

Active England

'Get Active in the Forest' – Rosliston Forestry Centre

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1. Introduction

This report provides background information about the design and delivery of an Active England funded project, 'Get Active in the Forest', at Rosliston Forestry Centre (hereafter 'Rosliston'), and the results of the research conducted by Forest Research between 2005 and 2008 to monitor and evaluate the project.

The Active England programme was established in 2003 with Big Lottery and Sport England funding of £94.8 million (Sport England, 2009). The overall aim of the programme was to increase community participation in sport and physical activity in England. Five woodland projects were funded, including 'Get Active in the Forest' at Rosliston, together with projects at Bedgebury in Kent, Haldon Forest Park in Devon, Great Western Community Forest in Wiltshire, and Greenwood Community Forest in Nottinghamshire.

Forest Research adopted a range methods to carry out a three year monitoring and evaluation of these woodland projects. These included:

1. On-site surveys to profile visitors and visits (a total of 382 questionnaires were completed at Rosliston).
2. Spatial analysis to produce a catchment profile of the surrounding population of each site/s (within an approximate 20 mile radius).
3. Qualitative research involving focus groups with 'users' and 'non-users' of the projects to explore the benefits and barriers to using woodlands and green spaces for physical activity, and interviews with project staff to obtain a self-assessment of project performance (a total of 28 people participated in the focus groups and 2 staff members were interviewed).

This report outlines the results of the research at Rosliston. This section provides the introduction and key findings. Section 2 outlines the design and implementation of the 'Get Active in the Forest' project. Section 3 reports the results of the on site surveys undertaken in autumn 2005 (before the project started) and 2006 (during the project). The presentation of results focuses on the changing 'visitor' and 'visit' profiles. Changes in target group behaviour are also described and the data collected by project staff are also presented.

Section 4 presents a comparison between the visitor profile, provided by the on-site surveying, and the profile of Rosliston's catchment population, provided by the spatial analysis of socio-demographic variables for an area within a 20 mile radius from the site. Comparisons between visitor and catchment profiles and, in particular, comparisons between levels of representation of Target Groups within each profile, provide a basis for

evaluating how successful 'Get Active in the Forest' has been at increasing participation and attendance within these groups.

Section 5 presents the targeting and results of the qualitative research with groups of 'users' and 'non-users' at the site. Here, the analysis of perceptions of, and attitudes to the site, the project, health, healthy exercise, and barriers to use, is presented as an additional level of project evaluation. This is complemented by an account of feedback and self-evaluation provided by staff working at Rosliston.

1.1 Key Findings

Impact on target groups: on site surveys and monitoring

- Visitor numbers rose significantly from approximately 129,340 in 2005/6 to 189,905 in 2007/8.
- Significantly more women than men visit Rosliston, with women accounting for somewhere between 70% and 75% of visitors.
- There was a small, but significant increase in the proportion of visitors from ethnic minority backgrounds between 2005 and 2006.
- Between 2005 and 2006 there was a significant shift in the age profile of visitors to Rosliston, with the proportion of visitors from the 16-44 age group increasing dramatically, from 54% to 66%, ($p < 0.05$). Correspondingly, the proportion of visitors from the 45+ yrs group fell from 46% in 2005 to 34% in 2006.
- The majority (83%) of visitors to Rosliston take part in multiple activities.

Catchment profiling

- Women and people from low income families are well represented at Rosliston.
- Despite a small, but significant increase in the proportion of visitors from ethnic minority backgrounds between 2005 and 2006, a comparison between the visitor and catchment profiles reveals that people from minority ethnic backgrounds are under-represented at Rosliston.
- Representation of 45+ yrs amongst visitors to Rosliston does not reflect the age profile of the population of many wards within the site's catchment area. We conclude that there is potential for specific engagement with a view to increasing numbers of visitors from this target group.

Qualitative research with project users and non-users and site staff

- Research respondents with prior involvement in 'Get Active in the Forest' project activities ('users') stressed how much they valued both the activities and Rosliston itself.
- Users reported clear physical and mental health benefits from taking exercise at Rosliston. For many, the forested environment at Rosliston enhances the therapeutic affects of exercise on the site.
- Users highlighted the importance of group activities, providing opportunities to meet new people and to develop and strengthen bonds of friendship and community. For many, the group has become as important as the activity itself.
- Transport and lack of adequate information were cited as the most significant barriers to increased levels of participation amongst users. Respondents from a Sikh? community group stated that low awareness of access rights was a particular problem amongst women in their community.
- Research respondents with no prior involvement in 'Get Active in the Forest' project activities ('non-users') talked with enthusiasm about their first visit to Rosliston. They discussed the restorative quality of the environment at Rosliston and said that walking there had helped them to relax and feel calm.
- Non-users from a Pakistani community group (all women) felt that low awareness of access rights (particularly with respect to land owned by the Forestry Commission), lack of adequate provision for specific language needs in the context of public service information, and lack of confidence associated with issues of gender and ethnicity, were the most significant barriers to their use of green spaces for healthy exercise. They stressed the importance of targeted community engagement and facilitated access to sites to build confidence and make minority groups feel welcome.

2. 'Get Active in the Forest' - design and implementation

The 'Get Active in the Forest' project at Rosliston, delivered by the Get Active in the Forest Partnership aims to deliver an innovative programme of opportunities to encourage sedentary people to become physically active and to make Rosliston Forestry Centre the activity centre of the National Forest ('Get Active in the Forest' Development Plan). The project involves the delivery of a wide-ranging programme of physical activity development, involving both the provision of new facilities, the organisation of activities and events, and a programme of volunteer development, centred around the physical activities of walking, cycling, outdoor activity (orienteeing, archery, bouldering, high ropes and low ropes), and conservation / environmental activity.

The project's Development Plan sets out the delivery strategy for each of the above activities, detailing a number of specific delivery actions and their target groups (NB 'Get Active in the Forest' selected the following additional target groups: older people, disabled, sedentary, unemployed, teenagers and young people, working families, ethnic minorities and those recovering from ill health, whether cardiac or mental health). Details actions and target groups for each activity are summarised in the tables below:

Walking:

Action:	Target group:
To roll out existing surgery based walks to all GP surgeries within South Derbyshire	Sedentary Obese Cardiac rehab Mental health patients Hypertensive
Link with East Staffs WHI Co-ordinator to promote Rosliston as venue for led walks for Asian Community	Ethnic minorities Women and Girls
Engage Asian Community at Stenson Fields in walking	Ethnic minority Women and girls
Pilot workplace walk	Sedentary
To establish annual programme of themed walks	Families
To train volunteer walk leaders	Over 50s People on low incomes Women Ethnic minorities
To train cascade trainer	n/a
To ensure network of support meetings and social events for volunteer walk leaders	Walk leaders

Cycling:

Action:	Target group:
Hold series of 'park and ride' events	Families People over 50 Young people People on low incomes

Hold cycle and swim event at Etwell	Families
Educate local drivers / road safety campaign	All drivers
Hold group cycling seminars	Youth workers Community leaders
Develop cycling proficiency on site	Local children Inexperienced riders
Improve local greenways network	n/a
Develop on site maintenance shop	Local cyclists
Strengthen links with local clubs	Local clubs

Outdoor activity:

Action:	Target group:
Develop regular programme of events	All, with specific events targeting specific groups
Explore feasibility of inter-schools orienteering competition	Primary and secondary schools
Promote activities to established groups	All
Offer orienteering training courses at Level 1 and 2 for teachers and group leaders	Teachers Group leaders
Develop Get Active Taster courses	Young people
Develop 'Get Active' Leader courses	Teachers Group Leaders i.e. scouts
Establish links with local clubs ,working with them to provide facilities and resources to increase their capacity (e.g. archery, orienteering)	Local outdoor activity clubs
Construct low ropes course and explore feasibility of high ropes	Young people
Locate boulders on site to encourage visitors to explore the whole site & enabling play	Young people Families
Explore feasibility of laser games/maze	Young people
Map static orienteering course at Rosliston – including wheelchair	Schools Families

friendly course	Groups Over 50s
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Conservation / environmental activity:

Action:	Target group:
Develop programme of residential conservation courses	Families People over 50 Young people
Develop Summer School programme for children's activities	Young people families
Create cultural zones on site	People from ethnic minorities Young people
Explore concept of linking art and the environment (e.g. sculpture trails/events)	Young people People from ethnic minorities
Include development of local allotments as part of outreach conservation activity	People on low incomes Over 50s
Secure service level agreements	People with disabilities People from ethnic minorities People on low incomes Mental health patients
Include conservation activity as revamped Exercise on Prescription Programme	Sedentary People over 50 Mental health patients Cardiac rehab Hypertensive Obese

3. Results: on site surveying and project monitoring

This section provides information on the changing visitor and visit profiles at Rosliston Forestry Centre between the surveys in autumn / winter of 2005 and 2006 and presents an analysis of changes in behaviour amongst those respondents from the Active England Target groups. It also presents data relevant to the Active England 'Key Performance

Indicators' collected by staff at Rosliston as part of their reporting obligations to Sport England.

3.1 Rosliston's changing visitor profile

Representation of target groups

The priority target groups for the Active England programme include:

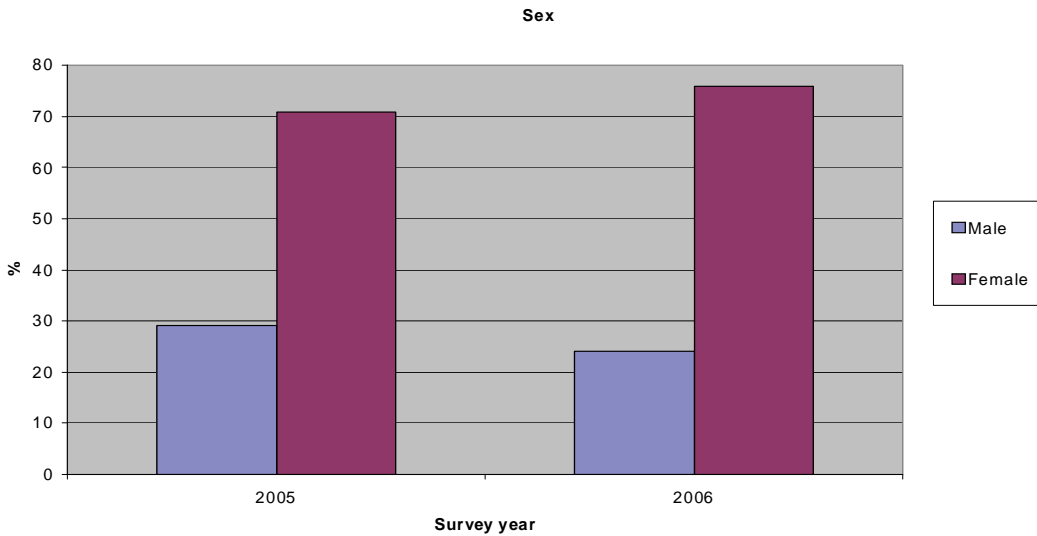
- Women and girls
- 45+ yrs age group
- People on low incomes
- Black and minority ethnic groups
- People with disabilities
- Young people (under 16)

A total of 382 people were surveyed at Rosliston during the study period, 185 in 2005 and 197 in 2006.

As discussed in the introduction to this section, our monitoring of site use amongst young people (under 16s) and girls was restricted by legislation controlling research practice with respect to vulnerable groups. As such, our analysis of the first target group is limited to women only (all respondents are over 16 yrs), and our monitoring of site use by young people must be approximated from responses to questions about family use.

Women and girls

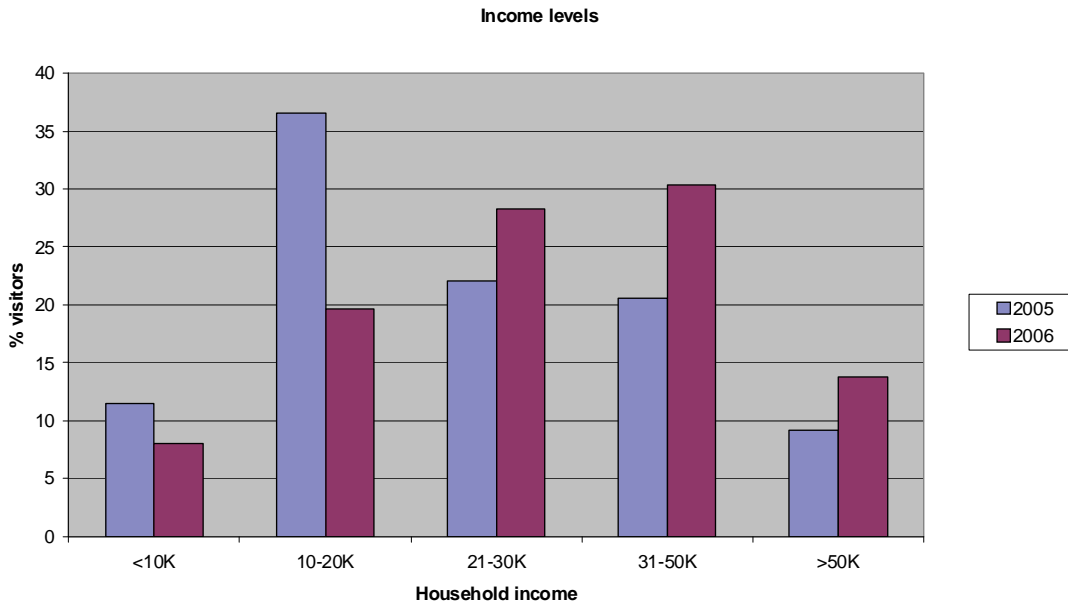
The research demonstrates that significantly more women than men visit Rosliston ($p < 0.001$). Women accounted for 71% and 75.9% of visitors in 2005 and 2006 respectively.



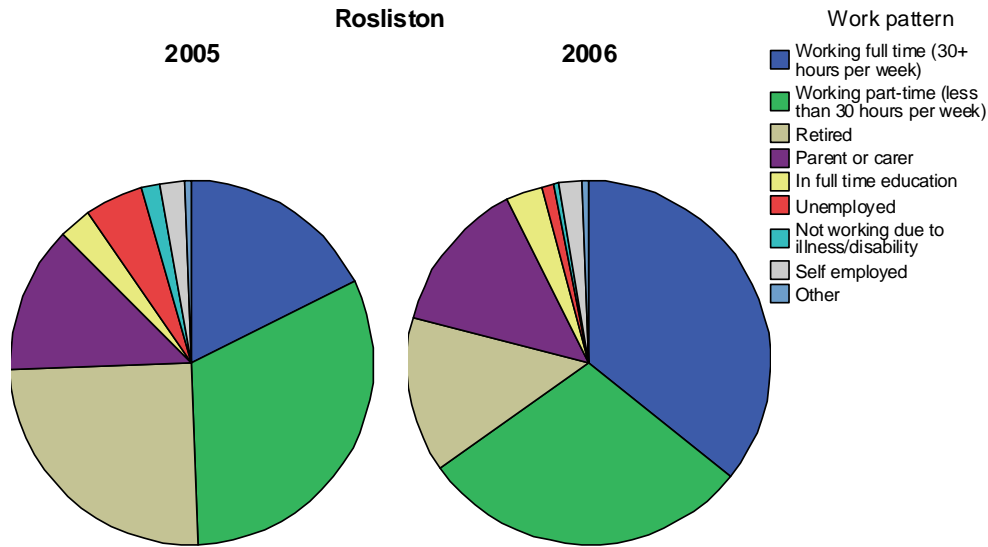
45+ yrs age group

Between 2005 and 2006 there was a significant shift in the age profile of visitors to Rosliston, with the proportion of visitors from the 16-44 age group increasing dramatically, from 54% to 66%, ($p < 0.05$). Correspondingly, the proportion of visitors from the 45+ yrs group fell from 46% in 2005 to 34% in 2006. The downward shift in the age profile of visitors to Rosliston is corroborated by evidence that ‘family use’ at Rosliston has increased, with the proportion of visitors reporting that they had children living in their household rising from 47% in 2005 to 62% in 2006.

People on low income



The indicated changes in the income profile between the two survey years are corroborated by changes in the occupation profile of visitors to Rosliston (see chart below), revealing an increase in the proportion of visitors working full-time (rising from 18% in 2005 to 36% in 2006) and a decrease in the proportion of part-time workers (falling from 32% to 29%) and retired people (falling from 25% to 14%).



Black and ethnic minority groups

The results of the on-site surveying reveal a small but significant increase in the proportion of visitors from ethnic minority backgrounds (from 0% in 2005 to 3.2% in 2006).

People with disabilities

Blue badge holders accounted for 6% of visitors in 2005 and 4% in 2006. Similar non-significant changes were recorded for those visitors registered as disabled who made up 4% of the survey in 2005 and 3% in 2006.

Young people (under 16)

In both the 2005 and 2006 surveys respondents were asked if they had any children living in their household aged 16 and under. In 2005 the results indicate that 47% of visitors to Rosliston were from households with children under 16, while in 2006 this number had risen to 62%. Although we were unable to track directly the use of Rosliston by children aged 16 and under, responses to this question do indicate that 'family use' of the site increased between the two survey years. This is corroborated by responses to

the question 'Who did you come with?', which showed an increase in family use from 62% in 2005 to 70% in 2006.

Further information about visitors

Exercise levels

The survey results indicate that visitors to Rosliston are not meeting the Chief Medical Officer's recommendation of 30 minutes moderate intensity exercise on at least five days a week. In 2005 respondents were doing 30 minutes of exercise on a mean of 4.4 days per week, falling to a mean of 3.4 days per week in 2006.

Current fitness

The survey results indicate no significant changes in the fitness profile of visitors to Rosliston. Respondents were asked how they rated their current levels of fitness and were provided with a range of responses from very unfit to very fit. The table below shows a slight decrease in the number of people classifying themselves as either 'unfit' or 'fit', and an increase in the number of people judging themselves to be 'neither fit nor unfit'.

Level of fitness	2005	2006
Very unfit	0.8%	1.4%
Unfit	15.4%	14.2%
Neither fit nor unfit	38.5%	48%
Fit	42.3%	34.5%
Very fit	3.1%	2%

Long term illness

Respondents were asked whether they had a long term illness or health problem which limited their daily activities. Positive responses to this question dropped from 15% to 7% between 2005 and 2006, indicating that healthier people are visiting Rosliston. However, the results do not enable us to conclude that Rosliston itself is responsible for improving visitor health, even though this might be the case. Perhaps a more likely explanation is that an increase in the number of visitors from the 16-44 age group is reflected in a healthier visitor profile.

Recommended exercise by doctor

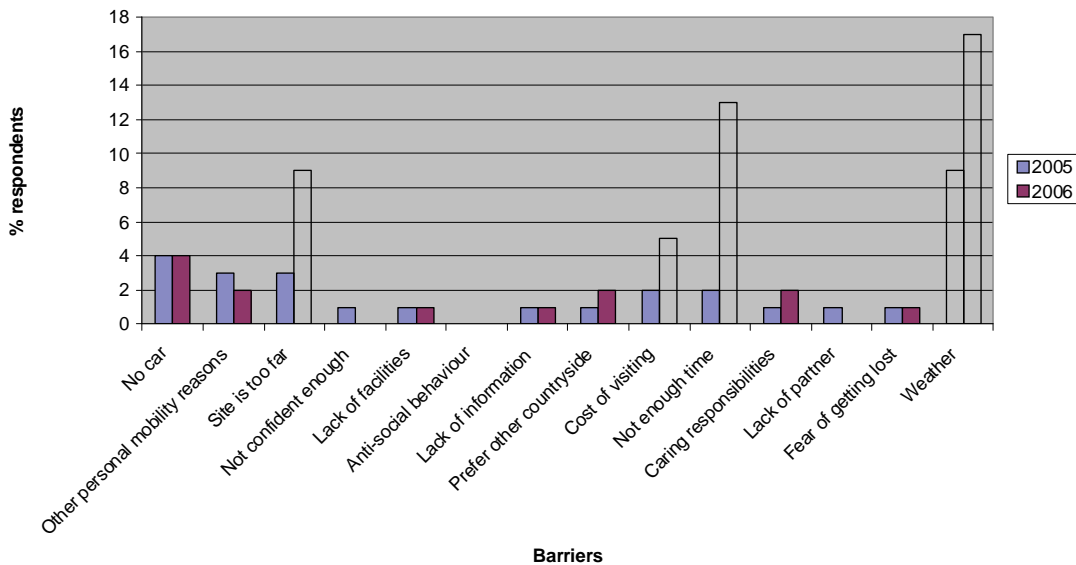
Respondents were asked whether their doctor had recommended that they increase their physical activity levels. Doctors can advise people to become more active or formally

prescribe more activity through the GP (General Practitioner) referral scheme. In 2005 11.5% (n=21) stated that their doctor had recommended them to increase their physical activity, however this declined to 2.6% (n=5) in 2006. The changing age profile of visitors, with a higher proportion of respondents aged 16-44yrs in 2006 than in 2005, might provide an explanation for this.

Barriers to visiting Rosliston

Respondents to the on site surveys were asked about barriers to using Rosliston more often for physical activity. The barrier categories were pre-determined by the researchers based on previous studies outlining the potential range of barriers to accessing woodlands. Distance to the site, the cost of visiting and lack of time were all factors cited by more respondents in 2005 than in 2006. The most significant barrier, however, was the weather, cited by some 17% of respondents in 2006 (an increase from 9% in 2005). This rise is most likely explained by the wet summer in 2006.

Barriers to using Rosliston for more physical activity



3.2 Rosliston’s changing visit profile

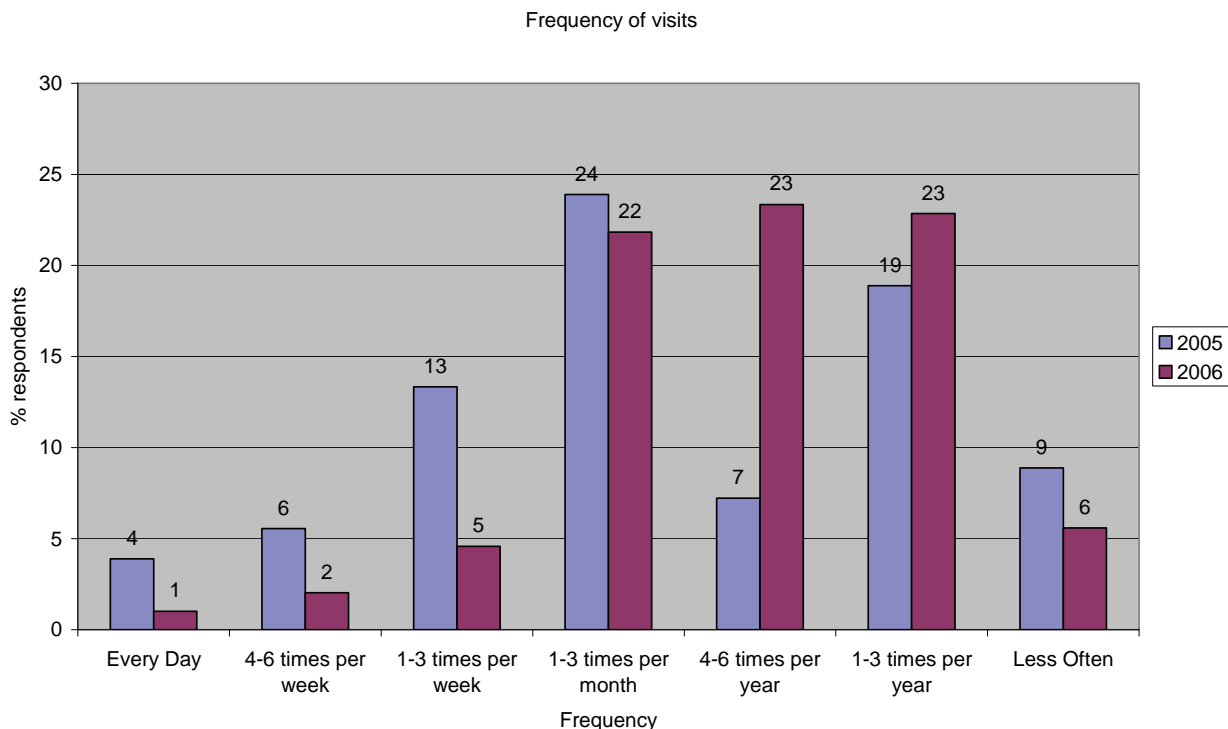
Over the two survey years there was little change in the proportion of respondents who were ‘first time’ or ‘repeat’ visitors to Rosliston (first time visitors accounted for 19% of respondents in 2005 and 18% in 2006).

In 2006, 16% of respondents said they were aware of the ‘Get Active in the Forest’ project. The majority, 84%, were unaware of the project (this question was only asked in the 2006 survey).

In 2006, 25% (n=49) of the respondents stated that the new activities and facilities available at Rosliston had, or would make them visit more often.

How often do you visit Rosliston?

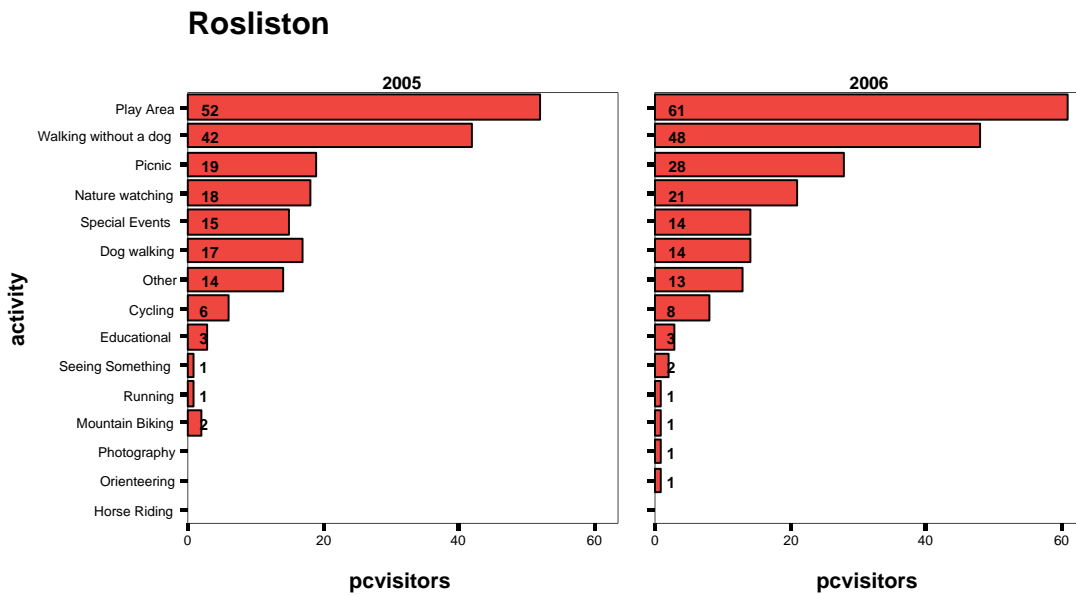
The results of the surveys reveal a decline in the number of frequent visits (at least once per week), little change in the number of monthly visits and a significant increase in the number of less frequent visits (4-6 times per year or less).



What do you usually do at Rosliston?

The results from both survey years show that about 17% of visitors to Rosliston take part in a single activity whilst on the site, while about 83% take part in multiple activities.

The graphs below show that between the two survey years there was a significant increase in the number of visitors using the play area, walking without a dog and picnicking.



How did you hear about Rosliston?

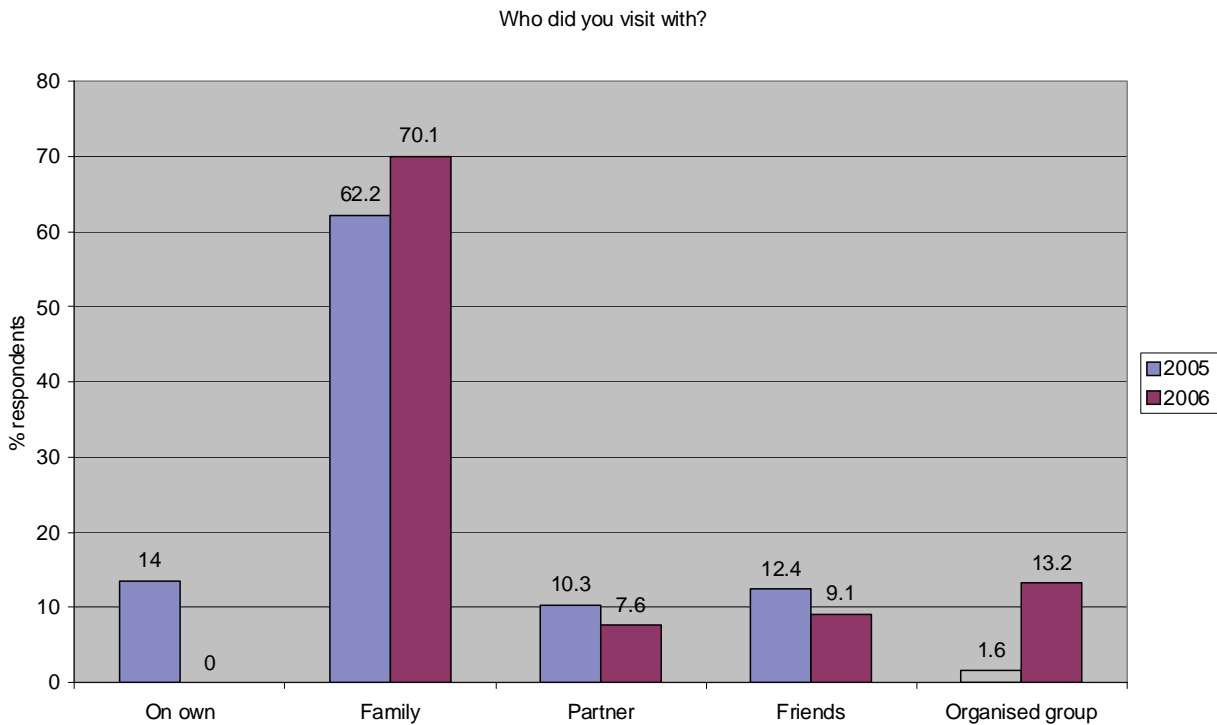
The table below shows that word of mouth (Friend / family) and road signs are the way many people first hear about Rosliston. Forestry Commission leaflets and website are also important means of awareness raising. Interestingly, there was a significant rise in the number of people citing 'Get Active in the Forest' publicity as an initial source of information between the two survey years.

Information source	2005	2006
'Get Active in the Forest' publicity	0%	4%
Forestry Commission leaflets/website	8%	10%
Local guide book/map	1%	4%
Tourist information centre	3%	3%
Library	1%	2%
Sports centre	1%	2%
Advert in press/on television	2%	4%

Newspaper article	8%	3%
Friend / relation	45%	47%
Road signs	18%	18%

Who did you come to Rosliston with?

The results show significantly fewer solitary visits to Rosliston and more accompanied visits, with a significant rise in the number of visitors who were members of organised groups (rising from 1.6% in 2005 to 13.2% in 2006).



How did you get to Rosliston?

Most visits to Rosliston are made by car (89% in 2005, 90% in 2006). A small number of visitors arrive on foot (7% in 2005, 2% in 2006), by bicycle (2% in 2005, 2% in 2006). In 2006, 6% of visitors arrived by minibus or coach.

How long does your visit last, on average?

The average length of a visit to Rosliston increased from just under 2 hours in 2005 to 2.5 hours in 2006, suggesting that the improvements in infrastructure and the additional activities on offer are providing an incentive for people to stay longer.

How far do you live from Rosliston?

The average distance travelled by a visitor to Rosliston remained almost unchanged between the two survey years (7.9 miles in 2005 and 7.8 miles in 2006).

3.3 Changes in target group behaviour at Rosliston

Due to the low numbers of respondents from diverse ethnic groups and disabled groups in the surveys, the discussion of changes in target group behaviour presented here is restricted to women, over 45s and those from low income households. For each of these target groups, statistically significant changes in activities, self-reported fitness levels, exercise levels and barriers are presented.

Women

Changes in activities:

Picnicking increased in popularity between the two survey years, from 22%-34% ($p < 0.05$).

Changes in exercise levels:

There was a significant decline in the number of female respondents who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years, from 48% in 2005 to 35% in 2006 ($p < 0.05$).

Changes in barriers:

There was a significant increase in the proportion of female respondents citing "not enough time" as a reason for not using Rosliston for more physical activity, from 2% in 2005 to 13% in 2006 ($p < 0.01$).

45yrs+

Changes in activities:

Cycling increased in popularity amongst over 45s between the two survey years, from 4% in 2005 to 14% in 2006 ($p < 0.05$). Use of play areas also increased in popularity for this target group, from 45% in 2005 to 64% in 2006 ($p < 0.05$)

Changes in exercise levels:

There was a significant decline in the number of over 45s who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years, from 49% in 2005 to 38% in 2006.

Changes in barriers:

There was a significant increase in the proportion of over 45s citing “not enough time” as a reason for not using Rosliston for more physical activity, from 0% in 2005 to 14% in 2006 ($p < 0.01$). In addition, “too far away” was cited as a reason by more respondents from this group in 2006 than in 2005, increasing from 2% to 12% ($p < 0.05$).

People from low income households

Changes in activities:

Use of the play areas increased in popularity amongst this target group between the two survey years, from 46% in 2005 to 74% in 2006 ($p < 0.01$).

Changes in exercise levels:

There was a significant decline in the number of people from low income families who exercise 5 times per week (recommended exercise level) between the two survey years, from 55% in 2005 to 40% in 2006.

Changes in barriers:

There was a significant increase in the proportion of people from low income families citing “cost of visiting” as a reason for not using Rosliston for more physical activity, from 0% in 2005 to 11% in 2006 ($p < 0.05$).

3.4 Data collected by project staff

Consistent with Rosliston Forestry Centre’s overall Business Plan and performance management procedures, a monitoring and evaluation system for the ‘Get Active in the Forest’ project was set up at project inception. An ‘Action Plan’ was agreed with the project steering group and service level agreements were drawn up with the relevant Primary Care Trusts, the National Forest Company and South Derbyshire District Council. The plan involved annual reviews of the main programme-level activities, covering

facility, voluntary sector, community, and coach/leader programme developments. There were also regular (3 monthly) reviews of the specific activity plans (walking, cycling, outdoor activity and conservation / environmental activity) and regular (6 monthly) reviews of target group development work.

These scheduled reviews involved regular site audits and the recording of participant numbers for events and activities. Evaluation questionnaires were also circulated to all group participants, and self-evaluation and self-assessment forms were filled in by volunteers. Evaluation forms to assess the mental well-being of staff, volunteers and participants were also used.

Monitoring activities over the duration of the project revealed that total visitor numbers to Rosliston increased dramatically from approximately 129,340 in 2005/6 to 189,905 in 2007/8.

A total of 4,867 individuals took part in activities organised as part of 'Get Active in the Forest', with the following target group representation: Female = 2149, Over 45s = 1581, Low income = 1469, BME = 280, Disabled = 132, Under 16s = 2132.

The numbers of coaches, activity leaders, instructors, or teachers involved in the project totalled 94, with the following target group representation: Female = 32, Over 45s = 37, Low income = 3, BME = 2, Disabled = 1, Under 16s = 2.

4. Results: catchment profiling

Forest Research's evaluation of 'Get Active in the Forest' involved the spatial 'profiling' of Rosliston's catchment area. Catchment profiling involved the presentation of background socio-economic and demographic data relevant to the Active England target groups within a defined catchment area (an area within a 20 mile radius of the site). The primary purpose of the catchment profiling is to reveal the representation of the target groups within the surrounding population. The demographic make-up of the catchment population can then be compared with the visitor profile, as revealed by the on-site surveys, thereby providing a basis for evaluating the project's success in increasing target group participation in healthy activity. In addition, where comparisons between catchment of visitor profiles reveal under-representation amongst certain target groups, follow-up research can be targeted in order to explore those factors that are preventing certain individuals and groups from using the site. As such, catchment profiling plays a pivotal role in the effective targeting of the research, and is an integral component of the overall evaluation.

4.1 Catchment area

Map 1 shows the location of Rosliston Forestry Centre in relation to major towns and transport links. Rosliston, represented by the pink blob, is near to the conurbations of Derby and Birmingham, with other nearby towns including Burton upon Trent, Swadlincote, Ashby-De-La-Zouche and Coalville.

Map 1: The location of Rosliston Forestry Centre

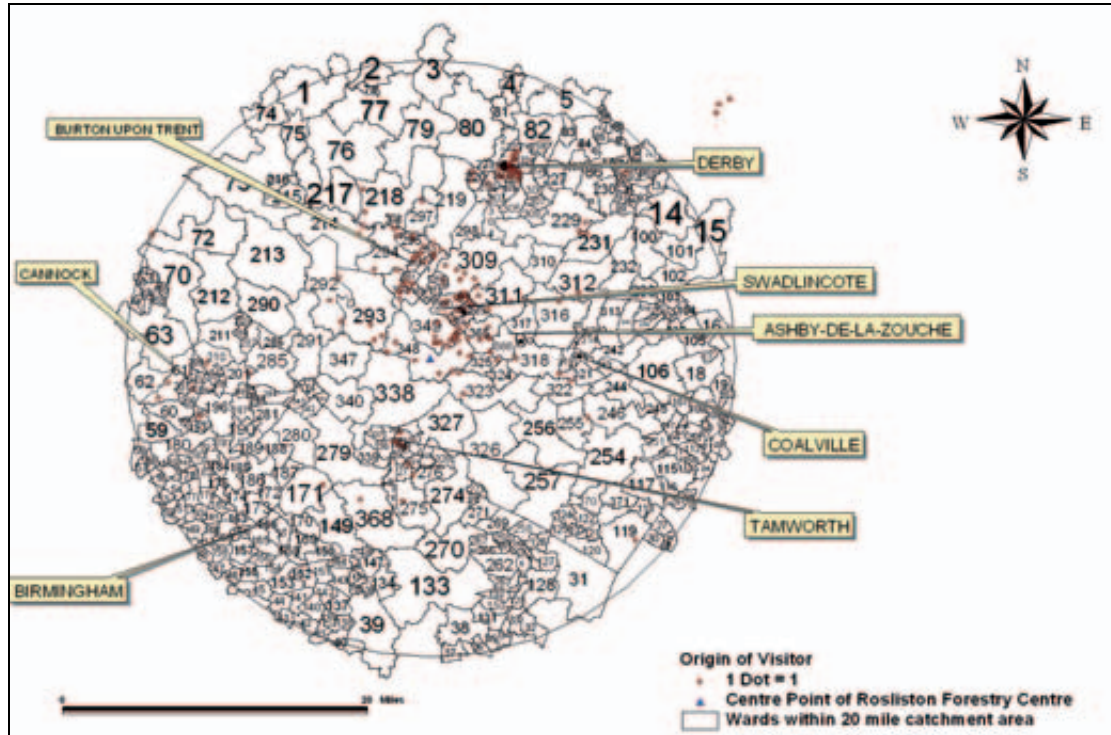


Map 2 shows Rosliston’s catchment area, as defined by a 20 mile radius from the site’s centre point, together with all the wards that fall within the catchment area (a list of ward numbers and names is provided at the end of this report). Each red dot on the map denotes the postcode provided by a respondent to the on-site survey conducted in 2005. As such, Map 2 presents a basic spatial analysis of Rosliston’s catchment area, showing also the origin of visitors within the catchment.

The map reveals a significant clustering of visitors from the North East of Rosliston (from around Burton-Upon-Trent, Derby and Swadlincote). This may be explained in part by the proximity of these conurbations, and in part by the fact that the population in the South Western quarter of the catchment area are drawn to areas where there are other

parks and green spaces available for visitors. The map also reveals that a significant number of visitors come from the Tamworth area.

Map 2: Rosliston’s catchment area and origin of visitors surveyed in 2005



4.2 Target groups

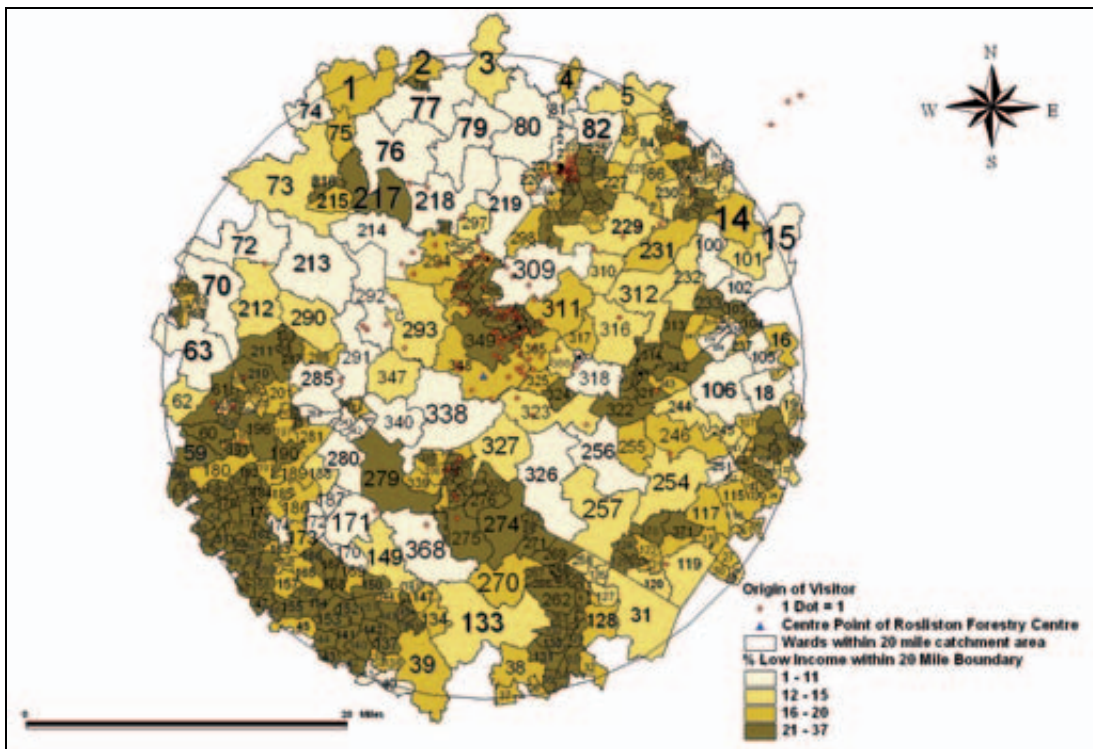
The maps below display statistical data from the 2001 Census relevant to the Active England target groups to show the spatial distribution of target group populations within the catchment area. Maps are presented displaying information relevant to the following groups: people on low incomes, people with disabilities, women and girls, black and minority ethnic groups, 45+ yrs age group and young people (under 16). For each map, wards in the catchment area are colour coded in accordance with the ward categorisation system used in the Census for each indicator. The distribution range of the values for a given indicator is divided into quartiles (for example, Map 3 reflects the categorisation of wards in relation to the low income where 25% of English wards contain between 1% and 11% of families on low income). The maps also show the origin of the visitors surveyed in 2005 (as shown in Map 2). This enables a comparison between the spatial geography of target groups within the catchment and the geography of visitors, and

reveals whether visitors to Rosliston in 2005 came from wards where there is a high or low representation of citizens falling within a given target group. As explained above, the demographic make-up of the catchment population can be compared with the visitor profile, as revealed by the on-site surveys, revealing whether each target group is adequately or under-represented amongst visitors to Rosliston.

Low income

Map 3 shows that Rosliston's catchment contains areas which contain relatively high concentrations of families on low incomes. Most of the major towns within the catchment (Derby, Burton upon Trent, Birmingham, Coalville, Tamworth and Cannock) contain wards where 21% to 37% of families are on low incomes. The map also shows that the majority of visitors surveyed in 2005 came from these low income wards, most notably the wards of Arboretum in Derby, Newhall and Stanton, Swadlincote, Linton and Church Gresley near Burton-upon-Trent and Glascote in Tamworth. The on-site survey results show that, in 2005, people from households with low incomes (20K or less) accounted for 48% of visitors to Rosliston. Although this dropped to 28% of visitors in 2006 according to the results of that year's on-site survey, an average of 38% across the two survey years would suggest that people from low income families are not under-represented at Rosliston.

Map 3: Low income distribution within Rosliston's catchment area



People with disabilities

Rosliston's catchment area was profiled using the Census indicator 'Limiting long-term illness'. The results showed that many visitors who were interviewed in 2005 came from wards where a relatively high percentage of people suffer from a limiting long-term illness. The wards of Arboretum in Derby and Newhall and Stanton have a particularly high occurrence (21-37%) of people with limiting long-term illness and a significant number of visitors came from these wards. Respondents to the on-site surveys were asked whether they had a long term illness or health problem which limited their daily activities. Positive responses to this question dropped from 15% to 7% between 2005 and 2006, indicating a positive change in the health profile of visitors to Rosliston. Comparisons between the catchment and visitor profiles suggest that people with limiting long-term illness are under-represented at Rosliston.

Women and girls

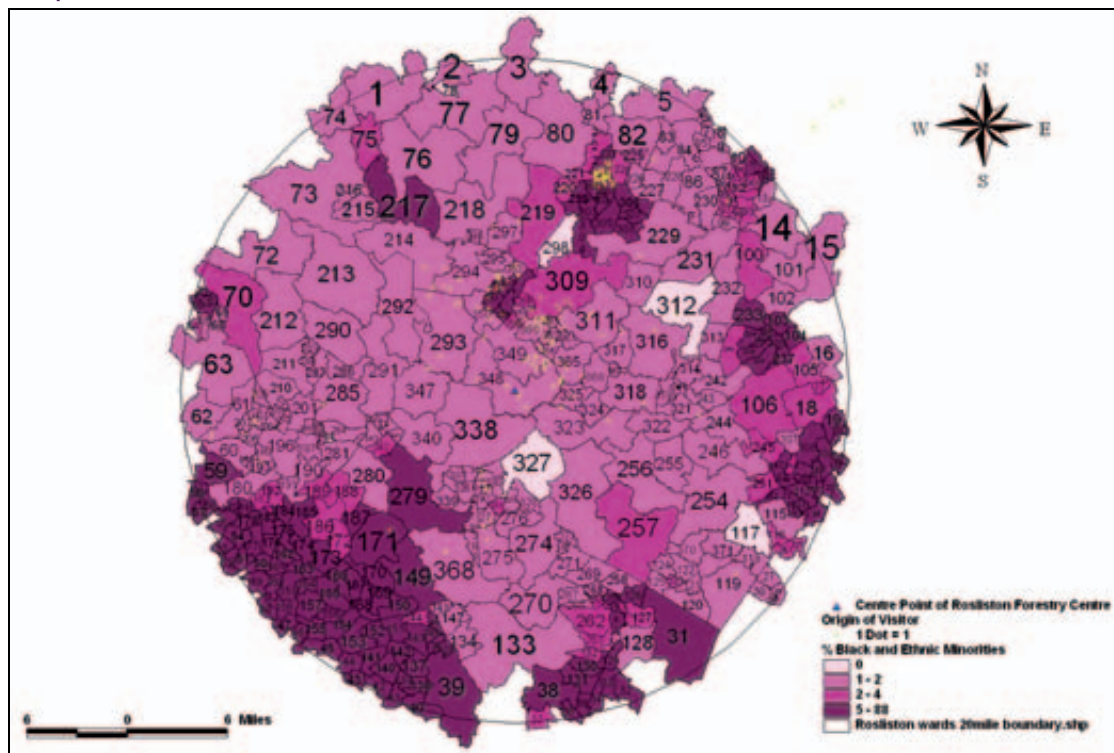
The results of the catchment profiling exercise reveal that there is little correlation between the origins of visitors interviewed during the 2005 survey and gender distribution within the catchment. However, it should be noted that there is a relatively high percentage of females within the North West wards, such as Bagots and Crown. It

should also be noted that there is little variation between wards in terms of gender distribution - the ward with the highest concentration of females is Soho and Victoria (54%) and the lowest is Doveridge and Sudbury (40%). The results of the 2005 survey show that women are well-represented, accounting for some 71% of visitors to Rosliston (rising to 75.9% in 2006).

Black & minority ethnic groups

Map 4 shows that there is a relatively high percentage of people from black and minority ethnic groups (BMEs) towards the peripheries of the catchment, especially to the South West, East and North East (wards in Birmingham, Coventry, Burton and Derby). Map 4 also shows that most of the visitors interviewed during the 2005 survey were from wards with either a 1%, or a 2-4% representation of BME groups. The results of the on-site surveying reveal a small but significant increase in the proportion of visitors from ethnic minority backgrounds (from 0% in 2005 to 3.2% in 2006). However, given that many respondents are from wards showing a 5% to 88% representation of citizens belonging to BMEs, comparisons between the visitor and catchment profiles suggest that these groups are under-represented at Rosliston.

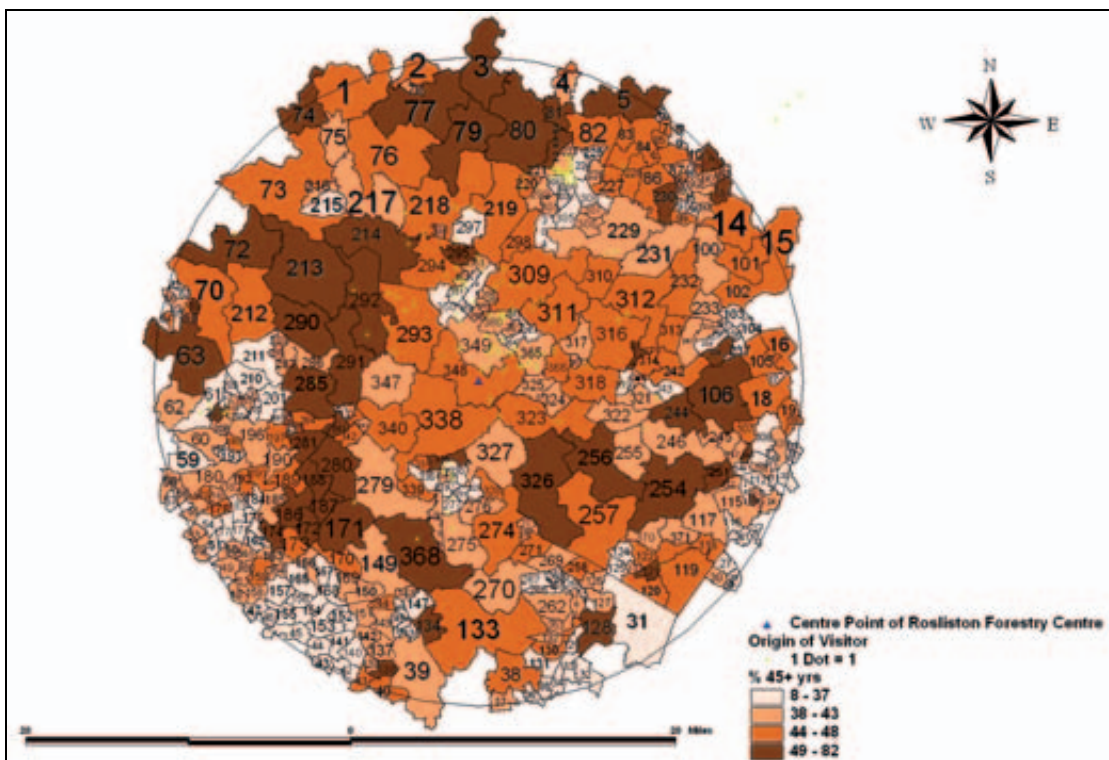
Map 4: Distribution of BMEs within the Rosliston catchment



45+ years

Map 5 shows a number of wards with a relatively high concentration (49% to 82%) of people in the 45+ yrs age group. These wards are concentrated in the rural areas of Needwood (to the west and north west of the catchment) and South-Derbyshire (to the north of the catchment). Map 5 also shows that most respondents to the 2005 survey came from wards where the representation of 45+ yrs is lower (8% to 37%, or 38% to 43%). The survey results show that the proportion of visitors from the 45+ yrs group fell from 46% in 2005 to 34% in 2006, bringing the age profile of visitors in line with wards with the lowest concentration of this age group. From this we do not conclude that the 45+ yrs are under-represented at Rosliston, but that there is certainly potential for targeted engagement with a view to increasing numbers of visitors from this target group.

Map 5: Distribution of 45+ yrs within the Rosliston catchment

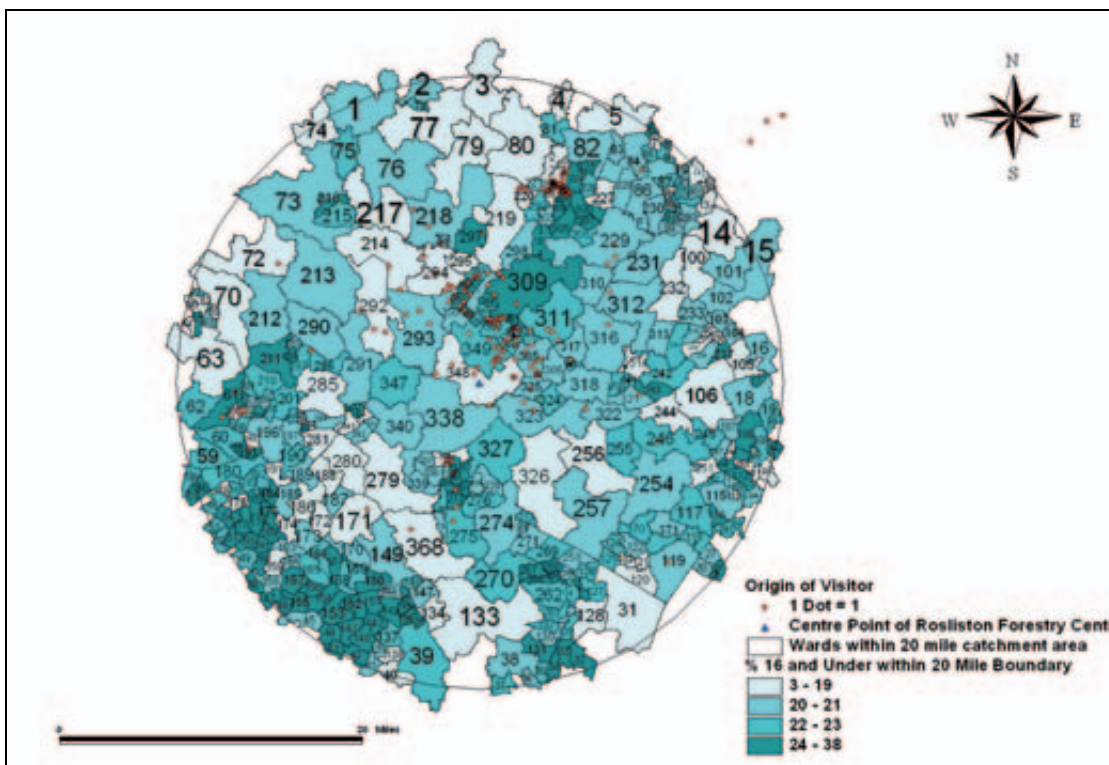


Young people (16 and under)

Map 6 shows a high concentration of young people in the wards between Burton-upon-Trent, Swadlincote and Derby (to the North and North East of the catchment area). Given the spatial distribution of respondents to the 2005 survey, these are the most

likely areas from which Rosliston will be able to draw in more young visitors. Because 'under 16s' were not interviewed in the 2005 survey it is difficult to draw very robust conclusions about the participation of young people at Rosliston. However, in both 2005 and 2006 respondents were asked if they had any children living in their household aged 16 and under. In 2005 the results indicate that 47% of visitors to Rosliston were from households with children under 16, while in 2006 this number had risen to 62%. These results do indicate that 'family use' of the site increased between the two survey years. This is corroborated by responses to the question 'Who did you come with?', which showed an increase in family use from 62% in 2005 to 70% in 2006. As such, we conclude that young people are not under-represented at Rosliston.

Map 6: Distribution of young people (16 and under) within the Rosliston catchment



In summary, based on the profiling of Rosliston's catchment population, and based on comparisons between the catchment and visitor profiles, we can conclude that there is significant potential to increase participation amongst people with limiting long-term illness, BME groups, and 45+ yrs at Rosliston.

4.3 Targeting qualitative research

Relatively low representation amongst people with limiting long-term illness, BME groups, and 45+ yrs as revealed by comparisons between the catchment and visitor profiles was used to inform the qualitative research phase that would be used to provide explanations for low attendance levels and to explore factors that might be acting as barriers. The case for focusing research efforts on people with limiting and long-term illness and 45+ yrs was made clearer by the results of the 2nd on-site survey in 2006, which revealed a drop in the proportion of visitors from these groups (from 15% in 2005 to 7% in 2006 for people with limiting and long-term illness, and from 46% in 2005 to 34% in 2006 for 45+ yrs). For BME groups, despite a slight rise in numbers between the two survey years, from 0% in 2005 to 3.2% in 2006, it was clear that more could be done within 'Get Active in the Forest' and subsequent projects at Rosliston to attract more visitors from this group.

A meeting was held in July 2007, attended by the researchers from Forest Research and members of the 'Get Active in the Forest' steering group to obtain agreement on the targeting of the on-going research effort, and to discuss appropriate groups and individuals to be recruited for the qualitative research phase. The research results to date were presented and discussed, along with the recommendation to focus on people with limiting long-term illness, BME groups, and 45+ yrs. However, because of limited resources, which would enable a total of three focus groups to be run at Rosliston, the decision was made to concentrate on the BME and 45+ yrs groups. This decision was shaped to a large extent by considerations of the ongoing delivery priorities at Rosliston and the policy priorities of the wider 'Get Active in the Forest' partnership.

In practical terms, a decision was made to run two focus groups with Asian community groups from Burton upon Trent (one 'user' and one 'non-user' group) and one focus group with 45+ yrs ('user' group).

5. Results: project evaluation with users and non-users

This section of the report presents a summary of the qualitative research phase. Firstly, results from activities and focus groups with the selected target groups are presented, focusing in particular on the outcomes and benefits derived by people involved with the 'Get Active in the Forest' project's initiatives (referred to here as 'users'), and on the barriers to participation for people who have not been involved (referred to here as 'non-

users’). In addition, the results of interviews with members of staff from Rosliston are presented, providing an insight into project successes, challenges, shortcomings and lessons learnt from the perspective of project delivery. As such, this section presents a summary evaluation of the ‘Get Active in the Forest’ project that is informed by and both complements and builds on the quantitative analysis presented in sections 2 and 3.

5.1 Summary of results from ‘user’ groups

5.1.1 Asian walkers (men)

Introduction to the group

A researcher from Forest Research joined a regular Thursday health walk. The walking group is made up of members of a Sikh community group from Derby. The group had been initially contacted by a member of staff from Rosliston who had gone to speak to them at one of their regular group meetings to give them some information about Rosliston and the ‘Get Active in the Forest’ project and to discuss their potential involvement in the healthy walking initiative. At this first meeting, plans were drawn up for a regular health walk on Thursdays and transport was organised with support from South Derbyshire District Council. The walks are very popular amongst the group. Anywhere between 10 and 15 people regularly attend the walk, which typically lasts about an hour.

Asian walkers (users)

Working status		Age		Frequency of 30 minutes exercise		Green space use	
Retired	10	55 - 64	6	2 days a week	5	1 - 3 times a week	10
		65 - 74	4	5 or more days a week	5		

Motivations for participating in the health walks

This is an autonomously organised community group that existed prior to their involvement in the ‘Get Active in the Forest’ project. They have regular meetings and

often organise community events and excursions. As such, the weekly health walks at Rosliston form part of a broad spectrum of organised activities for the group. Most members of the group are already quite health conscious and physically active, many are regular yoga practitioners and see walking as a complement to their existing exercise regime:

'We are yoga enthusiasts, every morning, walking afterwards, all through the winter.'

In addition to the perceived health benefits of walking, members of the group see the walks as an opportunity to experience and explore the countryside, and to meet new people:

'We come to see the countryside, different parts.'

'We meet new friends, (name) and (name)... they are very helpful.'

For all the members of the group, the fact that the health walks are a group activity that enables them to spend time together is extremely important:

'Some of us we get together and we are walking, talking. We are not talking like everyone, just walking and looking.'

Benefits of the health walks

During the walk that preceded the focus group meeting, the group was given a set of prompt cards containing questions that would be addressed during the discussions. One question: 'Has it done me any good?' was designed to generate discussion about the benefits derived by the group through their involvement in the health walks at Rosliston. During the meeting itself, the group was prompted with further questions related to benefits. The group's responses to these questions can be grouped into two broad categories: physical and mental health benefits at the level of the individual, and positive social outcomes.

Individual health benefits:

Group members talked readily about the positive influence of the walks on both their physical and mental health. Affect was attributed both to the physical activity of walking:

'When we are walking it helps improve the health.'

'It helps us to breathe better.'

'Everybody's happy walking, you know, we feel healthy.'

And to the therapeutic qualities of the physical environment at Rosliston:

'The fresh air helps you to improve your health.'

'I enjoy the quiet and feeling very healthy.'

'More better and the warm weather helps us to feel refreshed.'

'Sitting at home you feel low down, when you come out there you feel much younger than what you are.'

Positive social outcomes:

The group discussions also provided evidence of the positive influence of the health walks, both in terms of strengthening the bonds of friendship within the group:

'Talking about all sorts of life.. you know, making friends.'

And in terms of fostering links between the group and a wider community of forest users. In this regard, the discussions provided evidence of an increased sense of community integration and belonging that can result from initiatives to encourage the use of green spaces by under-represented groups:

'We like walking with so many other people.'

'We feel happier when we are coming round... different atmosphere, more sceneries, we go different places...'

'If you stay home, mental you feel stressed... but if you come here you can talk to everybody and you feel alright.'

Attitudes to health and exercise

Respondents considered health issues to be important and showed a high level of understanding about the health benefits of exercise:

'If you are walking on the hill and breathing hard you are not fit, but if you are walking on the hill and not breathing too hard then you are healthy.'

'Yoga and breathing gives you more oxygen... your blood gets more purified.'

The group displayed a generally high level of regular physical activity, with nearly everybody stating that they do at least 5x30 minutes exercise per week. Again, the discussions provided evidence of the high value attached to exercise as an opportunity to spend time with friends:

'Often doing exercise, yoga as well.'

'I walk nearly five miles every day... and go to the gym as well.'

'Most of us we walk every morning.'

'Some of us we get together and we are walking, talking. We are not talking like everyone, just walking and looking.'

'I get up in the morning very early and do half hour yoga, then go out, we get together, walk together.'

The discussions also provided evidence of a high awareness of the health risks associated with sedentary lifestyles and other causes of ill-health:

'If you are sitting all the time you feel depressed.'

'Young people are drinking too much.'

Attitudes to woodlands and green space

The group was highly appreciative of the quality environment at Rosliston. They agreed that the physical space and facilities at Rosliston make it a very good space for healthy exercise:

'This is one of the best places...'

'Good paths, it's very nice for walking...'

The group also agreed that exercising in a well forested environment accentuated the positive affects on physical and mental health. In particular, group members emphasised the importance of improved air quality and higher oxygen concentrations in forested environments:

'Quite a big place, it's more green, more trees and the place where the more green and more trees it has more oxygen, which is very good for the human body.'

'Forests are better than open countryside because you can get fresh air and more oxygen as well.'

Barriers to participation

The group displayed such enthusiasm for the walks and for Rosliston (a fact that is borne out by the consistently high attendance numbers at the weekly walks) that the topic of barriers seemed somewhat irrelevant. However, the group are aware of their current dependency on transport provided by the South Derbyshire District Council for their continued visits to Rosliston. That said, there was general agreement that they would continue with their visits even if they had to pay for their own transport:

'We are old now and we need some help...! If you want to come on your own it fine, but if you want to come as group, then you need some transport.'

'You never know if the future council they can still afford it, but maybe we can still coming...'

'Even if we have to pay a bit for transport, we want to still keep coming...'

The ensuing discussions turned to the barriers experienced by the wider Sikh community, particular women and children, who are not currently coming to Rosliston. There was general agreement that women and children might find the site intimidating, and this led on to discussions about the importance of group activities to engender a sense of security and confidence:

'Might be frightened if you are walking alone, or for children it might be.. but when you are together in a group... nothing to be afraid about.'

Using the evidence of the on-site surveying, the group was asked to reflect on why people from minority ethnic groups are under-represented at Rosliston and in the wider countryside. Some participants argued that they did use the countryside and that they might represent an exception to the rule:

'The place where we live we do go to open fields...'

'We have been living here since the 1960s so we know how to walk and how to... we know... so we are doing this walk for a very long time.'

However, there was general agreement that, in the wider community, many people are badly informed about access to the countryside. This is particularly the case amongst women, who perceive the countryside as largely off-limits:

'Also the ladies don't use [the countryside]... we need someone to tell the ladies that they can come.'

5.1.2 Over 50s cyclists

Introduction to the group

A researcher from Forest Research joined a regular Friday cycle ride. The group is made up of over 50s cyclists (three men and 5 women) who had been attending the led rides organised as part of the cycling programme within the 'Get Active in the Forest' project at Rosliston. Rides typically last 1 hour, using the cycle paths at Rosliston, with occasional excursions onto local roads. The rides are led by one or two of the volunteer cycle ride leaders trained as part of the project. The table below presents a summary of the data from a short questionnaire filled in by each participant at the end of the focus group discussions. Most participants are aged between 55 – 64 years. Three participants take the recommended amount of exercise, and five make frequent (1 – 3 times per week) visits to green space or woodland.

Over 50s cyclists

Working status		Age		Income		Frequency of 30 minutes exercise		Green space use	
Full time	1	55 - 64	6	10-20K	1	2 days a week	1	4 - 6 times a week	1
Part time	2	65 - 74	1	21-30K	3	3 days a week	3	1 - 3 times a week	5
Retired	3					5 or more days a week	3	1-3 times a year	1
Not working due to illness	1								

Motivations for participating

All the participants got involved with the weekly cycle rides in order to improve their health and because they felt that the rides would provide an opportunity to meet people and to socialise. Some group members also had specific health problems that they were hoping to tackle through increased levels of exercise:

'I started to come... because I've got a lot of issues with my legs.. skin problems... and I wanted the exercise... and I thought it'd be quite a nice way to meet people and get some exercise at the same time...more or less I've been coming every week since and I really enjoy it.'

'I started coming because I've got arthritis, osteo-arthritis...'

'I do a lot of cycling on my own and I wanted to meet other cyclists... I wanted the social aspect... and there's also the health aspect. My GP's fully aware of the cycling and he's happy that I do it...'

'The reason I started coming is that I've had a series of injuries... and a number of accidents and I go out to get the exercise, because you tend to put on weight when you're sitting...'

Benefits of healthy cycling at Rosliston

All the participants felt that their health was benefitting as a result of their involvement in the regular cycle rides. For many, the rides form part of a routine of fairly regular exercise:

'and it just keeps me active alongside what I do at the gym.'

In this regard, the cycling is valued precisely because it is a regular, scheduled event involving other people. As such, the rides have a welcome element of incentive and obligation, which means that it is less likely for other things either to take precedence, or to be used as an excuse for not getting out:

'and the other thing about the weekly meeting is that if I lose focus myself in the week to go out on my own the group keeps you weekly in contact with the cycling, so it doesn't slip. So the GP says do a certain amount of exercise a week and this serves as a weekly session that keeps you on track...'

Many emphasised the mental, as well as the physical health benefits, highlighting a real sense of achievement and satisfaction at the end of a ride. Some draw particular satisfaction from the pain or discomfort felt as a result of their physical exertions:

'I feel worn out after an hour and my knees give in... but I feel exhilarated, yeah. And I feel good in the mind that I've done it... and if I don't manage to do it I get off and push it...'

'I feel tired, but on a bit of a high as well... you know, you get the endorphins, don't you?'

'Physically sometimes I feel tired before I start, but it always pays off mentally once you've done it... you feel satisfied for having made yourself do it...'

All participants agreed that they benefitted socially from their involvement with the rides. As discussed, social interaction was a primary motivation for many to get involved in the first place:

'I like to get out and meet people'

'When we first started coming, what we were looking for is something where we could meet people'

Many of the participants spoke about the group itself as having equal, if not greater importance than the actual activity of cycling. The discussions conveyed a real sense that social interaction acts as a complement to the mental and physical health benefits derived from cycling, whether in the sense that interaction provides a welcome distraction from the physical discomfort of exertion:

'You don't notice you're pedalling away if you're chatting to someone... and last week I felt really good cycling up the hills and that was because I had someone next to me... cos when I walk I'm on my own so perhaps coming and doing a group activity is very nice... I really enjoy it.'

Or in the sense that individual members draw satisfaction from being part of a group that has developed a positive atmosphere of support and mutual respect. In some sense, it seems as though the group itself has started to develop its own identity, based around a spirit of acceptance and co-operation:

'And in the group we've got two levels: a good level and a bad level [laughs]... so we don't feel competitive and because it's not competitive then I enjoy it more. So you don't feel like you're being pushed into anything you don't want to do cos there's always somebody at the back with you and somebody at the front with the fast ones.'

One participant spoke of the group as providing a kind of social therapy that has helped her to deal with feelings of isolation when her husband spends long periods of time away from home. For this participant, there was a clear sense of the enormously positive influence in her life that the group has had:

'Yeah, it very social and you get the encouragement, you get the vibes and you feel you want to be part of it really... you can feel quite isolated sometimes... specially on these dark nights... when my husband's away and you shut the curtains, you know, you shut the world out and you can feel quite alone.'

Attitudes to health and exercise

All participants showed a high level of understanding and knowledge of general health issues and the important role of exercise in contributing to a healthy lifestyle. All participants exercise on at least a weekly basis (see table above) and three individuals already take the recommended level of weekly exercise:

'I go to yoga as well, on a Thursday night... and I come here on a Friday, but I also try to walk as well... but I've got to work two days a week so it's a bit more difficult to fit it in... but I'm trying really hard to walk and I'm trying to walk into the next village and back at least once a week and that's about 3 miles. So I go to yoga and come here and I try to walk, so I am quite conscious.'

For many participants the weekly cycle rides at Rosliston have acted as a springboard to becoming more active and getting involved in other forms of physical exercise:

'I have started to do more since I started doing the cycling... even though it's only an hour, it's starting to ease me back into some sort of exercise...'

Attitudes to woodlands and green space

All participants expressed a preference for exercising outdoors rather than indoors and all were agreed that exercising outdoors enabled contact with the natural environment that they enjoyed:

'It's the environment and the forest...'

'I like being out in the fresh air...'

'Some days if I'm not feeling that grand I just bring the dog and have a walk round and that's really nice cos you see all the wildlife...'

Many welcomed the added safety of cycling on the purpose built cycle trails, as opposed to cycling on the roads. This was particularly the case for those participants who were novice cyclists, and whose confidence on a bike was relatively low:

'Also the traffic.. I mean I hadn't ridden a bike for about 30 years... probably more than that, and when I tried to cycle in the village where I live and it was a nightmare and the only time we could go out was early on a Sunday morning and that's why I like coming here, cos I know that it's traffic free.'

'You virtually had to learn to ride a bike again and you haven't got the confidence and certainly when we started here we could do that...'

However, the group was fairly evenly split on the question of whether green spaces like Rosliston are better for physical exercise than gyms and other indoor facilities. Some were completely against the use of gyms:

'I don't do gyms.'

'You don't want to spend all afternoon in a gym... I'd much rather go out for a walk or cycling.'

Whilst others recognised some of the practical (and social) advantages that indoor facilities have over green spaces and woodlands:

'I prefer exercising outside to inside... but the gym is all female, so that's quite good cos it's all female and you don't feel intimidated...'

'Gyms have their place I mean you can't go out for a run or a ride if it's dark and the country lanes are even more unsafe, aren't they?'

Barriers to participation

Lack of adequate information about local facilities and events was seen as a significant barrier to more regular participation in health-related activities both at Rosliston and other locations / facilities:

'Sometimes you just don't know what to do... you can't really know what's out there.'

As with other groups, transport was also seen as a significant obstacle, with many relying on use of their own car because of a lack of information about the public transport network:

'The public transport should be more publicised because some people don't know that you can get a bus here.'

For two respondents, car reliance was particularly an issue in relation to cycling at Rosliston because the need to transport a bike presented an additional challenge that had to be overcome by using the hire bikes:

'I have got a bike, but for me to get it out and put a carrier on is totally prohibitive...'

'I would buy a bike if there was somewhere like here close to me so I didn't have to drive...'

Evaluation of cycling initiative / Rosliston

The group was asked what to provide their overall evaluation of Rosliston and the organised cycle rides. All participants gave an extremely positive general assessment:

'I think it's lovely!'

'What a fantastic place and it's 2 minutes away from my house and there's so much on offer here.'

Similarly positive evaluations were made in response to specific lines of questioning about the facilities at Rosliston and their suitability for cycling:

'I think there's a really good mix of paths, there's so many flat level bits that they can build up to the hills.'

Only one negative issue was raised in relation to the condition of the rental bikes:

'As far as the biking goes.. I mean the conditions of the bikes sometimes, I had problems with my brakes once, but I mean it probably needs somebody to be there most of the time...'

Perhaps the most compelling illustration of the group's strong endorsement for Rosliston and the cycle rides was provided by one participant's response to a question about how they would react if they heard that the rides were to be cancelled:

'I'd feel devastated... I would, I'd be really upset.'

5.2 Summary of results from 'non-users'

5.2.1 Pakistani women

Introduction to the group

This group was made up of 10 women from a Pakistani community group in Burton upon Trent. Two children were also present. The group had been contacted by staff at Rosliston as part of their community engagement work within the 'Get Active in the Forest' project. During an initial meeting, the group had been given information about Rosliston and the project and had been invited for a 'taster' health walk. At this point, the group had also been informed about the evaluation being conducted by Forest Research and had been invited to take part in a focus group discussion that would take place after the walk. Transport had been provided with support from South Derbyshire District Council. The group participated in a 45 minute walk, followed by the focus group discussion and lunch. The table below presents data from a short questionnaire that each participant was asked to fill in at the end of the focus group discussions. Most participants are full-time parents or carers, aged between 25 – 34 years. Most are from low income (>20K) households. Seven out of ten take the recommended amount of exercise. For most, however, trips to a green space are made only a few (1 – 3) times a month, with the implication that many are using other types of space or facility for exercise.

Pakistani women from Burton upon Trent:

Working status		Age		Income		Frequency of 30 minutes exercise		Green space use	
Part time	1	16-24	1	Under 10K	4	1 day a week	1	4 - 6 times a week	1
Parent or carer	7	25-34	6	10-20K	4	2 days a week	1	1 - 3 times a week	1
Unemployed	2	35-44	3	21-30K	1	3 days a week	1	1 - 3 times a month	6
				31-50K	1	5 or more days a week	7	1-3 times a year	1

Attitudes to health and exercise

The group displayed a fairly high level of awareness in relation to general health issues. When asked what they did to stay healthy, for example, they talked about the importance of a healthy diet:

'Eating the right types of food the five a day.'

'Eating fruit and vegetables.'

'Drinking water.'

A healthy diet was seen to have particular importance in relation to family, the importance of home cooking and the health of their children:

'Sometimes they [children] eat the wrong foods...Asian people we always tend to cook meals at home we never get ready meals, always fresh always made at home.'

Awareness of the health benefits to be gained from leading an active lifestyle was also high. When asked how often they took exercise, members of the group felt that they already led fairly active lives:

'five days a week taking the kids backwards and forwards to school that keeps them going.'

However, there was general agreement that they found it difficult to make time for exercise and that they would like to be more active:

'It's finding the time.'

'There's not enough hours in the day.'

'If it's not house work It's taking the kids to the doctors the mosque, there is always something there.'

The group were happy to use a broad definition of 'exercise', seeing a range of activities as relevant, such as walking, gardening, going up and down stairs, housework, and taking the children to the mosque. In general terms, the group felt that being 'always on the go' meant that their health was benefitting:

'For the Asians they come home from school and then they go to the mosque then they come back from mosque so they are always on the go.'

However, many members of the group regretted not having specified time for exercise and, in qualitative terms, felt that they were forced to count daily household activities because there was no time for specific dedication to exercise:

'The housework is a chore you have to do it.'

'Well we're walking but when you rushing it's not really relaxing.'

There was general agreement that exercise is important for children and two respondents made reference to benefits of exercise, such as improved sleep and appetite. They also recognised that sedentary activities, such as watching TV and computer games could have a detrimental affect on health:

'It's better than sitting in front of the TV and playing computer games.'

As was the case with their own lifestyles, they recognised the value of a broad range of children's activities, and there was general agreement that the most important thing was for the children to be active, irrespective of the type of activity:

'We don't tend to say that's exercise...they probably don't know they are keeping active but they running around and skipping.'

Attitudes to woodlands and green space

In general, the group displayed a high appreciation for 'the outdoors'. There was general preference for being outdoors as opposed to indoors. Many members of the group said that they visited green spaces fairly frequently, particularly in summer

'With being inside all the time you need the fresh air, and being in a busy environment you need to go somewhere where there is relaxation and trees and greenery.'

'In the summer we try to go every two days or everyday as much as we can and as long as we can with the children, in the summer holidays.'

There was also general appreciation for the positive health influence of spending time in green spaces:

'It's good for your lungs the fresh air and exercise and it changes things, you've gone out and enjoyed yourself more.'

In addition, the group felt that green spaces had a high social value, providing an important place to spend time with family, friends and to meet new people:

'I think it's a social thing as well, you do go out and meet people as well, friends it's a meeting point... New people or your children might know somebody from school, it's a social thing as well.'

The walk that preceded the discussions made a big impression on the group. In the ensuing discussions, the group was asked whether they thought that Rosliston was a good place for healthy exercise. Some group members talked about the restorative quality of going for a walk at Rosliston and the fact that they felt it to be a form of escape from the daily routine. Others emphasised the relaxing quality of the environment at Rosliston and expressed feeling a sensation of calm:

'You're not getting away from it with things like that [household chores], home is an everyday thing, it's a normal everyday thing but this [Rosliston] is out your away from that environment and it's open space and there the breeze that's the difference.'

'This is different, it's something you can get away from and do.'

'You're leaving things behind.'

'I don't know about any of you ladies but when I walked around the trees I felt really relaxed, I don't know why but it felt nice and comfortable, stress release if you want to say.'

'I feel really relaxed today I don't know about anyone else but I felt really relaxed... it felt right.'

Barriers to participation

The group was asked to discuss those factors that prevent them from using green spaces like Rosliston for healthy exercise. Most of the group agreed that the weather, particularly in winter, was something that put them off getting out and using green spaces near to where they live. Other members of the group made specific reference to other factors that discourage them from using green spaces, such as dogs, and irresponsible dog owners in particular.

In an attempt to gauge the participants' knowledge and awareness of their access rights, the group was asked if they had heard of the Forestry Commission (FC) or the National Forest (NF) and whether they knew that all FC land was accessible to the public. Most of the group had heard of the both the FC and the NF, but didn't know what they meant. None of the group were aware that FC land and most of the newly planted sites within the NF were accessible. They recognised this lack of awareness as a significant barrier to access for members of their community:

'We should have more advertisement.'

Specific reference was made to the issue of language and the fact that many people within the wider Asian community are unaware of public services available for them, precisely because public information is not tailored to the specific language requirements of minority groups:

'You know when people are promoting it [Rosliston] what about leaflets that are in different languages... That's why Asian people miss out on a lot of things, it's the language if they can't read it and understand it.'

One respondent also stressed the importance of an inclusive approach to on-site communication and signage:

'Sign posting would be good. Because you [Rosliston staff member] guided us we were okay but if you weren't here we would need maps.'

This led into a more general discussion of a lack of confidence, both in relation to using public transport to come to Rosliston and more generally in relation to issues around gender and ethnicity. When asked if they would consider using a local bus service to get to Rosliston, two respondents cited lack of confidence as a significant barrier to using public transport:

*'Some people won't have the confidence I don't think.'
'I think if I had somebody else with me for support.'*

The following excerpt from the discussions shows how one respondent expresses the lack of confidence experienced by Asian women in her community with regard to accessing green space. This respondent clearly illustrates the importance of group activities as a means of overcoming this barrier.

- Respondent: *I think lacking in confidence is a big thing, people who have come from abroad or Asian ladies haven't got the confidence it is hard for them to go places if they don't know anybody. If it's local and only round the corner we will go.*
- Researcher: *Is that because they don't know the people?*
- Respondent: *Sometimes if people are new they are not going to know many people, like in any community you have to make friends and take it from there.*
- Researcher: *Even if you knew about a site that was accessible or a walk that you could do would you feel happy or comfortable doing that or would you need some kind of introduction?*
- Respondent: *If it's a family outing they will feel more comfortable but they wouldn't go on their own.*
- Researcher: *So it's nice to have a group?*
- Respondent: *Or a family, but coming up by themselves, no.*

The discussion was then directed towards the issue of community engagement. The group was asked whether they would have come to Rosliston without first having been contacted by Rosliston staff. During the ensuing discussion, several group members

emphasised the importance of direct engagement with community groups like their own and expressed how grateful they were for the steps taken to engage with them and facilitate their participation in the taster walk at Rosliston:

'Obviously you invited us and we passed that on to others, otherwise no we wouldn't have known.'

'It's just breaking that barrier, sometimes for the Asian community opening that barrier takes a lot of guts, that's all they need.'

'But with a place you've never ever been you think oh my god.'

'What you offered us today to bring the group out is fantastic, it's ideal. But we need more.'

5.3 Summary of site representatives' views

An interview was conducted with two members of staff central to the delivery of the 'Get Active in the Forest' project at Rosliston. The interview was an opportunity for researchers to elicit feedback from Rosliston staff on the successes of the project and to discuss and record any difficulties and challenges. As such, the interview represents a self-evaluation of the project by the members of staff responsible for its delivery, and enables the recording of insights and lessons learnt that might inform future project design and delivery.

Key project successes

Target groups:

Active England funding provided the opportunity to purchase some equipment to provide opportunities for certain specialist activities, such as archery and laser combat. The ability to purchase this equipment is seen by Rosliston staff as pivotal to the project's successes in providing facilities for and encouraging participation amongst certain groups who are typically excluded from participation on recreation-based physical activity. For example, laser combat equipment was absolutely critical to the project's successes with encouraging young people to exercise at Rosliston.

'Get Active in the Forest' delivered a diverse range of activities that appealed to a wide range of people. This is seen as critical to the project's popularity and success because it meant providing opportunities for people to try things that they wouldn't normally think of doing. For example, activities like archery, climbing and laser combat were particularly popular with groups of children from schools where students normally either refuse, or try to avoid participation in conventional P.E. lessons. In this regard, the critical factor was the provision of facilities for activities where having fun is the primary consideration and participants are physically active almost without realising it.

Another critical factor determining project successes with certain groups is the provision of funding without too many constraints on how exactly it would be used. This allowed a certain level of autonomy to be maintained by project delivery staff, giving them the freedom to try things out without always knowing how they would be received. This freedom was critical, for example, to the delivery of Tai Chi taster sessions, which proved enormously successful with the 45+ yrs target group.

Staff at Rosliston stressed the importance of outreach work in order to encourage participation amongst so-called 'hard to reach' groups, such as Black and Ethnic Minority groups. They were keen to stress that the projects successes with some groups would not have been possible without this opportunity for direct community engagement work. They also stressed the importance of identifying already existing groups for whom visits to Rosliston could become incorporated into an already established timetable of scheduled activities and excursions. In this regard, drawing on the experience and contacts of the project's steering group (particularly members from South Derbyshire District Council and the National Forest Company) was critical to the success of the community engagement work. The need to be 'client oriented' was also emphasised, and they advocated a mode of engagement where listening to a group's needs and tailoring services accordingly was just as important as providing information about the facilities on offer at Rosliston. A key lesson to be drawn from the experience of delivering a programme of outreach work is that the availability of the site and facilities is not enough to achieve sustained participation amongst certain target groups. Staff emphasised the critical role of direct community engagement.

Volunteers

Volunteer development is not only a key delivery objective, but also a key delivery mechanism for the 'Get Active in the Forest' project. Staff emphasised the fact that the development of the volunteer base has been absolutely invaluable in terms of delivery against wider project aims and objectives. They stressed that the project simply would not have been possible with volunteer support.

In addition to providing an invaluable human resource for project delivery, the volunteers themselves have benefitted enormously through their own involvement. Many volunteers have developed enormously in terms of their own abilities and self esteem. Specific reference was made to one individual with mental health problems who has become an absolutely key member of the project delivery team. Reference was also made to other vulnerable individuals for whom involvement in the project has had an enormously positive impact. Indeed, Rosliston staff see volunteer development in terms of a virtuous system of reciprocal benefit and support involving enormously positive project delivery and personal development outcomes.

Sustainability

Both staff members highlighted certain factors which have helped to ensure that some positive outcomes will last beyond the lifetime of the project. For example, they predict that some investments as part of the 'Get Active in the Forest' project will help to ensure longer term service delivery at Rosliston. Again, specific reference was made to the opportunity to buy equipment, which not only proved to be a viable short-term commercial investment, but will also continue to be used long after project closure, providing in a sustainable revenue stream for the Centre. This was presented as a good example of how 'Get Active in the Forest' and the Centre itself have been mutually reinforcing and supportive.

Key challenges

Both staff members agreed that the 'Get Active in the Forest' has been a victim of its own success, in the sense that the project has been responsible for a significant increase in visitor numbers at Rosliston which, while being a positive project outcome, does nevertheless create new issues and challenges for the management of the Centre.

There was also agreement that the lack of adequate staff capacity has been a real issue that has significantly constrained the scope of the project. 'Get Active in the Forest' has been delivered by just 1.5 permanent staff and while some support has been given by the staff of partner organisations, there have been issues with the reliability of this support. The lack of an adequate, permanent staff resource has meant that staff have been constantly frustrated by their inability to realise the almost limitless potential at Rosliston to provide services and facilities for a huge number of individuals and groups. A key lesson is that more realistic staff provision should be a central dimension of project design and funding.

Both staff members stressed the challenges involved with engaging disabled groups. Both made reference to the lack of existing organisations and autonomous groups within the district, making it extremely difficult to efficiently target engagement and outreach work. This is more a reflection on the current status of local and regional organisations, rather than on project design or delivery.

Future development / lessons learnt

A critical lesson to be drawn from the experience of delivering the 'Get Active in the Forest' project is the importance of adequate staff resource for project delivery on-site (activities, events etc.) and community engagement work. The reality of this project has been that existing staff resource has been used to deliver both work streams, with the

result that community engagement has suffered because the demands of on-site project delivery have been so high. There is also a clear need for specialist staff development, through training and recruitment, for the successful delivery of a programme of community engagement.

6. Discussion

The 'Get Active in the Forest' project at Rosliston Forestry Centre has enjoyed considerable success, both in terms of facilitating participation amongst target groups (particularly amongst women, under 16s, and people from low income families), and in terms of enabling physical infrastructure and human resources development at the site that put Rosliston in a strong position to deliver similar projects and programmes in the future.

Comparisons between the dynamic visitor profile and the profile of Rosliston's potential catchment population reveal that there are significant opportunities both to encourage and facilitate increased attendance and participation amongst over 45s and people from BME groups.

Activities and the facilities at Rosliston are highly valued by participants in 'Get Active in the Forest' project activities ('users'), who reported clear physical and mental health benefits, together with important social benefits from taking exercise at Rosliston. Users and non-users stressed the importance of organised, group activities, providing opportunities to build confidence, to meet new people and to develop and strengthen bonds of friendship and community.

The fundamental importance of targeted community engagement leading to 'facilitated' access at Rosliston highlighted by user and non-user groups alike has a direct bearing on the staff resource issues raised by project staff, for whom the delivery of activities on-site proved to be an almost full-time occupation, leaving little time for community outreach work. Notwithstanding the enormous importance of volunteers and their significant contribution to the delivery of the project, the availability of a strong volunteer resource should not detract from the need to build up an adequate staff resource to enable the efforts dedicated to delivery of activities on-site to be matched with those required to actively target those sections of the community facing persistent barriers to participation.

Key recommendations and 'lessons learnt' are presented in the main evaluation report, drawing on research findings from across the five woodland projects.

References

'Get Active in the Forest' Development Plan – unpublished executive paper

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