 'ecological restoration' (Measham and Barnett, 2007), or as Volunteer Development Scotland (2006 p. 18) puts it: 'managing or improving habitats', 'improving access', and 'gardening for wildlife'. Measham and Barnett (p. 10) state: 'Generally, the involvement of volunteers in environmental restoration focuses on removal of noxious weeds, replanting of vegetation and providing habitat for wildlife'.

### **Sustainable living**

According to Measham and Barnett (p. 10), the ‘most recent mode of environmental volunteering relates to recent interest in reducing ecological footprints by implementing effective modes of energy use and reducing waste at the household level’. This mode of volunteering is closely related both to activism and to community education.

### **Organisational support**

Volunteer Development Scotland (2006 p. 18) reports that organisational support is ‘the most frequently reported group of activities that volunteers are involved in’. It includes involvement in management committees/steering groups, co-ordinating other volunteers, fundraising, administration/office activities, campaigning, marketing and driving (p. 19).

## **4.1 Potential contribution of environmental volunteering to wider policy agendas**

Volunteering in the environment can contribute and link into a range of current government policy agendas. Highlighting linkages with different policies can raise awareness of the wide range of benefits that can be gained from this type of volunteering.

### **Sustainable development**

Securing the future (HM Government, 2005 p. 97) describes how ‘natural resources are vital to our existence. Our health and well-being are inextricably linked to the quality of our air, water, soils and biological resources’. Our landscapes, seascapes and wildlife are inseparable from our culture and sense of identity’. In terms of biodiversity a key target is to bring ninety five per cent of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) into favourable condition by 2010; at present only two thirds meets the target. Environmental volunteers can contribute to maintaining or improving biodiversity through their activities such as coppicing, thinning, creating suitable habitats or maintaining suitable habitats for a range of species. Figure 1 highlights government thinking on its integrated approach to environmental protection and enhancement.

**Figure 1: Integration to protection and enhancing environment (taken from Securing the future, HM Government, 2005 p. 113)**



### **Health and well-being**

While the terms 'health' and 'well-being' are frequently used, the way they are defined is not always clear. Health is often seen in quantitative terms, such as the absence of illness or disease, whereas well-being is seen as a more qualitative concept. Yet the World Health Organization (1946), in its Constitution, defined health as *'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'*, highlighting the inter-relationship between the two concepts. This inter-relationship is also emphasized in a paper entitled 'Measuring Well-being' from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001 p. 6), which stated: *'From birth to death, life enmeshes us within a dynamic culture consisting of the natural environment ..., the human made environment ..., social arrangements ..., and human consciousness ... . Well-being depends on all the factors that interact within this culture and can be seen as a state of health or sufficiency in all aspects of life.'*

The need to increase levels of activity and fitness in the British population is a key strategic policy of the three countries. There are increasing concerns about obesity, and the numbers of people not meeting the recommended level of 30 minutes of activity on at least five days of the week (Department of Health, 2005). Only twenty four per cent of women and thirty seven per cent of men are meeting this recommendation. Also three out of ten boys and four out of ten girls are insufficiently active to gain a health benefit, and rising obesity in young people is causing concern in Britain (Department of Health, 2005). Research that was undertaken into the Green Gym run by BTCV, in which people become involved in environmental volunteering, highlighted the health benefits of practical conservation work (Yerrell, 2008).

There are also concerns about rising levels of mental ill health and there is an increasing body of research outlining the restorative benefits of nature and green spaces (e.g. Hartig et al., 1991; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Kaplan, 1995; Taylor, Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). In Australia, a project involving people who were experiencing depression, anxiety and/or social isolation in hands-on environmental activities demonstrated significant improvements in mood for all participants (Townsend and Ebdon, 2006).

However, it is not only in the restoration of those suffering mental ill health that nature and green spaces have something to offer. According to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (1999), mental health extends beyond the absence of mental illness to include the realisation of individual potential and the building of capacity within individuals and groups to relate to one another and to the environment in health promoting ways. Environmental volunteering has been shown to contribute to achieving these goals (Moore, Townsend and Oldroyd, 2007).

Another aspect of environmental volunteering which contributes to health (both physical and mental) is physical activity. Research has indicated that physical activity may be as effective as medication in treating depression in elderly people (Blumenthal et al., 1999). In a study which compared the incidence of depression in people undertaking indoor aerobic exercise, being treated with antidepressants, or a combination of both, Blumenthal et al. (1999) found that after four months, around 65% of patients in all groups were no longer classified as clinically depressed. More recent research has explored exercising outside in a nature-based setting, such as a park (termed 'green exercise') to identify its effects on depression and overall mental health. Reporting on a study comparing simulated green exercise (indoor exercise while viewing photographs of green spaces) with similar exercise while viewing other photographs, Pretty et al. (2005) found green exercise to be beneficial for both

cardiovascular health and mental health. Subsequently, Peacock, Hine and Pretty (2007) compared outdoor exercise (in a 'Country Park') with indoor exercise (in a shopping centre). They found that the outdoor exercise had more positive outcomes for mood, and was associated with increased vigour or energy.

### ***Formal education and informal learning***

Education, skills, training and life-long learning are key foci for governments in Britain. Education is seen as a way of enabling people to move out of poverty into employment; being adaptable so that changes in career direction can be made; building a portfolio of skills that provide an important foundation for identity and self esteem. Formal education takes place in many areas of volunteering, where people can attend specific courses, or can gain qualifications and certificates. Informal learning can also be an important component of volunteering as those leading activities impart knowledge and enthusiasm and as the volunteers share their own knowledge and experiences with others.

### ***Regeneration***

Urban regeneration and restoration are important components of building sustainable communities. It is argued that green spaces can provide attractive places for businesses, and for creating community and social enterprises; promoting healthy living; contributing to the culture of a community; supporting environmental sustainability and encouraging education and learning (Lucas et al., 2004). New woodland planting and green space creation in urban areas often takes place on 'brown field' sites that may have previously been sites of industrial activity. With community engagement in decision-making and active involvement, these spaces can prove to be important resources for local communities. A key government objective is to create safe and healthy local environments with well designed green spaces (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003).

### ***Community development and cohesion***

'Community Action 2020 - Together We Can' is the public engagement element of the government's sustainable development strategy. Together We Can is a campaign that aims to bring people together and is led by the Department of Communities and Local Government (Together We Can, 2008). The campaign is also linked to the government's aim of giving people more influence and power to improve the quality of their lives. As part of this, 'every action counts' emphasises the importance of local action at many levels. The website for this initiative provides advice and support to community and voluntary groups who are trying to improve their local area and reduce their impact on the environment (Every Action Counts, 2008).

### ***Social and environmental justice***

Social justice aims to give individuals and groups fair treatment and an impartial share of social, environmental and economic benefits. Environmental justice deals with the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens people experience, whether at home, work or where they learn, play and recreate. Environmental benefits include attractive and extensive green space, clean air and water, and investment in pollution abatement and landscape improvements. Environmental burdens, on the other hand, include risks and hazards from industrial, transport and municipal pollution. In the UK 'environmental degradation' is a problem for many of the most deprived communities (HM Government, 2005). Both social and environmental justice work are sensitive to power issues, such as who causes pollution and who suffers from pollution. A recent review (Lucas et al., 2004) on environment and social justice found that ethnic minorities, women and young people were underrepresented in their use of parks and green space. In terms of volunteering there is an increasing amount of work being undertaken in urban areas

where the majority of the British population lives and where there can be high levels of deprivation, and where people may suffer from 'environmental deprivation' (Townsend and Ebdon, 2008), for example through lack of access to good quality green space.

### ***Climate change***

Increasing concerns about changes in climate are leading governments to encourage change in attitudes and behaviour in their citizens. Examples include encouraging and making easier the recycling of waste and packaging, and encouraging the use of public transport rather than taking a car or plane travel. There have been a number of research projects which suggest that contact and involvement with nature through, for example, volunteering can potentially lead to more concern for the environment and changes in people's behaviour to more pro-environmental activity. Curtis (2000 p. 48), for example, notes that voluntary participation in Landcare groups in Australia has '*increased awareness of issues, enhanced landholder skills and knowledge, and contributed to increased adoption of best management practices*'. In an urban setting, the Calthorpe Project in London (Church, 2007 p. 71) was shown to have heightened participants' awareness of environmental issues and enabled them to '*contribute to the environmental change through actions such as composting*'.

## **4.2 Who becomes involved in environmental volunteering?**

A whole range of groups and individuals can and do get involved in environmental volunteering either through their own initiative or through encouragement from others or specific projects that are set up. Individuals and groups include:

- Civic environmentalists – when a group of people within a community decide to take social action to solve an environmental problem or take action focused on a site or number of sites to either improve the area or prevent a specific activity happening (such as losing green space to business or housing development). These activities are often bottom up approaches started from a grassroots level.
- Offenders – people in prison or on probation that get the chance to become involved in environmental volunteer work as part of a specific work experience or rehabilitation programme, such as the Offenders and Nature Schemes (Carter, 2007).
- Corporate volunteers – an organisation may allow its employees to volunteer, often for one day a year for a particular cause. This is often linked to the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda (Countryside Recreation Network, 2008).
- Specific groups – these can be mental health groups, excluded groups, asylum seekers, refugees who get involved in environmental volunteering through their group provider/organiser e.g. the service provider working in partnership with the environmental organisation. This category could also include groups of mountain bikers who get involved in creating or improving many of the trails that are available around the country (MIND, 2007).
- Schools and universities – pupils and students may get involved on a one off or more regular basis through their institutions.
- Individuals – who decide themselves to join a group or get involved in any of the activities outlined above. These people may come from a range of backgrounds and be employed, retired, unemployed, self employed or a parent or carer.

- Community woodland volunteers – individuals and local communities may take partial or complete control of a woodland and its management. The woodland may also be owned by the local community (Edwards et al., 2008)
- ‘Friends’ groups e.g. Friends of Chopwell Wood; these groups may have a wider interest and membership and a core group of people who are regularly involved in a range of practical and administrative activities.

The Dalgleish report on Environmental Volunteering, to deliver Scottish Government policies, discusses what distinguishes environmental volunteering from other types of volunteering (Dalgleish, 2006). Dalgleish highlights that the environment is the common factor; it can have a particular appeal giving people a chance to connect or reconnect with nature, to understand nature better and contribute to its well-being. Individuals who volunteer in the environment can also gain new skills, improve their social networks by meeting people, as well as improve their physical and mental well-being. She also outlines that volunteering in the environment can lead to a greater sense of ownership and contribute to sustainable futures for local communities. The Scottish Government’s response to the Dalgleish report highlights the need to develop a more strategic framework for environmental volunteering (Scottish Government, 2007). In mid 2007 a package of £250,000 was announced in parliament to encourage more volunteers to get involved in environmental projects.

The Forum of Environmental Volunteering Associations (FEVA) in Scotland is a network of approximately twenty organisations that seeks to share information and best practice in the environmental volunteering sector. FEVA also aims to promote collaboration and co-operation between its members (FEVA, 2008).

A recent report commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage presents an interesting review of volunteering in the natural heritage (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2006; Scottish Natural Heritage, 2007). The aim of the report was to identify the scope of natural heritage volunteering in Scotland and examine ways of supporting and developing it. A database of 553 organisations involved in volunteer work in the natural heritage in Scotland was developed. A survey of 204 of these organisations was undertaken to analyse their work with volunteers. These organisations were identified by non-random methods<sup>5</sup>. As a result caution needs to be exercised when interpreting the results.

Out of the 204 organisations, it was calculated that there are a total of 23,340 volunteers who collectively volunteer for at least 91,149 hours in an average month. The estimated economic value of this time is £14.25 million per annum. This value was calculated by converting the number of volunteer hours worked into Full Time Equivalents (FTE) weeks and then multiplying this by the average weekly wage for Scotland (£379.90 - excluding overtime). An extra 20% was added to represent the costs of ‘employment overheads’ to cover employee costs such as national insurance, holiday pay and other benefits (Volunteer Development Scotland, 2006).

A survey in 2006 by Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS) found that 12% of respondents to the survey classified their formal volunteering as working in the environment (VDS, 2006). The ‘Forestry for People’ research project was a valuation undertaken by Forest Research of the social and economic benefits of woodlands in Scotland that are derived by the people of Scotland (Edwards et al., 2008). Through the research it was estimated that the number of volunteers in forest related work in Scotland was 7,500 and the number of volunteer days (mid 2006 to mid 2007) was

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<sup>5</sup> A sample of organisations was selected from the database using a sampling matrix based on annual income (small – up to £50,000 per annum, medium - £50,001 to £500,000 per annum and large – over £500,000 per annum).

estimated at 47,500<sup>6</sup>. It is believed that this is the first estimate of volunteers related to forestry to be undertaken in Scotland.

BTCV set up the Environments for All programme (through a Community Fund grant – now the Big Lottery Fund) in 1999 to encourage BME and marginalised groups to become engaged in environmental volunteering. A report 'Changed places, Changed lives' has recently been published by BTCV (Church, 2007). BTCV staff were employed to work with these groups in eight locations. Asylum seekers, refugees, disabled groups, BME communities, Chinese community and low income groups were included in the programme which ran for 3 years. Some of the key benefits of the programme were that 1,176 community groups and over 38,000 people directly benefited from the work; 50% of these were unemployed, 13% were disabled and 44% were from BME groups. Two hundred and fifty new partnerships were formed and BME representation in BTCV's paid staff increased from 3% to 5% (Church, 2007). The report acknowledged that, looked at from an environmental perspective, the impacts were limited; however the report argues that the social impacts were potentially significant particularly for those who took part. The work outlines how engaging with the environment can help to shape social identities and improve people's self esteem and confidence.

The Scottish Government (2008) provided BTCV Scotland with a three year grant in 2001 to re-launch the BTCV Scotland Community Local Action Network (CLAN). The purpose of the project was to support groups who wanted to influence and shape their surroundings. Groups that became part of the CLAN network could gain access to BTCV's insurance scheme. CLAN gatherings (which continue) provide opportunities to share best practice and experience. Training is usually run alongside the meetings which often end in a social activity such as a Ceilidh. By 2004 there were 447 members and 102 groups that had BTCV insurance.

In 2002 TWT received heritage lottery funding to deliver the 'Unlocking the potential' volunteer project (Institute for Volunteering Research, 2005). The aims of the project were to encourage more people to volunteer; involve underrepresented groups in volunteering; ensure volunteers receive benefit from their involvement; and deliver conservation improvement through volunteers. Ten Wildlife Trusts ran diversity projects and within the umbrella organisation, volunteer development work sought to promote best practice in volunteer management across all the Trusts. An evaluation of the project found that the numbers of volunteers for TWT grew and 500 new recruits from the target groups were recruited through the ten projects focused on increasing diversity. It was found that working in partnership was an effective way of reaching some of the underrepresented groups.

Timbrell (2006 and 2007) researched issues of volunteering and social inclusion and the impact on space and place. One of her main findings was that volunteering could lead to social inclusion although this was not an automatic outcome. However volunteering can be a strategy used for inclusion for people moving into an area for example.

Weldon et al. (2007) devised a typology of levels of access to woodlands. It is also applicable to wider green spaces in urban areas and the countryside in general. The typology has been adapted for this work (Table 2). The typology moves beyond physical access and introduces a broader schema, from viewing woodlands to being

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<sup>6</sup> This comes from the F4P survey of activities and included FCS, community woodland groups, NGOs, local authorities, public bodies, private woodland owners, research organisations and a small number of forestry companies. 151 responses were received. The results were multiplied up using conservative estimates to cover the known population size for each sector (Edwards et al. 2008)

involved with their management. One of the levels in the typology is ‘active hands on’ engagement through voluntary practical work, which it is argued provides a very different experience through physically digging, clearing or planting than that experienced through recreational use such as walking or cycling. It could be argued that people may experience all or only some of the levels in the schema and that different levels provide people with different experiences and benefits. For example, active engagement and ownership or management might provide people with greater learning opportunities, through their engagement or involvement in decision-making.

**Table 2: Levels of access to woodlands and greenspaces** (adapted from Weldon et al., 2007)

Level of access	What can be accessed?	Benefits of access
<b>Level 0 – Knowing woods and green spaces exist</b>	Knowing that trees, woodlands and green spaces exist for others and future generations can be important for some people. For example, knowing that tropical rainforests exist can be important for people even if they know they will never visit one.	Mental well-being from satisfaction of knowing that trees and woodlands exist and their role in the global climate, biodiversity and enjoyment of them by others.
<b>Level 1 - Virtual access</b> At this level the subject is distant from an actual greenspace or woodland. He/she can only access a virtual or mental image, a TV programme, a picture, story or a memory.	As Morris and Urry (2006:31) point out in their analysis of access to the new National Forest: ' <i>the range, or reach of forest affordances is not limited to the confines of forest areas but may also affect embodied experiences within other, unforested locations</i> ' <sup>7</sup> .	Mental well-being – enjoyment of memories, pictures, stimulation, fascination, development of interest in places.
<b>Level 2 - A view</b> Access to a view requires proximity to green space or woodland but does not require one to be 'in' the landscape. This can be a view from a window or the view while driving, cycling or walking past woods or green spaces.	The changing scenery, contours of the landscape. Kuo and Sullivan (2001) and Taylor et al. (2002) highlight that access to a view of the countryside from a window is a positive benefit.	Mental well-being – aesthetic enjoyment of views, relaxation, stimulation, enjoyment of colours.
<b>Level 3 - Use and 'being in'</b> Access afforded by being in, or passing through, a green space/woodland environment. An activity is usually part of this, which may be active such as cycling or more contemplative by sitting on a bench, or social such as picnicking with friends or family.	Being in, by walking or cycling through green space/woodlands, gives one access to a greater level of sensory amenity. These include sights and sounds and smells of flora, fauna and the environment.	Physical well-being – feeling fitter and more energetic, improving stamina, gross motor skills development, adrenalin rush.  Mental well-being – restoration, calm, fascination, stimulation, sense of place, relaxation, smell, fresh air, changing seasons.  Social connectedness – enjoying space with friends and family, or meeting new people and being part of a group (through joining a health walk or cycle group).

<sup>7</sup> They use the example of schoolchildren who, after a day spent in their local woods, had later participated in a range of activities featuring woodland and connected with their experiences.

<p><b>Level 4 – Active ‘hands on’ engagement</b> Being actively and physically engaged in working within green space or woodland</p>	<p>Active engagement, by digging, clearing or planting gives access to a two-way physical and mental interaction with the environment and can also effect changes in the environment, e.g. conservation or restoration.</p> <p>Leading nature or health walks for a range of participants and actively encouraging people to enjoy nature and become more aware of nature.</p>	<p>Social connectedness<sup>8</sup> – meeting and interacting with new people, being part of a team (through voluntary practical activity). Rootedness in a place.</p> <p>Physical well-being – being active, improving fitness and gross motor skills, lifting, bending.</p> <p>Mental well-being – from physical activity, working with others, enjoying activity and environment. Learning skills and improving confidence and self-esteem. Meaning and fulfilment from getting involved.</p>
<p><b>Level 5 – Participation in decision-making</b> Being involved in decision-making – this could be on a one off basis or on a sporadic basis (not the frequent involvement associated with ownership and/or management)</p>	<p>Involvement in the creation or development of woodlands and green spaces in local area (e.g. Forest Design Plans).</p>	<p>Social connectedness – exploring with others the potential for local green spaces, working with others.</p> <p>Mental well-being – increasing sense of place, interest in local spaces, sense of ownership.</p>
<p><b>Level 6 - Ownership and/or management</b> Being in a position of responsibility. Able to determine the future management of the green space/woodland</p>	<p>Involvement in, and responsibility for, the management and maintenance and use of the area (including commercial uses). Involvement in decision-making and governance issues related to woods and green spaces.</p>	<p>Social connectedness – contribution to developing networks, taking part in decision-making, organising, taking responsibility. Attached to place and community. Contribution to community resource.</p> <p>Mental well-being – increase in confidence and sense of achievement at involvement, intellectual engagement.</p>

### 4.3 Purposes and motivations for volunteering (including environmental volunteering)

In a paper published by Volunteer Development Scotland (Jarvis, 2007), it is stated:

*‘Every potential volunteer will have a motivation for wanting to give time to your organisation. Identifying these motivations will allow you to match the needs of the volunteer with those of the organisation.’*

The paper goes on to draw on information from Volunteering England to provide some examples of the motivations that potential volunteers might have:

- commitment to the organisation/cause
- meeting people
- gaining skills
- utilising existing skills
- keeping active.

Davis Smith (1999) developed a broad typology of what might be termed the ‘purposes’ of, or motivations for, volunteering, which is outlined here with examples of environmental volunteering activity:

- **Mutual aid or self help** – this can be from informal groupings to more formal associations and groups. Buddy systems are an example of this, in which

<sup>8</sup> Social connectedness is a psychological term describing the relationships people have with others in terms of quality and quantity.

individuals may go out into a woodland or green space with someone else to encourage and enable them to become more physically active. This happened at Chopwell Wood in Northeast England as part of the Chopwell Wood Health Project (O'Brien & Snowdon, 2007). Mountain bikers may get involved in volunteer activity in creating new trails and routes in woodlands, which benefits themselves, their friends and other mountain bikers.

- **Philanthropy or service to others** – the main beneficiary of this is a third party and this often takes place through organisations. Improving the local environment in which the whole community can benefit, particularly the users of the green space, is an example of this.
- **Participation** – this is the part played by individuals in governance processes, for example being involved in decision-making in relation to a community woodland or green space, including involvement in how it is created or managed.
- **Advocacy or campaigning** – this might include lobbying, or raising awareness, for example writing letters to organisations or ministers about conservation issues and the protection of species. Lobbying to protect green space from business or housing development is an example.

This last category relates to the first of the motivations identified by VDS (above).

A report prepared in 2001 by Wesley Mission Sydney's Strategic Planning and Development Unit (Hoogland, 2001) noted that volunteering is often undertaken as a 'pathway':

*'...today individuals volunteer with a greater focus on specific purposes that will assist them in their life's journey. Hence, volunteering has become a pathway to success for many people, including:*

- the unemployed who seek volunteer opportunities to re-skill and retrain themselves
- those undergoing some form of rehabilitation
- students [who] view volunteer activity as an integral part of vocational guidance
- those on special pensions [who] view volunteering as an opportunity to contribute to society, to give meaning and direction and social contact to their lives.

Clary et al. (1998) developed an inventory of individualistic functions served by volunteering, and suggested that volunteering is maintained provided that one or more of these functions is being fulfilled. Anderson and Cairncross (2005) list the six functions of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) model as:

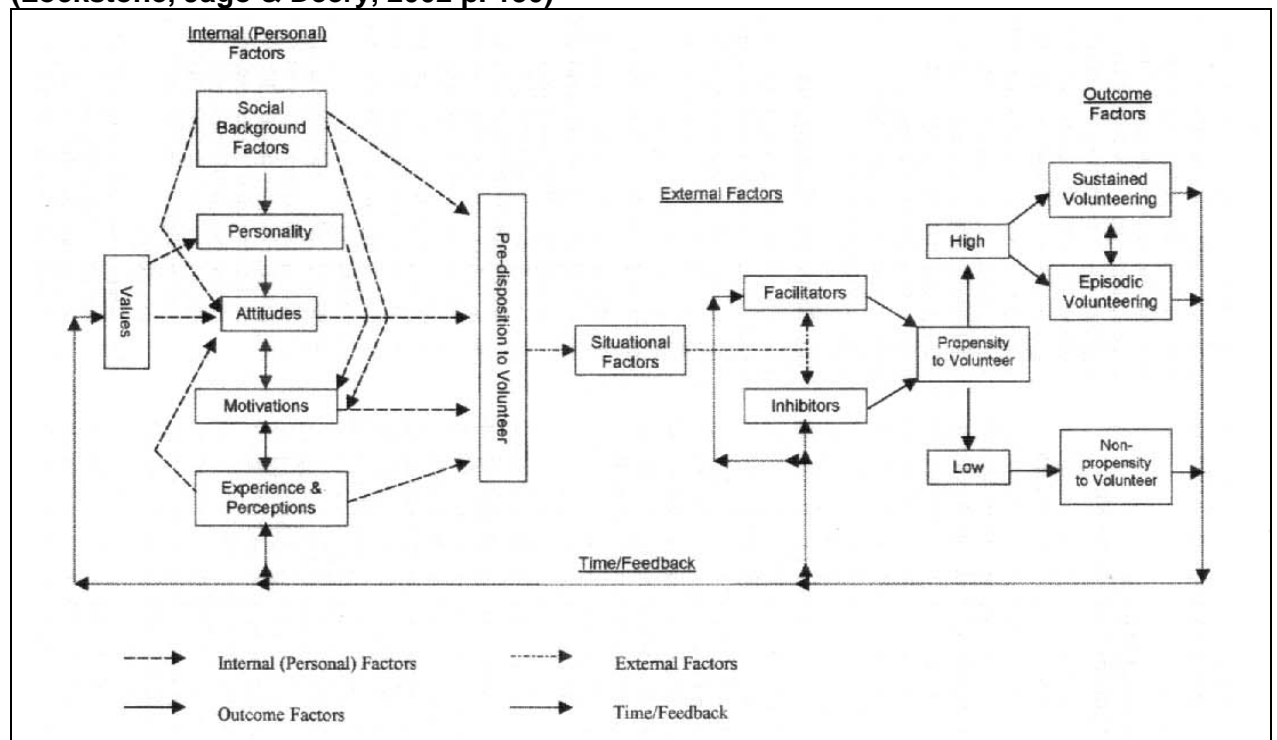
1. Values – altruistic concern for others, or opportunities to use skills and knowledge
2. Understanding – opportunities to practise existing skills or learn new skills
3. Social – opportunities to create new friendships and/or sustain existing relationships
4. Career – opportunities to enhance career prospects
5. Protective – overcoming the risk of negative thoughts about being better off than others
6. Enhancement – opportunities for growth and development of the ego in a positive way.

In two case studies in Australia involving predominantly older volunteers, of whom 80% were retired, Anderson and Cairncross (2005) found that the understanding, values and enhancement were the motivations of greatest importance. The findings of Erlinghagen and Hank (2006 p. 572) that *'the desire to contribute something useful'* (70%) and *'the pleasure derived from volunteering'* (61%) seem to echo the findings of Anderson and Cairncross.

Building on the work by Clary et al. (1998), Finkelstein, Penner and Brannick (2005) combined functional analysis with Role Identity Theory and Pro-social Personality Orientation to explore the predictors of volunteering. What they found was that *'the individuals who are most likely to engage in ongoing, discretionary helping are those who have internalised a pro-social role and who strongly feel that others expect them to continue in a manner consistent with that role'* (p. 414). However, they were unable to determine the direction of the influence: that is, whether it was that *'a volunteer role identity lead[s] to longer and more active volunteering'* or the other way around (p. 414). This issue of expectation is related to the issue of the 'social contagion' of volunteering and the related issue of being specifically encouraged to undertake volunteering explored by Hustinx et al. (2005) in their study of Belgian university students. They report (p. 532) the importance of *'Having at least three acquaintances volunteering and being stimulated to volunteer'*. They go on to say (p. 532): *'On the other hand, if a student reports to have no (former) volunteers among his/her closest relatives, and has never been encouraged to participate in volunteering, the probability of being among the non-volunteers increases'*.

Perhaps the most comprehensive model for understanding volunteering has been provided by Lockstone, Jago and Deery (2002). Their model (see Figure 2 below) suggests that motivations are but one aspect of a range of internal and external factors contributing to varying levels of engagement in volunteer activities.

**Figure 2: Hypothesised conceptual model of the propensity to volunteer (Lockstone, Jago & Deery, 2002 p. 130)**



According to Lockstone, Jago and Deery (p. 129), *'Internal (personal) factors are depicted in the model as directly determining an individual's predisposition or general character to volunteer. ... External (situational) factors may act to promote or hinder predisposition to volunteer based on an individual's status in terms of available free time, work and commitments. ...The hypothesised model incorporates a time/feedback loop acknowledging that non-propensity to volunteer may change over time or if certain situational variables are modified'*.

Penner (2002 p. 464) identifies a further element influencing volunteering behaviour: the treatment of the volunteer by the organisation. Penner states (p. 464): *'Of equal – if not more – importance is what service organisations might do to retain volunteers ...how a person is treated by the organisation. ...Thus, service organisations must do more than simply recruit volunteers; they must work to maximise the volunteers' involvement with the organisation. If the initial level of volunteering can be maintained, a volunteer role identity should develop. Once this identity has emerged, the organisation has a volunteer who should remain a long-term and active contributor'*.

While the motivations for volunteers in general also apply to environmental volunteers, there are also specific motivations that apply to this group. According to Dalglish (2006 p. 8), *'for many environmental volunteers, the environment is the main motivation'*. This relates to the concept of *'place attachment'* at a local level which is an important factor underlying environmental concern (Vorkinn and Riese, 2001). Dutcher et al. (2007) used the more abstract concept of *'connectivity with nature'* or *'environmental connectivity'* in their study of riparian landholders in Pennsylvania. They report (p. 490) that *'our connectivity scale was significantly and positively associated with both environmental concern and environmental behaviour'*. However, Ryan (2005) highlights the fact that place attachment may be different for users of particular environmental settings than for volunteers in those same settings. Ryan (p. 25) reports: *'the volunteer group was significantly more likely to seek another park to fulfil their needs should this park change in a negative manner than would the frequent park users. This suggests that the park volunteers were less attached to their respective natural areas as particular places and more attached to them in a conceptual way, for instance, as ecosystems'*.

Bruyere and Rappe (2007) explored the motivations for environmental volunteering through a survey of 1214 volunteers in Colorado. The strongest motivations identified were *'helping the environment'* (p. 510) and the expression of personal values. This view is supported through research by Campbell and Smith (2006) who explored the underlying values of volunteers involved in conservation of sea turtles, on the basis that such values are a key factor in motivations. They found that *'conservation'* (that is, valuing something for its conservation status, for example in terms of it being an endangered species) and *'scientific'* (valuing something for its interest or scientific properties) values were predominant, with *'aesthetic'* values (relating to the sensory response to the particular environment or species) the next most common. In a study of environmental activism in the forest sector in Canada, McFarlane and Hunt (2006) found a link between value orientations, attitudes and involvement in activism but noted that social context may influence how this is played out. *'Environmental organisations may find support in natural resource-dependent communities; however, local citizens may be reticent in participating in public displays of activism. They may, however, be more supportive of behind-the-scenes activities such as donating funds to an environmental cause'*.

Martinez and McMullin (2004) similarly distinguished between *'active'* and *'nonactive'* members of groups, the latter typically being people who donated funds rather than

playing an active hands-on role. They state (p.122): *'Nonactive members may have had the motivation to volunteer, but, lacking the confidence of active members that their participation could make a difference, competing commitments became the issue dictating their lack of participation'*.

Nerbonne and Nelson (2008) highlighted the fact that environmental volunteering may have more than one set of motivations associated with it: the group motivations (such as the desire to impact directly on policy or to build community awareness), as well as individual motivations. Koehler and Koontz (2008 p. 145) highlight the links between group and individual goals or motivations, saying: *'Group goals can affect citizen participation. Some groups with clearly defined, realistic goals have proven successful in motivating citizen participation'* (Byron and Curtis, 2002; Schindler & Neburka, 1997). *Importantly, group goals that match individual goals encourage participation among those individuals'* (Clary and Snyder, 1999).

#### **4.4 Benefits of volunteering (including environmental volunteering)**

Closely related to the motivations for volunteering are the benefits perceived to flow from volunteering. Moreover, Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan (2005) report that when volunteers perceive that their motivations for undertaking volunteering are matched by the benefits they gain, the outcome of volunteering is more positive and more satisfying. The opportunity to choose tasks matching their motivations also contributes to positive outcomes (Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan, 2005).

However, there is a second level at which benefits of volunteering occur: the practical level, at which benefits flow to the organisation, the community or the environment. The following discussion of benefits is largely restricted to the former (individual) category of benefits, except where practical benefits to the organisational, social or physical environment are linked to benefits for volunteers.

##### ***Benefits for social capital, social inclusion and citizenship***

The issues of 'social capital' and 'social inclusion' both have direct links to involvement in volunteering. The term 'social capital' is commonly used to refer to social structures (e.g. networks, trust, and social norms) which foster co-operation and cohesion within communities, and result in benefits for members of the community (Kawachi et al., 1997; Putnam 1995). As this definition implies, social capital is both an antecedent to and an outcome of volunteering. According to Wilson and Musick (1997), volunteering appears likely to reflect existing levels of social capital. For example, Brown and Ferris (2007 p. 96) state: *'individuals with higher levels of norm-based social capital volunteer more'*. Similarly, Liu and Besser (2003 p. 358) reporting on elderly rural people's voluntary community participation note that *'those with more informal ties are significantly more likely to report higher levels of community involvement'*. However, other research has indicated that *'volunteering directly connects individuals to their communities and breeds the sense of social obligation needed for action at the local level'* (Narushima, 2005 p. 569). Moreover, specific research into voluntary involvement in environmental management indicates that such an activity may have spin-off benefits in terms of creating social capital (Pretty and Smith, 2004; Moore, Townsend and Oldroyd, 2007).

Two sub-types of social capital have been identified: bonding social capital, which strengthens the bonds between like individuals, and bridging social capital, which strengthens the bonds between unlike individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000). In their analysis of Flemish data on membership of voluntary associations, Coffé and Geys (2007) developed a ranking system based on socioeconomic diversity of members, as a measure of organisations' bonding social capital. Using this system, they ranked organisational types from the ones with most bridging potential (Rank 1)

to least bridging potential (Rank 16). *'Environmental and nature associations'* were ranked 10<sup>th</sup> out of 16 on this scale, indicating that they have some bridging potential but are more oriented to bonding social capital. A subsequent paper by Coffé and Geys (2008), which used membership of multiple groups as a measure of bridging social capital, reported that environmental and nature associations were ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of 20.

However, Coffé and Geys (2008) also highlight what is known as the 'darker side' of social capital: groups high in bonding social capital which have the effect of excluding people with different characteristics. This leads us to the concept of 'social exclusion', defined as *'The process whereby certain groups are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, low education or inadequate lifeskills'* (Combat Poverty Agency, Ireland, undated). As well as being closely related to poverty, social exclusion *'also results from racism, discrimination, stigmatisation, hostility and unemployment. These processes prevent people from participating in education or training, and gaining access to services and citizenship activities'* (Wilkinson and Marmot, 2003 p. 16). This seems to be borne out by Healy (2007 p. 63) who reports on an analysis of the 2006 Australian Census data on volunteering and notes *'the negative impact of ethnic diversity on volunteering and, by implication, the formation of social capital'*.

However, volunteering has the potential to overcome social exclusion. Davis Smith (1999 p. 19) notes that

*Volunteering brings particular benefits to those suffering from social exclusion. For people with disabilities participating in volunteering can aid social integration and challenge negative stereotypes of disabled people as passive recipients of care. For unemployed people volunteering can improve employability by providing essential work experience and opportunities for skills development and training. For young people volunteering offers opportunities for self-development and risk-taking and provides a valuable grounding in the practice of citizenship. For older people volunteering has a positive contribution to make to the process of 'active ageing' by helping the newly retired adjust to life without the structure of the workplace, by providing opportunities for life-long learning and by improving physical and mental well-being'.*

This is particularly true of environmental volunteering, according to Dalglish (2006 p. 12) who states:

*Environmental volunteering offers the potential to engage people who had previously not been engaged with the environment, including the excluded, with a focus on the environment as a common language and a common baseline for all. ...for both the excluded and the non-excluded the common ground can expose people to individuals who challenge their stereotypes, and provide a platform for genuine integration. Working in the physical environment breaks down the categories into which people are placed and the opportunity to make a contribution is genuinely equal.*

The theme of inclusion is also related to the concepts of 'citizenship' and 'empowerment'. Under the heading 'Citizenship and Nationhood', Dalglish (p. 16) suggests that *'Environmental volunteering can forge a physical link with Scotland. This matters most, perhaps, in the case of newcomers to Scotland, who have seen the common interest that they can gain through the environment as a starting point for integration in the community and in the country'*. A report prepared on behalf of

Wesley Mission Sydney (Hoogland, 2001) highlights the links between volunteering and citizenship:

*As early as 1831 Alexis de Toqueville (Democracy in America) discussed the phenomenon that critical decisions were made by common people coming together in small, self appointed groups to solve problems, create new approaches to production and celebrate local society. 'The members were not individuals, clients or consumers. Rather they were citizens. Acting together they were powerful tools of social production.*

The notion of 'empowerment' associated with volunteering has been picked up by Gooch (2004) in her report on volunteering in Catchment Management Groups in Australia. Gooch (p. 204) reports:

*Some volunteers spoke of participation in voluntary activities as being personally empowering, as the experiences gave them the opportunity to develop personal skills and confidence, including the ability to speak to influential people. ...Many volunteers commented on the training provided by the group as being personally empowering. ...Empowering individuals by using a range of common-sense and self-help strategies helps to develop resilience in individuals, and this has positive benefits for the whole group and the wider community.*

Davis Smith (1999 p.13) suggests that 'volunteering as an essential element of good governance and civic society requires a separation from the state. Whilst volunteering brings significant benefits to society in terms of social integration and economic advance it also serves the vital function of safeguarding citizen liberty from an over powerful executive'. This is supported by the findings of a study by Measham and Barnett (2007 p. 16) whose environmental volunteer respondents highlighted 'political outcomes, most notably as preventing or reducing the impact of residential development as well as influencing the type of development that occurred'.

### **Benefits for health and well-being**

Among the major benefits of volunteering are improvements in health and well-being. Dalgleish (2006 p. 10) cites the Scottish Executive Volunteering Strategy (2004):

*Volunteering can help those experiencing difficulties in their lives, such as addiction, homelessness and mental health problems, to get back on their feet and become fully integrated into communities. For older volunteers in particular, volunteering can improve physical health and mental well-being, providing a means to keep active and contribute to communities.*

This claim is supported by a range of literature. For example, Li and Ferraro (2006 p. 511) say: 'we found that volunteering contributes to better mental health in the older age group, and at the same time, reduces the pace of functional decline'. Similarly, Harris and Thoresen (2005 p. 749) 'found that more frequent volunteering is associated with delayed mortality' and Oman, Thoresen and McMahan (1999 p. 310) identified a '44 percent reduction in mortality associated with high volunteerism'. However, it is not just in terms of mortality but also in perceptions of health that volunteering has been shown to have benefits for older people (Van Willigen, 2000).

The health benefits of volunteering, however, are not limited to older people. A study of volunteers aged over 18 years in four different organisations in the UK (Black and Living, 2004) found that involvement in volunteering had positive outcomes for mental health and well-being across the sample.

Volunteering also results in secondary health benefits resulting from improved social capital. Research shows that differences in social capital may contribute to differences in morbidity and mortality both within and between different population groups (Kawachi et al., 1997; Putnam, 1995 and 2000; Runyan et al., 1998; Baum, 1999; Leeder and Dominello, 1999; Lynch and Kaplan, 1997). At a population level, people with low levels of social integration experience death rates two or three times higher than well integrated people (Berkman, 1995, cited in Wilkinson, 1999; House et al., 1988). At an individual level, a USA study by Kawachi et al. (1996, cited in Baum, 1999) found that people experiencing social isolation *'were 6.59 times less likely to survive a stroke, 3.22 times more likely to commit suicide and 1.59 times less likely to survive coronary heart disease'*.

Another secondary health benefit flowing from volunteering is via improved self esteem and pride. Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) explored the links between volunteering, the benefits for volunteers in terms of personal pride and respect, and the flow-on effects in terms of commitment of volunteers to the organisation. They found that volunteer work was associated with a sense of pride for volunteers, and that the support they receive from the organisation/s in which they volunteer makes them feel respected within the organisation. In turn, that pride and respect contribute to increased self-esteem and flow back as ongoing commitment to the organisation/s. Given that low self-esteem has been identified as being associated with problems such as alcohol abuse (Pritchard, Wilson and Yamnitz, 2007) and *'self-esteem can buffer the impact of stress on psychological distress'* (Marcussen, 2006 p. 6), the importance for health of activities such as volunteering which can boost self-esteem are obvious.

As indicated in the section above on the contribution of environmental volunteering to wider policy agendas, the health benefits of volunteering are increased when that volunteering takes place in the 'natural' environment. Miles, Sullivan and Kuo (2000), for example, noted that respondents to their survey of volunteers in prairie restoration groups in the Chicago region reported extremely high levels of satisfaction with their activities. They reported that the opportunity for volunteers to be involved in *'meaningful action'* and to feed their *'fascination with nature'* were key sources of this satisfaction. Lawrence (2005) also reports personal meaning as an outcome for volunteers involved in biological monitoring, and links this to *'the empowering potential of participation in nature'* (p. 12).

In related research, Ojala (2007) studied worry about environmental problems and its impact on young volunteers. She reports (p. 739) that worry was seen as *'a constructive force'*, a motivator for engagement in environmental volunteering, which in turn led to feelings of self-efficacy and acted *'as a buffer against excessive feelings of guilt-mixed worry'*.

#### ***Other benefits (including organisational and environmental benefits)***

There are also benefits to be gained for organisations who manage volunteers in helping them to achieve their objectives. Tacticos and Gardner (2005 p. 17) reported that in their study of two Australian community health services, *volunteers were involved to extend and enhance service delivery where insufficient funding led to paid staff being over-stretched'*. While this was seen as helpful in terms of reducing pressure on paid staff and improving outcomes for service users, it did lead *'to tension ... regarding the delineation between the roles of paid and unpaid staff'* (p. 22). Tacticos and Gardner (p. 17) raise important questions: *'there are contentious questions surrounding volunteer activity. Is it exploitation of the volunteers? Is it condescending to the people being assisted to have a volunteer instead of a paid staff person; and are volunteers replacing paid workers?'* They go on to comment (p.

22): *'Volunteering Australia's policy that volunteer activity only occur in designated volunteer positions to avoid volunteers replacing paid staff seemed a good ideal but difficult to achieve in practice, especially in an environment of reduced funding and increased service delivery expectations'*.

In the New Forest, the Forestry Commission (FC) has developed a volunteer ranger service which provides extensive training for volunteers. After training the volunteers commit to working two days a month for FC: they get FC clothing and can drive official FC vehicles. Not only do the volunteer rangers help FC staff undertake important work; they also act as another visible presence within the Forest of the FC's on-going management (Garner, 2002).

Environmental benefits have also been identified as flowing from environmental volunteering. For example, Cline and Collins (2003) reported on a study of volunteer involvement in watershed associations in West Virginia, USA. They noted (p. 381 and 382) *'the observed ability of watershed associations to coordinate collaborative efforts among different organisations and government agencies to address major watershed problems. By engaging in partnerships, technical and financial resources can be obtained to undertake large-scale watershed protection actions that may have been unavailable to one organisation or government agency acting alone'*.

In a review of two programmes through which support was channelled to voluntary environmental groups (McCulloch and Moxen, 1994 p. 16) reported that they *'produce practical environmental improvements at a relatively low cost'*. This is borne out by Church and Elster (2002 p. 32) who say: *'while the direct environmental impacts of most local projects are indeed limited and are mostly restricted to improvements in their own localities ...the collective impact of such projects on national targets for sustainable development is increasingly significant'*. Likewise, Foster-Smith and Evans (2002 p. 207) reported that the biological monitoring by volunteers through the Earthwatch Institute produced data that were *'not significantly different'* from that collected by scientists, indicating that volunteers who are appropriately trained have the ability to collect data accurately and thereby make valuable contributions to environmental knowledge. Lawrence (2006 p. 291) states:

*Volunteers' data can be used to change housing development plans (Bathe, 1993; Key, 1993), to protect livelihoods ..., to prosecute environmentally neglectful governments ..., and to change policy (Evans et al., 2000).*

A related benefit of environmental volunteering is the impact it has on the environmental awareness, knowledge, attachment and sense of responsibility of volunteers (Evans and Birchenough, 2001, cited in Foster-Smith & Evans, 2002). It is hard to believe that such a change will not impact positively on individuals' behaviour towards the environment, and there is research evidence to support this. Research undertaken by BTCV found that volunteering changed attitudes across a broad range of environmental and social issues (2008b). According to Ryan, Kaplan and Grese (2001 p. 644), *'volunteers are transformed in their outlook toward the environment, becoming more likely to landscape with native plants, more apt to want to protect natural areas and more attached to local natural areas'*.

## 4.5 Barriers to volunteering (including environmental volunteering)

### **Time pressures**

One of the most obvious barriers to volunteering is lack of available time. According to Warburton and Crosier (2001), the dual trends to increasing work hours and growth in female workforce participation are likely to pose a barrier to participation in volunteering. However, they emphasise that time constraints are just one of the factors impacting on potential volunteers' decision to participate. A telephone survey of 800 people in Victoria, Australia in 2005 explored levels of volunteering, reasons for volunteering/not volunteering, and barriers to volunteering (Pope, 2005). Pope (p. 30-31) reports: *The most common barrier to volunteering reported by Victorian non-volunteers is that they are too busy*'.

A related issue highlighted by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008 p. 16) is the perception that volunteering requires a long-term commitment. The report says: *'People can be afraid to start volunteering because they do not want to let people down if they are unable to turn up regularly*'. In particular, the report refers to people with young families, but there are undoubtedly other groups for which this is also a deterrent.

### **Gender**

While not of itself a barrier to participation in volunteering, gender differences are evident in the profile of volunteers. Taniguchi (2006 p. 91) reports that *'women are significantly more likely than men to volunteer*'. While there is evidence from previous research that being married and having children is associated with higher levels of volunteering (Taniguchi p. 87), Taniguchi's analysis of data from the 1995-1996 National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States indicates that the eldercare-giving role undertaken by many women in addition to paid work may, however, undermine their capacity to volunteer.

### **Management**

The costs of planning for volunteer involvement, recruiting volunteers and supporting volunteers may discourage organisations from having volunteers (Tacticos & Gardner, 2005). Tacticos and Gardner (p. 22) report that in one of the community health services they studied *'...changes in funding resulted in disintegration of the volunteer programme as the co-ordinator no longer had time allocation for volunteer support and instead had to focus on meeting client targets*'.

Particularly in the context of citizen or volunteer involvement in *'co-management of natural resources*', perceived differences in the purposes or intentions of some other participants, and *'past negative experiences with collaboration*' may pose barriers (Plummer and Arai, 2005 pp. 228 and 229).

Another issue of concern to some potential volunteers (and thus, a barrier to volunteering) is risk and liability. A report published by Volunteering England and The Institute for Volunteering Research on risk management and volunteering (Gaskin, 2006) highlighted the issues of risk, risk management and liability. Gaskin (2006 p. 5) noted that:

*In more than half the organisations in the survey volunteers have expressed anxiety about risk and around a fifth say that potential volunteers have been deterred from joining them. A similar percentage have lost existing volunteers for these reasons.*

This may be of particular concern in relation to corporate volunteering. McGregor-Lowndes (2005) highlights that while civil liability laws have been reformed in all Australian jurisdictions, there may still be concerns for corporate volunteering. For example, corporate volunteers who receive pay while volunteering may not fit the definition of 'volunteer' and therefore may not be covered by laws to protect volunteers from civil liability.

Gaskin (p. 6) points out that the voluntary sector faces a choice between being 'a sector that does things just to be on the safe side and one that is allowed to take certain risks to improve the quality of life for individuals and society'.

### **Information/awareness**

According to Pope (2005), lack of information about opportunities for volunteering, and a lack of awareness of what is involved in volunteering commitments pose barriers to participation by young people, people who are overseas born/non-English speaking at home, and people in low socio-economic groups. A report by The Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008 p. 15) confirmed this, highlighting the perceived 'low profile' of volunteering information and access difficulties, stating:

*For disabled participants and those from black and minority ethnic communities, this barrier can be compounded by the fact that what information is available is often not in accessible formats, such as Braille or community languages.*

Another group affected by lack of information is people who perceive that they do not have the health, physical fitness or strength to become involved in volunteering. For this group, the problem is a lack of information about the range of activities involved, including activities which require little in the way of strength or fitness (The Commission on the Future of Volunteering, 2008).

### **Other barriers**

Other barriers identified in the study undertaken by Pope (2005), in addition to time constraints, were 'being unable to volunteer due to disability, remoteness or lack of transport' (p. 33). Pope also highlighted barriers identified by other researchers as relating to particular groups:

*For young people these have been found in other studies to include a lack of confidence in capabilities, difficulties with unfamiliar formal structures and organisational attitudes towards young people (Ferrier, Roos and Long, 2004). For the overseas born/non-English speaking at home, the barriers have been found to include gender roles that make volunteering inappropriate in some circumstances, cultural differences with volunteering organisations and a lack of skills or experience (DVC, 2005). For low socio-economic groups, the barriers have been found to include costs, ill health/disability, a lack of confidence and cultural differences with organisations (Gerard, 1985; Lasby, 2004; IRV, 2005).*

Another barrier to volunteering which particularly relates to maintaining volunteer involvement, is the issue of 'burnout, in the form of low personal accomplishment'. (Byron and Curtis, 2002 p. 66). This is similar to the notion discussed by Ojala (2007 p. 736) who alludes to 'a feeling of helplessness about the fact that it is very hard to reach concrete results when it comes to global environmental problems'.

## **4.6 Strategies to address barriers to volunteering**

A range of strategies to address the barriers to establishing and/or maintaining volunteer engagement emerge from the literature. This section highlights a few key strategies for addressing some of the most pertinent barriers. In addition to the

specific strategies highlighted below, Dalglish (2006 pp. 28) outlines a range of strategies, under the headings:

- Leadership in the Landscape;
- Coordination and Partnerships;
- Training;
- Research;
- Networking;
- Targets, Measurements and Outcomes;
- Funding.

Appropriate expectations and acknowledgement appear to be key strategies for volunteer retention. Byron and Curtis (2002 p. 66) say '*Clear and realistic expectations ...including intermediate indicators of success*' may be critical in maintaining volunteer involvement and avoiding volunteer burnout. Similar views are expressed by Boezeman and Ellemers (2007 p. 783) who state: '*volunteer organisations can provide volunteers with concrete feedback about the successes of their joint efforts*'. Bruyere and Rappe (2007 p. 514) express similar views: '*Managers need also to provide volunteers with appropriate acknowledgement and recognition for their work*'. Jarvis (2007 p. 4) says: '*retaining volunteers is largely a matter of making them feel valued and important*'.

According to the Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008 p. 22), a key strategy should be '*tailoring volunteering opportunities to people's lives and needs*'. This has several important aspects: flexibility; the opportunity for family volunteering; accessibility (including for people with disabilities and/or language barriers); and matching opportunities with skills and interests.

Organising activities that address the motivations of volunteers (as suggested above) will assist in retaining volunteer commitment and engagement. Anderson and Cairncross (2005 p. 15) suggest that managers of volunteers need to create '*more meaningful and fulfilling tasks for volunteers*'. Ryan, Kaplan and Grese (2001 p. 645) couched this in terms of providing '*learning opportunities that appeal to a range of volunteer experience*' and providing '*people with the opportunity to help the environment in a very tangible way*'. Another way of putting this is '*letting volunteers perform tasks with benefits that match their primary motives*' (Houle, Sagarin and Kaplan, 2005 p. 343).

A growing issue is that of risk management. Gaskin (2006 p.6) suggests that care needs to be taken that perceptions of risk and risk management procedures do not pose such huge barriers to volunteers that they ultimately undermine volunteer willingness to participate and/or undermine the opportunities for paid staff to facilitate volunteer involvement.

## 5. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The aims and objectives of the research are outlined below.

### ***Aim***

To provide a better understanding of the motivations for and barriers to, and benefits of volunteering in woodlands and green spaces for those individuals involved.

### ***Objectives***

- Identify the motivations of those who volunteer in the environment.
- Identify the barriers preventing or discouraging people from volunteering in the environment.
- Identify the benefits people perceive they gain from their volunteering activities.

In order to address the aims and objectives, through social research, the researchers discussed various methods of data collection. The methods used are outlined below:

There were four levels to the research including (Table 3):

- 1) A review of literature on volunteering with particular reference to environmental volunteering and the policy context for volunteering in Britain.
- 2) Interviews with representatives at a, primarily, national level of organisations that recruit and manage volunteers.
- 3) Interviews with local representatives of organisations that manage volunteers (e.g. the person leading the volunteer group).
- 4) Interviews with volunteers - including the gathering of demographic information, quantitative data through a quality of life questionnaire and an emotional state scale used before and towards the end of the volunteer activity.

There were three main stages to the research process:

- 1) Desk research focusing on the literature surrounding environmental volunteering, other volunteering, contact with nature and health and well-being associated with nature – this was an ongoing task throughout the project.
- 2) Interviews with national representatives of organisations.
- 3) Spending the day with a volunteer group, working with them and interviewing them, and the person leading the group who was usually a representative of an organisation working at a local level (Appendix A).

The idea to spend the day with volunteers and interview them was undertaken for primarily research reasons, but also pragmatic ones. In terms of the research it was thought critical to the data collection process to spend time with the volunteers to develop rapport, hear their stories and learn about their experiences, to observe what they were doing, to explore their interactions with others in the group, and to gain a feel for what their volunteer day was like, and what it consisted of.

In addition to the interviews, the researchers also invited participants to complete the Emotional State Scale (ESS), adapted from the Osgood Semantic Differential Scale (Tyerman & Humphrey, 1984), before and after the environmental activities took place (Appendix B). A variation of the ESS was used by Townsend and Ebdon (2006) in an Australian study 'Feel Blue touch Green' to monitor emotional change in people who were experiencing mental health problems and who had become involved in environmental volunteering. The scale indicates changes in emotional state across twelve parameters such as happy/unhappy, bored/interested, worthless/worthy. The scale is sensitive to emotional change experienced during a

short period of time. The ESS does not control for dependent variables such as natural fluctuations in mood. The impact of these variables however is reduced with the changes measured by the ESS occurring across a short period of time with little opportunity of external factors influencing emotional state.

The volunteers were also asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix C) asking them for demographic details, and about the length of time they have been volunteering for the organisation, how many hours they volunteer a month, and whether they volunteer for any other organisation. The last part of the questionnaire was about the volunteers' satisfaction with their quality of life as a whole as measured by the Personal Well-being Index (PWI; Australian Centre on Quality of Life, 2008). Despite there being many measures of quality life, only a few, such as the PWI, are targeted for general population use or provide information on subjective well-being. The PWI also has demonstrated validity and reliability (The International Well-being Group, 2006), In comparing the results of the PWI to normative data, it is assumed that comparative Australian data would be similar to British data, as no British comparison data was available at the time the study was conducted, this being one of the limitations of using this measure.

In pragmatic terms it was felt that one of the easier ways of reaching volunteers was when they were undertaking their activities. This approach was piloted with a volunteer group for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HWT). The day went well and the volunteers and local organisation representative stated that they did not find the approach intrusive. In fact the volunteers expressed interest in knowing what other volunteers felt and whether they would be different or similar to other groups.

The sampling approach taken for this research was a 'purposeful' one (Table 3). In other words the organisations invited to be involved in the research were chosen to cover a range of organisations in size and scope, to include urban and rural volunteering, to cover volunteers from a range of ages and different socio-economic backgrounds; also to cover a range of practical voluntary activities. The groups (except HWT) were located in northern England and southern Scotland. Twelve organisations were involved in the research.

**Table 3: Organisational representatives interviewed at a local and national level**

Organisation	Abbreviation used in report	Local Reps	National Regional Reps	Type of organisation
The Wildlife Trusts	TWT	Yes Hampshire Wildlife Trust	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds)	RSPB	Yes Baron's Haugh nature reserve, Motherwell	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	BTCV	Yes Glasgow	Yes and FEVA <sup>9</sup> representative	Limited company and registered charity
Forestry	FCS	Yes – four	Yes	Government

<sup>9</sup> Forum for Environmental Volunteering Activity in Scotland

Commission Scotland		FC staff members working on Project Scotland		body
National Trust	NT	Yes Northumberland	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
Forestry Commission England	FCE	No	Yes	Government body
The National Trust for Scotland	NTS	Yes	Yes	Registered charity Membership organisation
Borders Forest Trust	BFT	Volunteers with Carrifran Wildwood Group (CWW)	Yes	Limited company and registered charity
Scottish Natural Heritage	SNH	No	Yes	Government Body
Natural England	NE	No	Yes	Government Body
Durham Bird Club	DBC	No	N/A i.e. no national Rep for this body	Registered charity Membership organisation
Friends of the Lake District	FoLD	Yes	N/A	Registered charity Membership organisation
Gateshead Council	GC	Yes – three staff members	N/A	Local government

Data collected	Numbers interviewed
Volunteers	88
National/regional representatives	11
Local representatives	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>

### 5.1 How the data was collected

The researchers would meet up with the volunteers and leaders at the site of the day's activities. After the leader of the activities had outlined what work was going to be undertaken that day the researchers would briefly introduce themselves and outline what the research was about. The volunteers were asked to look at the project's plain language statement (Appendix D) which outlined in a bit more detail what the research was about and were then asked to fill in a form stating that they were happy to be involved or to tell the researchers that they wished to decline involvement in the research. Out of all the groups visited only one person declined to get involved in the research. On the form was a place for the volunteer to request a







Activity	Clearing up broken glass from a tarmaced area and raking a field of cut grass to encourage wildflower growth, taking out fence posts.
Frequency of meeting	Tuesday and Thursday

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Durham Bird Club (Charity – no paid members)</b>
Date	22/09/07
Location	Pages Bank, County Durham
Weather	Sunny but cold day
Number of volunteers	Five
Number of staff	None
Habitat	Grassland owned by a private farmer
Activity	Scrub management – removing willow to stop tree growth on the site
Frequency of meeting	When needed – potentially a day every month or two

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Carrifran Wildwood and Border Forest Trust</b>
Date	25/09/07
Location	Carrifran, Moffat hills
Weather	Sunny and cold day
Number of volunteers	Six – one person declined to be part of the study
Number of staff	None
Habitat	Mountain valley
Activity	Tree planting – aim is to recreate a wildwood that would have covered this area six thousand years ago
Frequency of meeting	Every Tuesday

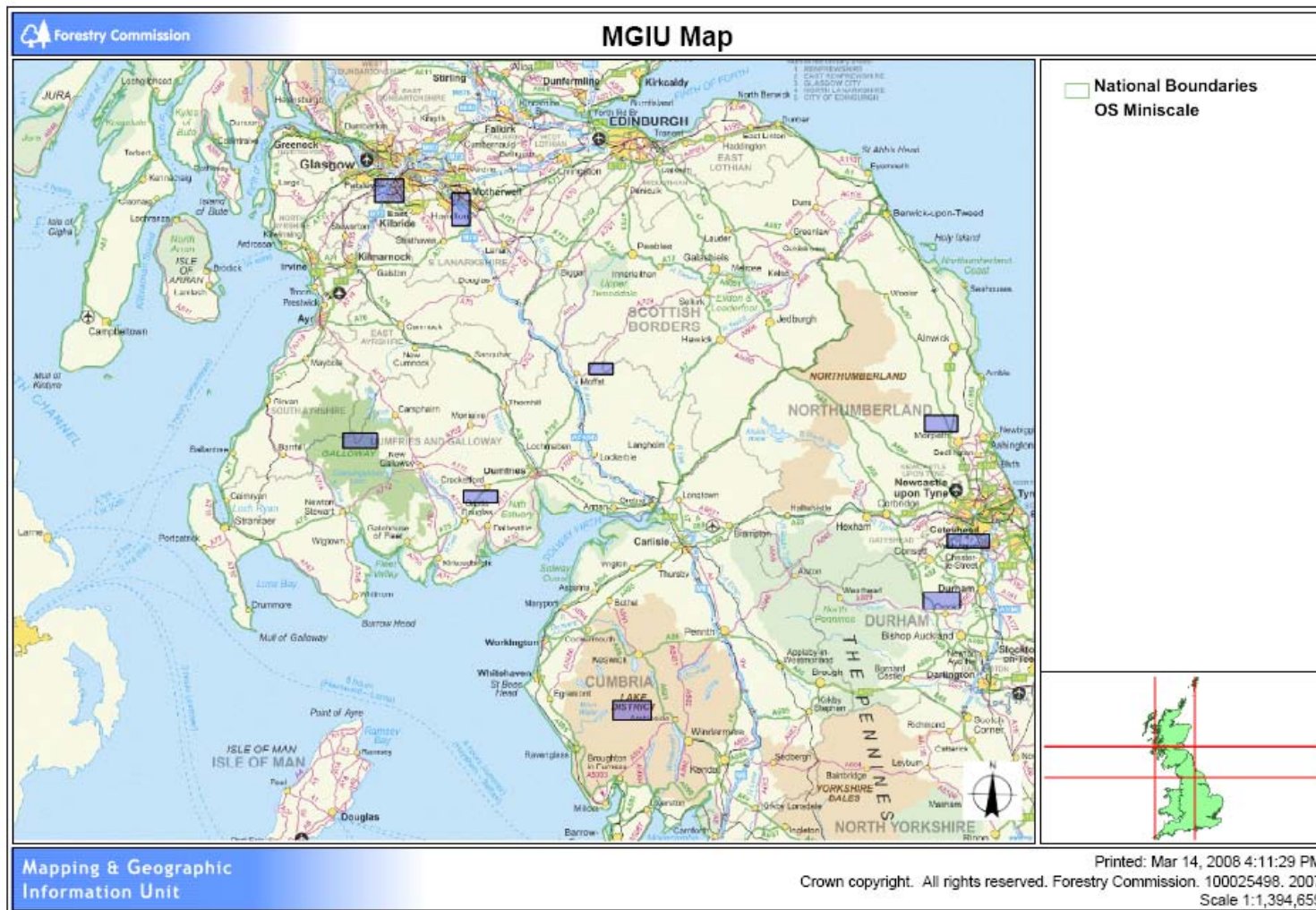
<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>British Trust for Conservation Volunteers</b>
Date	26/09/07
Location	Outskirts of Glasgow
Weather	Sunny and cold day
Number of volunteers	Eight volunteers
Number of staff	One
Habitat	Urban strip of woodland
Activity	Clearing Japanese knotweed and treating stumps
Frequency of meeting	Three days a week

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>Friends of the Lake District</b>
Date	27/09/07
Location	Eskdale
Weather	Sunny and cold
Number of volunteers	Four FoLD volunteers Ten Environment Agency staff volunteers (i.e. corporate volunteering) Two Lake District National Park Volunteers Two Staff from West House (three residents of West House – who were not interviewed directly)
Number of staff	One member of staff FoLD
Habitat	Woodland
Activity	Thinning of trees
Frequency of meeting	Every few months

<b>Lead organisation</b>	<b>National Trust for Scotland (Thistle Camp)</b>
--------------------------	---



Figure 3: General locations of the environmental volunteer groups in southern Scotland and northern England



- Groups (highlighted in purple)**
- | Location                | Group                      | Habitat                         |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Clydebank               | BTCV                       | urban wood                      |
| Motherwell              | RSPB                       | marsh, wood, water body, meadow |
| Galloway Forest         | FCS (Project Scotland)     | Forest                          |
| Castle Douglas/Dumfries | NTS (Thistle Camp Holiday) | Formal garden                   |
| Moffat                  | CWW                        | mountain valley                 |
| Morpeth                 | Northumbland NT            | woodland                        |
| Gateshead               | GMBC                       | wetland, herb rich grassland    |
| Durham                  | DBC                        | grassland                       |
| Eskdale                 | FoLD                       | woodland                        |
- Ringwood - HWT group is not shown on this map as it is in southern England. Flooded gravel pits.

























*biodiversity action plans and all that sort of thing, they tend to focus on the rare and declining species and let's save these things that are really precious and let's develop these really high quality protected sites, the SSSIs and the national and local nature reserves and all the rest of it. And what all that stuff forgets, or simply doesn't even seem to think about in the first place, is the fact that the areas with the least biological diversity tend to be your poor inner urban areas, your poor peripheral housing estates, where if you've got any green space at all, it's just drab, barren green desert, lowest possible management costs and simplest possible management regimes and that's rubbish. If there is a goal about looking after biodiversity in this country, then surely one of the prime goals should be to increase biological diversity and the variety of life in some of these areas where there's almost nothing there. (BTCV, NR<sup>13</sup>)*

A number of organisations are involving communities, where possible, in directly finding out what they actually want and how they think they can change their local spaces. This is done before any activities are undertaken and is a fundamentally different approach compared to recruiting people to an existing project or activity. For those organisations that own land this approach is more difficult as the focus on their activities is primarily on the land they are trying to manage; so they have existing management needs that have to be met, but there can be flexibility within this to involve people in decision-making and deciding what could or can be done and what is of interest to volunteers.

#### **Information on volunteers**

Some organisations had more systematic methods than others of recording data on their volunteers, depending to a certain extent on how many volunteers they have, and how important volunteering is perceived to be for that organisation. There was a realisation from most of the organisations that good systematic data collection was needed; this would be through databases that provided information on the sort of people volunteering. It was also felt that research was important to find out in more detail what volunteers thought about volunteering and getting a better understanding of their experiences. A number of the websites of these organisations provide data on the numbers of volunteers and members (NT, NTS, RSPB, TWT) they have, while others provide quotes and testimonies of volunteers' experiences (FCE, RSPB) (Table 4).

**Table 4: A range of information collected on volunteers**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Information and data</b>
RSPB	Central volunteer management system – that includes who volunteers are, what they do, what references or screening have been completed on the volunteers, what volunteer opportunities are available. Induction pack given to every volunteer. Undertake a survey of all volunteers every 3-4 years of how volunteers feel about their experience.
NT	Mapping exercise undertaken in 2004 – largest proportion of volunteers are stewards in historic buildings. Do not have central database of volunteers – this is undertaken locally. Have a central database of all Working Holiday volunteers. Undertake an annual survey of volunteers – to enable the volunteer voice to be heard and focus priorities.
FCS	Have carried out a survey to establish how many people are

<sup>13</sup> The organisation that the representative is part of is given at the end of each quote e.g. BTCV is British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. NR means National representative and LR means local representative of an organisation.









































































































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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Questions for representatives of National organisations**

- How important are volunteers to the organisation? Primary way of organisation meetings its objectives, peripheral to organisation, what info does the org collect on volunteers – age, number, gender, ethnicity?
- How do organisations recruit volunteers and how effective is this? Advertising, training, support given, reimbursement of cost of volunteering, type of support given, diversity of volunteers, what do they see as best practice?
- What is the impact of volunteering on the organisation? Positive – get work done, bring in new skills. Negative – time and effort needed to work with volunteers.
- What is the impact of volunteering on paid staff of the organisation? Helps them to do their work, takes up too much of their time, makes them nervous that they will be replaced by volunteers?

### **Questions for representatives of organisations at a local level**

- How long have you been involved with volunteers here?
- Regarding the activities volunteers carry out, what are the well-being benefits for the environment?
- What do volunteers say that they enjoy or do not enjoy about the activities they do?
- Do volunteers prefer particular places/habitats or activities?
- What feedback do volunteers get on how well they work or how their work fits into the objectives of the organisation?
- Why do volunteers get involved in your organisation? And in your opinion what benefits do they gain?
- What are the benefits and difficulties of managing volunteers?
- What areas of volunteering could be improved in your organisation?

### **Questions for volunteers**

- What roles, responsibilities and tasks are you involved with?
- Why do you volunteer here?
- What benefits do you gain from being involved?
- In what ways does your voluntary work here influence the environment?
- In what ways does your voluntary work here influence your/or this community?
- Through your voluntary work here, to what extent do you feel connected to your/or this community?
- Has your involvement in this voluntary work led you to make any changes in your life?
- Through your voluntary work here, to what extent do you feel connected to nature and the environment?
- In your opinion is there a difference between carrying out your activities in different habitats/environments?
- What enables you to be involved with activities here?
- Are there any negative aspects or anything that limits you from engaging in the voluntary work here?
- Have you encouraged friends/family to get involved with the voluntary work here?
- What could be done to encourage others to be involved as volunteers here?

**APPENDIX B**

**Environmental volunteering:  
Understanding motivations and benefits**  
*Emotional State Scale* **BEFORE**

Name:	Date:
Organisation:	Code:

**INSTRUCTIONS:**  
Mark on the line the position that best represents how you are currently feeling.

**EXAMPLE:**

good	-----	bad	(feeling very good)
good	-----	bad	(feeling a little bad)
good	-----	bad	(feeling very bad)

Bored	_____	Interested
Happy	_____	Unhappy
Helpless	_____	In control
Worried	_____	Relaxed
Satisfied	_____	Dissatisfied
Worthless	_____	Worthy
Irritated	_____	Calm
Incapable	_____	Skilful
Withdrawn	_____	Talkative
In pain	_____	Pain-free
Healthy	_____	Unhealthy
Trusting	_____	Cautious

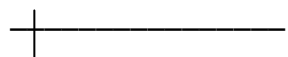
## Environmental volunteering: Understanding motivations and benefits


*Emotional State Scale*      **AFTER**

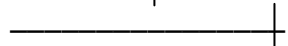
Name:	Date:
Organisation:	Code:

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Mark on the line the position that best represents how you are currently feeling.

EXAMPLE:    good        bad    (feeling very good)

                  good        bad    (feeling a little bad)

                  good        bad    (feeling very bad)

Bored	_____	Interested
Happy	_____	Unhappy
Helpless	_____	In control
Worried	_____	Relaxed
Satisfied	_____	Dissatisfied
Worthless	_____	Worthy
Irritated	_____	Calm
Incapable	_____	Skilful
Withdrawn	_____	Talkative
In pain	_____	Pain-free
Healthy	_____	Unhealthy
Trusting	_____	Cautious

## APPENDIX C

### Environmental volunteering: Understanding motivations and benefits

#### Volunteer Self Report Questions

Participant code:	<i>Internal Use Only</i>
Date of interview:	Time of interview:
Organisation:	
Habitat type:	Activity:

1. Gender (please tick):

Female	Male

2. Postcode and locality of residence:

Postcode	Locality

3. Age:

In years

4. Ethnic background:  
(please tick)

White	Chinese	Mixed race	Asian/Asian British	Black/Black British	Other (specify)

5. Length of time volunteering at this organisation:

Years	Months

6. Hours per month volunteering for this organisation:

Hours per month

7. Voluntary involvement in other organisations/activities:

Name of organisation/activity	Hours per month

8. Employment status:

Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Retired	Parent/ carer	Studying full-time	Un- employed	Not working due to	Self- employed	Other (specify)
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**Environmental volunteering:  
Understanding motivations and benefits**

						illness/ disability		

9. Occupation of the principle income earner in your household:

10. How many days a week on average do you take part in 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical exercise? (this includes all types of physical activity that makes your breathing and heartbeat faster such as sport, recreation, domestic activities like housework or gardening. Exercise can be built up of 10 minute bursts and does not have to be done all at once)

0 Days	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days	4 Days	5 or more days

11. "Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you **with your life as a whole?**"

Completely Dissatisfied
Neutral
Completely Satisfied

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

—  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —

12. "How satisfied are you **with your standard of living ?**"

Completely Dissatisfied
Neutral
Completely Satisfied

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

—  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —

13. "How satisfied are you **with your health ?**"

Completely Dissatisfied
Neutral
Completely Satisfied

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

—  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —

14. "How satisfied are you **with what you are achieving in life?**"

Completely Dissatisfied
Neutral
Completely Satisfied

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

—  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —  —

15. "How satisfied are you **with your personal relationships?**"



## APPENDIX D

# Environmental Volunteering: Understanding Motivations and Benefits

## *Plain Language Statement*

The purpose of this Plain Language Statement is to explain to you what this research project is about and how the information will be collected and used. If you agree to participate in the research you will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form. You may choose not to participate in this research, to withdraw at any time, or choose not to answer a particular question without consequence.

### **What is this research project about?**

Dr Liz O'Brien, Forest Research in Britain, together with Associate Professor Mardie Townsend and Mr Matthew Ebdon, both from Deakin University, Australia, are studying the benefits, motivations and needs associated with environmental volunteering. This study includes various organisations involved in environmental volunteering across Britain.

This research will involve talking to volunteers about their experiences with environmental volunteering and also representatives from organisations to find out about the nature of environmental volunteer programs.



### **How will the information collected be treated?**

Volunteers: Researchers will take notes on what the volunteers say about their experiences in environmental volunteering. Volunteers will also be asked to complete some short questionnaires. Researchers may also take audio recordings that will be transcribed in writing to accurately capture what volunteers have said and may take photographs of volunteers participating in environmental activities. The information provided by volunteers will be de-identified. That is, names and other identifying information will be removed from any written text to ensure anonymity and privacy of the volunteers. No names will be associated with photographs. At any time volunteers may request that information or photographs be discarded. All information will be stored securely at Forest Research and no one other than the research team (named above) will have access to individual information.

Representatives from organisations: Researchers will take notes on what the representatives say and audio record discussions that will later be transcribed in writing to accurately capture what representatives have said. The information provided by representatives will be associated with their name and organisation unless the representative indicates otherwise. At any time representatives may request that information be discarded. All information will be stored securely at Forest Research and no one other than the research team (named above) will have access to individual information.

### **How will the information collected be used?**

## **Environmental volunteering: Understanding motivations and benefits**

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The information will be analysed to identify themes, trends, comparisons, suggestions and recommendations regarding environmental volunteering. This information along with photographs will appear in reports, publications, conferences and academic journals to inform:

- Communities about possible benefits of environmental volunteering to encourage greater involvement; and
- Environmental volunteer organisations about the possible needs of volunteers to improve conditions for volunteers and encourage greater involvement.

Please let us know if you would like a copy of our final report.

Should you have any questions or want more information on the project, please contact Liz O'Brien:

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Thank you for your interest,

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