



‘Offenders and Nature’ Schemes

**Forestry Commission Seminar Series 2007
NW England Region – Wednesday 20th June**

Claudia Carter

Social & Economic Research Group

Environmental & Human Sciences Division

Forest Research, Alice Holt Lodge, Farnham, GU10 4LH

E-mail: claudia.carter@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

O&N Schemes:

- What are they?
- Why bother?
- Experience & Evidence
- Research - Evaluation
- Information & Advice



‘Offender’: anybody serving a sentence in custody or in the community



What are O&N Schemes?

- ‘Volunteers’ working on nature conservation and woodland sites
- Labour-intensive tasks
- Part-time to full-time
- Prisoners are risk-assessed - ROTL: released on temporary licence
- Partnership based initiatives - shared responsibilities



Context

- Reparative work that benefits the public, offenders and the environment
- Reduce crime and re-offending
 - around 60 per cent of convicted offenders are re-convicted within two years of completing their prison or community sentence
- Cross-government Green Paper *'Reducing Re-offending Through Skills and Employment'*
- Other key factors: unstable family relationships, homelessness, mental health problems, addictions to drugs or alcohol
- Diversity - Inclusion of marginalised groups





Experience

- Schemes with **probationers**
 - e.g. Bedgebury, Gloucestershire - Westonbirt, Leicestershire YOT,
 - mixed level of motivation
 - supervisor from probation services
- Schemes with **prisoners**
 - e.g. Dartmoor, Winchester, Delamere YO, Hollesley YO at Sandlings Forest
 - high level of motivation and commitment
 - small teamwork with FC staff
- Most 'problems' can be addressed/solved
- Positive feedback - high commitment

Evidence

"One thing that prisoners need is hope and also a symbol that things can be better and that one can in fact change oneself and become a better person"
Khemadhammo Mahathera

- 'Calming' influence - reflection
- Good for physical and mental health
- New skills (personal & professional)
- Work experience - Work done
- Positive contribution felt and seen
- Stepping stone for employment in land-based industry
 - e.g. Dartmoor: all 9 people in paid work

"Thank you for the opportunity it has given me in life that I may not have had.
My time with the Forestry Commission has changed my outlook to life and work.
I really believe for the first time I have a future."
Ex-offender, HMP Dartmoor



Research - Evaluation

- Quantifiable results
 - km/acres of work done
 - attendance
- Lack of 'after scheme' data (impact / careers)
- How to measure 'subjective' and qualitative outcomes?
- Evaluation framework
- Evolution of schemes: transition to paid work, maintain/increase flexibility, widen partnerships

Information & Advice

- O&N Seminar, February 2007
- Website
- Steering Group
- Awards / Recognition

- 12-page overview document (on FR website)
<http://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/offendersandnature>
- Forthcoming publication (Dec. 2007)
- 'Good Practice' tool kit (planned work)



Basic Set-up for Link with Prison(s)

FC contribution:

- Employ a dedicated work supervisor
- Supervisor's work vehicle
- Tools and equipment
- Technical training
- Sites where work can take place

HMP contribution:

- Risk assess volunteers
- Transport to and from worksite
- Basic PPE
- Basic skills training

- ✓ Memorandum of Understanding between Partners
- ✓ Good Communication
- ✓ Health and Safety
- ✓ 'Equal' approach



Basic Set-up for Link with PS

FC contribution:

- Specify tasks
 - Some technical training
 - Specific H&S issues
 - Sites where work can take place
- ✓ Communication
 - ✓ Larger numbers
 - ✓ Less financial input from FC

Probation Services contribution:

- Supervise working groups
- Transport to and from worksite
- Basic PPE
- Basic skills training
- Basic H&S

