

Communication, not conflict: using communication to encourage considerate shared recreational use of the outdoors

Natural Heritage Management



sportscotland

widening opportunities • developing potential • achieving excellence

SCOTTISH
NATURAL
HERITAGE



Planning for visitor management – the wider context

Scottish Natural Heritage, in association with a number of key land managing organisations, has developed **'Management for People'**. This publication, aimed at all those involved in access management, presents, in five modules, a recommended process of planning for visitors. **'Management for People'** explores how to make informed decisions and review their effectiveness in achieving sustainable visitor management. The five modules are:

- Involving and communicating with people
- Planning and objective setting
- Visitor care and welfare
- Monitoring
- Analysis and assessment

"Communication, not conflict: using communication to encourage considerate shared recreational use of the outdoors" is part of a complementary suite of material offering more detailed topic-specific advice about management for public access to the outdoors, building on the foundation provided by **'Management for People'**.

'Management for People' is available from November 2004 from:
Scottish Natural Heritage Publications Section, Battleby, Redgorton, PERTH
PH1 3EW Tel: 01738 444177

**Communication, not conflict:
using communication to encourage
considerate shared recreational use of
the outdoors**

FOREWORD

This guide describes how communication techniques can be used to prevent or solve conflicts between groups of people using the outdoors for different recreational pursuits. It has been produced to assist people such as rangers and land managers to develop communication projects suited to their particular situation.

The publication has been produced for Scottish Natural Heritage and **sport**scotland, based on the work of James Carter.

CONTENTS

Section 1	Introduction	4
Section 2	Behaviour and how it can be influenced	6
Section 3	Effective communication	8
	3.1 Get in at the beginning	8
	3.2 Make it easy	8
	3.3 Get in at the top	9
	3.4 Key principles	10
Section 4	Means to an end	11
	4.1 Set up the right expectations	11
	4.2 Peer pressure	12
	4.3 Role models	12
	4.4 Codes of conduct	12
	4.5 Voluntary agreements	13
Section 5	Planning communication projects	14
	5.1 Involve people	14
	5.2 Define the problem	15
	5.3 Identify aims	15
	5.4 Define the audience	16
	5.5 Specify objectives	18
	5.6 Define your messages	18
	5.7 Identify media	19
	5.8 Developing the project	20
	5.9 Evaluate	20
Section 6	Communication tools	21
	6.1 Talk to people	21
	6.2 Leaflets and booklets	22
	6.3 Posters	22
	6.4 Other publications – ephemera	22
	6.5 Mass media	22
	6.6 On-site signs	22
	6.7 Video and audio	23
	6.8 Rich media	23
	6.9 Websites	24
	6.10 Distribution	24
Section 7	Key points	25
Section 8	Further reading	26

Section 1. Introduction

Patterns of recreation in Scotland's outdoors are changing. Numbers of people participating in outdoor recreation over the past 40 years have increased in response to improved economic well-being and mobility. At the same time there has been considerable change in the range of activities enjoyed by people. Activities which were uncommon twenty years ago, such as snowboarding and mountain biking, now attract many participants. Technical improvements to equipment and clothing have influenced participation and led to some activities becoming fashionable. Changes in patterns of work and leisure mean that demand by people to use the outdoors now extends throughout the week and at all hours of the day.

Outdoors: *This guide uses the term 'outdoors'. As defined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code this term includes, "...mountains, moorland, farmland (enclosed and unenclosed), forests, woods, rivers, lochs and reservoirs, beaches and the coastline, and open spaces in towns and cities".*

The legal framework within which people access the outdoors for recreation is also changing. In Scotland, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 establishes new statutory rights of public access to the outdoors for non-motorised recreation to most land and inland water, with safeguards for privacy, public safety, land management and conservation. These rights come with responsibilities as detailed in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. For example, people only have a right of access to the outdoors as long as they behave with consideration for the environment and for others. Although it is not envisaged that the new rights of access will lead to a sudden increase in the numbers of people wanting to use the outdoors, the modernised access arrangements provide a framework to resolve existing conflict and address new localised problems brought about by changing patterns of recreation.

As a result of the historical growth in the number of people participating in outdoor recreational activities, the demand for recreation outwith traditional times, the wider range of activities undertaken, and the new access rights, there is a greater need to encourage considerate, shared use of the outdoors. Without consideration for others and a mutual respect between different recreations, there may be tension or conflict between different recreational groups and with land managers. **Good communication is often the key to avoiding or resolving such tension or conflict: this guide looks at how to plan and use effective communication.**

This guide is aimed at those people, for example countryside officers, rangers, site managers and land managers, who wish to utilise communication techniques to manage a current problem or defuse a potential issue. It concentrates on the development of communication projects for specific recreational situations, for particular target audiences or

for on-site delivery. Ideally individual communication projects should be developed in the context of an organisation's wider communications policy, which will define your organisation's overall objectives, who you need to communicate with and the messages you want to get across.

Several research studies have shown that tension between different recreations is largely based on the way people perceive or think about other users: actual conflict is rare.

*Researchers in New Zealand looked at the attitudes of walkers towards mountain bikers in an area where shared use between cyclists and walkers had been introduced as a trial. Of walkers who saw bikes during their trip, 91% said this had no effect on, or enhanced, their experience. But among walkers who had not seen bikes, 32% said the presence of the bikes detracted from their trip. Clearly the **idea** of mountain bikes is more disturbing than the reality. Age was also a factor: walkers over 40 were more likely to have negative perceptions of bikers, suggesting that changes in recreation patterns will become more accepted over time by new generations of countryside users.*

Source: Cessford 2002 (see section 8 "Further reading")

Of course, communication is not the only tool in resolving conflict: to be really effective it must often work together with other management techniques such as zoning, good route and site design, and provision of rangers. These complementary techniques are beyond the scope of this guide.

The guide is divided into 8 sections, including this introduction (section 1):

- Section 2 looks at the root causes of behaviour that may lead to conflict and considers what communication must do to influence such behaviour.
- Section 3 reviews some principles of good communication that can be used as a basis to help to address potential conflict.
- Section 4 looks at some specific strategies that you may need to use.
- Section 5 describes how to go about planning an effective project. Planning is essential to successful communication. This key section will help you to develop projects to suit your needs.
- Section 6 reviews some common media that you may use to get your messages across.
- Section 7 provides a short reminder of key points made in this guide.
- Section 8 lists some references that can give you more information about some of the issues discussed.

Throughout the guide, case study examples illustrate ideas and suggestions. All the examples are drawn from real projects where some evaluation has taken place to assess their effectiveness. A key case study used is based on work to resolve conflicts between canoeists and anglers: this illustrates the recommended planning scheme in section 5. Most of the case studies are based on Scottish experience, but the principles discussed are applicable everywhere.

Section 2. Behaviour and how it can be influenced



Persuasive communication aims to influence the attitudes of people towards an issue or towards other people, and through this the way they behave. This guide concentrates on this type of communication, although there are of course other roles for communication that can be useful in establishing good practice in shared use of the outdoors.

Some communication projects simply provide information, hoping that people will use this to make logical decisions in line with managers' objectives. The Hillphones scheme, managed jointly by Scottish Natural Heritage, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and participating land managers, is an example of this. It provides up to date information about where deer stalking is likely to happen and suggests alternative routes for walkers in these areas.

The Hillphones scheme provides walkers with a series of telephone numbers that they can call for information about where deer stalking is likely to be happening during autumn. The system relies on information being up to date, specific, and presented in a positive way. It is also vital that people know the system is available and how to access it, so the project attempts to ensure information is distributed widely and to appropriate places.

Giving people information works well if they are able and motivated to both pay attention to it and act on it. But this is not the case in many circumstances where you might want to influence recreational participants' behaviour. You will probably need to get messages across to them while

they have other priorities to think about, such as where to go that day or what equipment to use. In these situations communication must go beyond providing information and try to influence the underlying causes of the way people behave. This gives it much in common with public health projects, which often have to do this to succeed. For example, if humans simply responded logically to information given to them, no-one would start to smoke.

Most persuasive communication assumes that the way people make use of information is shaped by their personal attitudes and beliefs. Important factors in this are the attitudes and behaviour regarded as normal or acceptable in an individual's social circle: these are called **social norms**. Communication designed to influence behaviour must therefore attempt to influence the personal beliefs and attitudes or the social norms that influence a particular behaviour.

As an example of how this works, think about efforts to discourage drinking and driving. The *information* that drinking impairs your ability to drive is common knowledge: a campaign to reinforce appropriate behaviour based on this might aim to persuade people:

- that they are likely to get caught and charged, or
- that the consequences of an accident will affect them very deeply, or
- that people who drink and drive are selfish and irresponsible – an attempt to influence social norms towards the view that it is socially unacceptable to drink and drive.

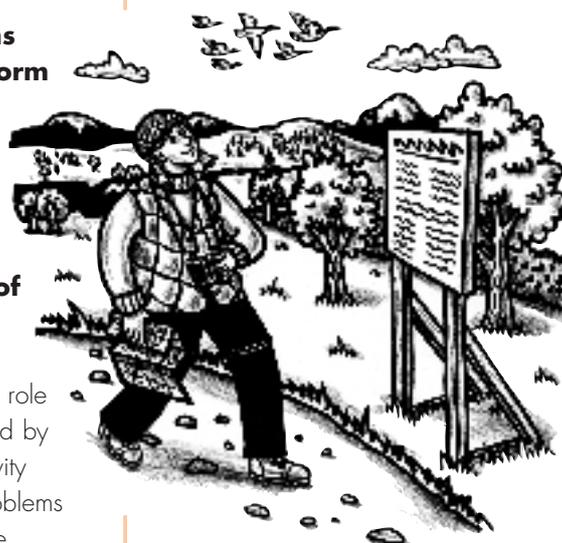
There is good evidence that behaviour can be influenced by communication that targets attitudes, beliefs or social norms, but the communication needs to be carefully planned to suit the audience concerned. Beliefs and attitudes vary greatly from one individual to another; social norms are specific to particular groups.

Decisions about what beliefs, attitudes and social norms are important in any given situation should therefore form the basis of a communication project.

Messages and media also need to be planned to suit specific target groups, possibly using different strategies and techniques for different groups involved in a conflict. **Communication projects should also therefore be based on a thorough understanding of the target audience group.** See section 5 for more on this.

For some challenging conflicts, communication may only play a minor role in attempts to resolve the problem. Vandalism, or the problems caused by 'rogue' participants determined to pursue their sport or recreation activity regardless of other outdoor users' needs, are often linked to wider problems in society or complex personal issues. Better information or persuasive communication alone is unlikely to address these problems.

There are ways to address these issues, but they are likely to involve long term partnerships with other agencies, such as social work departments, neighbourhood improvement schemes or the police. These are beyond the scope of this guide.



Section 3. Effective communication



This section reviews some well established principles of effective communication. Many of these principles are equally applicable to work on interpretation projects, and you can find out more about them in the references in section 8.

3.1 Get in at the beginning

Social norms, a major influence on attitudes and behaviour, are often established through the first contact people have with a sport. The attitudes and behaviour patterns of instructors are therefore a powerful influence on their students' subsequent behaviour. Getting staff at outdoor pursuits centres to introduce their sport in the context of considerate behaviour for others, and encouraging them to demonstrate this to their students through both theory and example, are valuable ways of influencing the behaviour of a whole generation of recreational participants.

Of course, many people are not introduced to an activity through formal tuition. Working with shops that sell outdoor equipment, and asking them to supply and attach codes of conduct to the equipment, is another way to try to influence people at the beginning of their experience in a sport.

The Scottish Canoe Association has produced a code of conduct for canoeists. In addition to publishing this in their yearbook and on their website, the Association encourages instructors at outdoor centres to promote behaviour based on it. They make presentations at canoe instructors' conferences about the code of conduct, and a knowledge of access and environment issues is a formal part of canoe instructors' qualifications.

3.2 Make it easy

No matter how well a communication project has worked in getting a message across about how people ought to behave, they sometimes need



help to follow the advice. Public health projects recognise this: for example, a campaign about healthy eating might be supported through schemes in which workplace canteens make a healthy eating option available at a reduced price. This process is called **enabling**. In outdoor recreation, it might involve making a desired behaviour easier through 'reminders' about the key message, or through good site design.

At Mabie Forest in Dumfries and Galloway, visitors complained about the amount of dog mess on the main path leading from the car park. The rangers built a 'dog loop' path designed for dogs to use as soon as they arrived. They advertised this through signs at the main entrance and at the exit from the car park, and through an article in the newsletter sent to regular visitors to the forest.

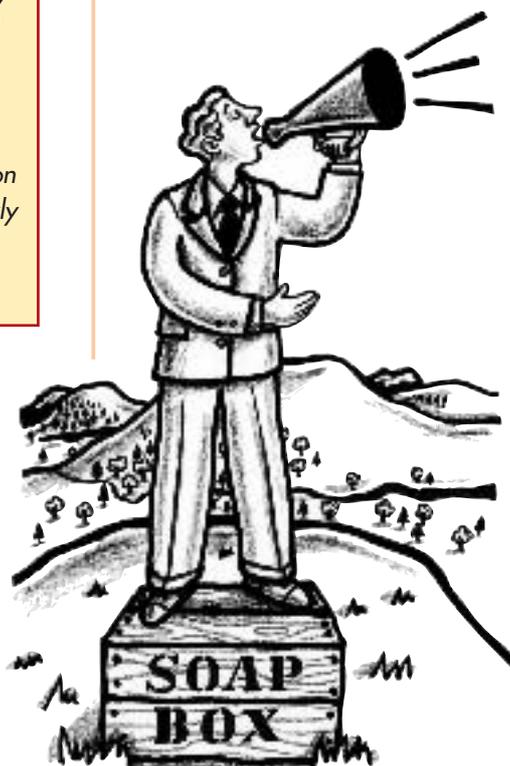
Because the loop is right next to the car park and leads to the main forest paths, most local people now walk their dogs there on every visit. People unfamiliar with the forest seem to use it less, and rangers are looking at the possibility of promoting the loop on the main orientation map as well as on the existing notices.



Another enabling technique is to reinforce a message or idea that has been established elsewhere. These 'reminders' must be presented close to where they are relevant. For example, signs reminding cyclists that walkers may also be using a forest path could be placed just before a junction with a cycle track. Reminders are often best if they are simple graphic symbols that can be 'read' in an instant.

Along several Scottish rivers such as the Spey, Leny and Arkaig, signs approved by the Scottish Canoe Association have been installed to identify good access points to the river. These points have been agreed through consultations between canoeists, land managers and landowners for reasons of privacy, environmental protection or simply because they are the easiest to find. The access points are also listed on the Scottish Canoe Association's website; and the signs remind canoeists to use the information they have gained elsewhere.

Although the same information is available in booklets, the Association prefers the website as a medium. This allows information to be quickly and easily updated as circumstances change, for example, when some access points become inappropriate and others are introduced.



3.3 Get in at the top

Another tool that should complement persuasive communication is **advocacy**: working at a wider policy level to influence political, economic, or broader cultural factors.

Health promotion work illustrates this. Health educators not only establish communication projects to promote healthy eating directly to the public; they lobby government ministers to establish healthy lifestyles as a political issue, or contribute to food industry working groups to try to influence the way food manufacturers develop and promote their products. These approaches are relevant to situations where there are

tensions between different outdoor recreations too, particularly with issues that are common across a number of different sites.

3.4 Key principles

The ideas above are all strategies for reaching your audience. When you come to develop the actual communication material itself, whether it is a talk, a leaflet or a video programme, remember the following principles.

Effective communication needs to:

- **Provoke** its audience to be interested in the material, as well as encourage them to think.
- **Relate** to its audience in the language and images it uses, and by comparing ideas or concepts to something they are already familiar with.
- **Reveal** ideas and ways of thinking, rather than simply present information.

Remember that in many situations you will have to present your messages alongside material that is far more interesting to your audience: they will probably only glance at a code of conduct printed in a leaflet detailing routes and recreational opportunities on a site.

In most circumstances you cannot expect people to pay close attention to your messages and give them considered thought. This means you need to get your messages across clearly and quickly. **Use simple designs and pictures and graphic devices as much as possible. Text should be kept to a minimum and written in a clear, accessible style.**

If you need to ask people not to do something they might want to do, or to do something that is slightly inconvenient, explain why. People may resent a list of 'dos and don'ts', and out of spite do exactly the opposite of what you would like them to do.

If you are working with a range of different media in one project make sure there is a consistent design style throughout. Plan the content of each element of your project so that they reinforce each other.

Developing leaflets, displays and other media which are attractive and communicate clearly is a skilled job. A single leaflet could involve contributions from a writer, an illustrator, a photographer and a designer. You may well need to work with professional contractors to produce the end result.

Section 4. Means to an end



This section reviews some communication strategies that are particularly relevant to encouraging considerate shared use of the outdoors. Remember that communication can work in conjunction with, and support, other management tools: developing codes of conduct or voluntary agreements are management options, but they rely on good communication to make them work.

4.1 Set up the right expectations

The way people feel about their recreation experience, and about other things that may be happening on the site they use, is heavily influenced by their expectations. For example, if you travel to a remote Highland loch wanting solitude and peace, you may well feel some conflict with other recreational use if you find the local Highland Games in full swing on its shores.

The New Zealand research project mentioned in section 1 found that walkers were more likely to regard the presence of mountain bikers as positive if they knew before they arrived that mountain bikers used the site too.

Make sure that any publicity about your site makes clear what people can expect, both in terms of facilities for their own recreation and other activities that may be happening there. You can do this quite subtly, for example by including pictures in a brochure of horse riders as well as walkers.

4.2 Peer pressure

Because social norms are such an important influence on both perceptions and behaviour, communication programmes that can influence them are a powerful tool. If recreational participants feel their peers expect them to behave in a certain way, and will disapprove if they do not, they are more likely to conform.

As discussed in section 3, working with the instructors who introduce people to a sport is one way to establish peer pressure to behave in a certain way. It is also possible to develop positive social norms through work with local user groups, or through 'Friends of ...' groups for a particular site. There will always be some people active in a sport who see themselves as outside such groups, so it is important that the group has a broad base among the participants concerned. Communication with such groups is often best done through face to face contact: see section 6 for more on this.

4.3 Role models

Getting role models who are well known by the target audience to endorse and promote certain behaviours is another way to influence social norms. Projects in which celebrities, such as footballers, champion road safety or healthy eating are examples of this. Role models can have a significant influence on a person's underlying attitudes, but they need to present simple messages or an overall style of behaviour rather than complex or detailed information.

It is vital that the role models chosen are respected by the target audience for a project. This may need some careful research: someone respected by cyclists aged 30 to 50 may be seen as out-of-touch by downhill riders aged 20 to 29. Role models who are seen as irrelevant can actually have a negative effect: research shows that people do not just ignore any messages they present; some may feel the messages are untrue.

4.4 Codes of conduct

Codes of conduct can cover how participants should behave towards the environment and their relationship with other outdoor users, as well as safety issues. Most sports now have national codes of conduct which form a good basis for local projects: there may be scope to develop specific codes of conduct for a particular site, or to address a current conflict.

Codes of conduct must be developed in consultation with representatives of the sport or recreation activity concerned. This process can be a good way to establish a debate about any current tensions or conflict, but be patient: it can take a long time to reach a form of words acceptable to everyone.

Once a code of conduct is established, you will need to make sure that as many people as possible see it and understand it. If the group involved in developing the code of conduct is truly representative of the broad spectrum of users, the code of conduct will probably 'leak out' through informal discussion, and should be well established by the time it is formally published. Most codes of conduct are also published in leaflets, guide books and other media such as swing tags on clothing and equipment. The more widely you can get the code of conduct published and distributed, the better.



Codes of conduct must be simply worded, short, and get their points across visually as far as possible. Most people are looking for the information contained in a leaflet, for example details of where they can pursue their sport, and will do little more than glance at the code of conduct.

4.5 Voluntary agreements

Some locally based conflicts, or potential conflicts, may best be dealt with through a voluntary agreement between the groups involved. These may be temporary and less formal than a published code of conduct, and so it may be easier to reach a statement everyone can accept. An example might be an agreement between local canoe and rafting businesses not to use a stretch of river during an angling competition, or on particular peak days for fishermen.

Section 5. Planning communication projects



Planning makes sure that your communication

- **addresses a clearly defined problem;**
- **is designed for a specific audience; and**
- **has specific objectives.**

This section describes steps that will help you do this. You need not follow each step in the order given here, but you should consider how each of them applies to your circumstances.

Many of the case study examples in this section are drawn from a pilot scheme designed to resolve conflict between canoeists and anglers. The main output from this was a video, 'Meeting at River Creek', produced in 1999 by Scottish Natural Heritage and **sportscotland**. This aimed to show that rivers are a resource shared by canoeists and anglers, and promoted considerate behaviour in situations where the two groups were using the same stretch of water at the same time. Like most communication projects, the scheme had some successful aspects and some that could have been better: the examples show both sides.

5.1 Involve people

Research shows communication projects work best if they are planned in consultation with representatives of the target audience. This helps focus on the issues that really matter to them, ensures the final product is credible and helps to get the issues discussed in the wider target group.

Think about how you can set up a working group that will help develop the project from the beginning. Make sure that the people you involve are truly representative of the interests you are concerned with: there would be little point working on a mountain bikers' code of conduct with people who come to cycle in family groups if you are dealing with issues associated with downhill riders.

5.2 Define the problem

Be as specific and objective about the problem as possible:

communication will only work well if it is directed at clearly defined issues. You must also make sure that everyone involved agrees on the issues that need to be addressed.

You may be dealing with real conflict over a resource, in which case you will probably need to develop some sort of agreed code of conduct for all of the recreations involved. In other circumstances, there may be negative perceptions held by one group of participants about another group. This will need a more general approach, using persuasive communication to influence those perceptions. Many situations will involve a mixture of the two.

It is also important to identify how underlying values and attitudes are influencing recreational behaviour and the context in which any conflict is taking place.

During research before the making of the video, consultations with canoeing and angling representatives identified that real conflict between canoeists and salmon anglers was mostly confined to two specific circumstances:

- 1. Anglers and canoeists having to share channels and pools in the river when the water was low.*
- 2. Canoeists using pools and eddies for 'playboating'. There was real potential for conflict over the resource here, since the same pools that are good for angling tend to be good for canoe exercises.*

Avoid trying to deal with too many issues in one project, even if they seem related. *The consultations also identified difficulties with raft trips, but the project did not attempt to deal with these. Rafters would have a different set of attitudes, perceptions and behaviours from canoeists, and would need a separate approach.*

5.3 Identify aims

Once you have clearly defined the issues that you are dealing with, you can set some broad aims or goals for what the communication should achieve. At this stage, these should be general rather than specific: they may relate to goals such as improving the image of an activity, or encouraging more responsible and considerate behaviour amongst its participants so that they can share a resource without conflict with other recreations.

The role of aims like these is to give direction to the rest of your planning and to act as reference points if disagreement arises at a later stage. As a result, they may tend to be 'motherhood and apple pie' statements which all key interests can sign up to. **It is important that there is real consensus about these aims from all concerned, and that they are based on input from the relevant recreational groups.**

Initial aims for the angling and canoeing project were:

- 1. To promote a positive image of canoeing and angling as enjoyable sports practised in a responsible manner.*
- 2. To minimise conflict between canoeists and anglers to mutual benefit by encouraging considerate and courteous behaviour.*

These aims were not only relevant to the production of communication materials. They could also act as starting points for lobbying policy makers and governing bodies (advocacy), and for work to remind participants about what they should do in a given situation (enabling).

5.4 Define the audience

It may be tempting to say that the audience for a communication project includes all participants in a particular activity. However, it may be the behaviour of only one category of these participants which is relevant to the issue; or the participants may be allocated to different sub-groups best targeted separately. Either way, **understanding the characteristics of your audience is critical to producing effective communication material.**

Unfortunately, reliable data on the characteristics of participants is often lacking or open to different interpretations, and you may have to rely on intuition, assumptions and anecdotal evidence as the basis for defining the particular audience to address. Other sources of useful information include the national representative organisations for individual sports.

If the issue you are dealing with is particularly important, or the audience is complex, you may need to commission market research through a user group survey: this will take both time and money. If you need advice on developing visitor surveys, section 8 includes references on this.



Among the key elements that you need to define for your target audience are:

- What aspects of their activity are most important to them, and what do they think compromises their enjoyment?
- What attitudes and beliefs do they hold about other users of the resource concerned?
- What attitudes and beliefs do they hold about their own activity, and about its relationship to the resource and to other uses of the resource?

The answers to these questions will provide valuable information about what your communication needs to achieve, and about the messages you will need to get across. You may not agree with some of the perceptions and beliefs you discover, but they are powerful and important for those who hold them. It is important not to discount or ignore perceptions you do not share or agree with.

Consultations with canoeing and angling representatives revealed problems in the way anglers and canoeists perceive each other's sport. Particular issues were anglers feeling that canoes disturbed the fish, and that canoeists had less 'right' to the river compared with anglers who had paid for a fishing permit.

Both these issues are debatable: scientific research on how fish respond to canoes is inconclusive, and legally canoeists have an equal right to use the river.

*But perceptions have a strong influence on the way people behave, whether or not they are based on facts. **Any communication must be based on an appreciation of a group's concerns, and address them sensitively, not ignore them because they may be factually incorrect.***

Other key factors in defining your audience include:

- What proportion of participants in any activity are members of local or national clubs or associations?
- How are they introduced to the activity?
- What communication media do they use, or are likely to use?
- Where do they come from to take part in their activity, and if they stay overnight, what accommodation do they use?

Answers to these questions will help you select appropriate media and techniques through which to reach your target group. For example, there may be magazines targeted at more experienced participants in an activity that could be used as part of your strategy. Media such as videos may be routinely used by specific target groups, such as instructors, as part of their coaching work.

Again, involving user group representatives in discussions about their motivations, behavioural influences and peer group behaviour is essential in getting accurate and useful information about your audience.

Once you have this information, you can make decisions about which group, or groups, to target through your project. These may be groups that are particularly important in shaping the norms of behaviour for the activity, groups you have identified as the key participants involved in the issues you need to address, or groups who can be reached easily and effectively through the sorts of media you can produce.

5.5 Specify objectives

The next stage in the process is to specify in as much detail as possible what the educational material should achieve.

These objectives are different from the broad aims of the project: just like objectives in other fields they should be 'SMART': Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic and Timetabled. However, it is important to remember that you are dealing with people and their behaviour, not with machines, so highly prescriptive objectives will not always be appropriate or achievable.

Identifying specific objectives provides essential discipline to the planning process; they are also essential if you are to undertake any evaluation of the project. Objectives can relate to both learning and behavioural outcomes (for example, we know that 75% of people who see the material will be able to recall at least three of its key messages), and to output processes such as the intended coverage of the material (for example, we also know that 70% of participants in an activity at a particular site will have seen the material within six months of its introduction).

5.6 Define your messages

Once you know your audience, and what you want them to know or do as a result of your project, you can determine what 'messages' you will need to communicate.

These might be very specific, for example about a course of action to follow in particular circumstances, or more general ideas about principles of considerate behaviour, or positive attitudes towards other recreations.

Some of the messages will need to be overt and precise, such as any specific behaviour protocols. Other messages, such as the right to mutual enjoyment of a resource, can be communicated through the overall emphasis and tone of the material.

Too many messages are confusing. Beware of trying to do too much with any one project and concentrate on those messages that you think will make most progress towards your aims.

User group involvement is vital at this stage of the planning process, especially when messages will involve agreed codes of conduct. You may need to develop these codes of conduct from scratch, in which case the communication project will be a catalyst for their development. It will be important not to rush this stage, but to develop any codes of conduct as part of a wider process of liaison and discussion with user group representatives.

A combination of specific messages about codes of conduct in specific circumstances and general messages about considerate use was needed for the canoeing and angling project. Examples of the messages proposed were:

1. Canoeists and anglers both share legitimate rights to enjoy their sport on Scottish rivers.
2. By being considerate and courteous towards each other, canoeists and anglers can co-exist without affecting their enjoyment of their sport, or bringing it into disrepute.
3. Anglers and canoeists both care for the environment and the quiet enjoyment of the outdoors, and should recognise the benefits of working together rather than in conflict.
4. Salmon anglers and canoeists should always follow an agreed courtesy protocol when meeting on the river. The project then defined specific actions each should take.

The project also identified some messages about safety and environmental care that could be reinforced without being specifically mentioned: for example, all canoeists shown in the video wore helmets and buoyancy aids.

5.7 Identify media

Only at this advanced stage in the planning process should you make final decisions about the best media for your project. Some of the media you can use are discussed in section 6.

They vary greatly in cost and the way in which they are distributed and used. Your choice should develop logically from the characteristics of your objectives, your messages, and especially of your audience.

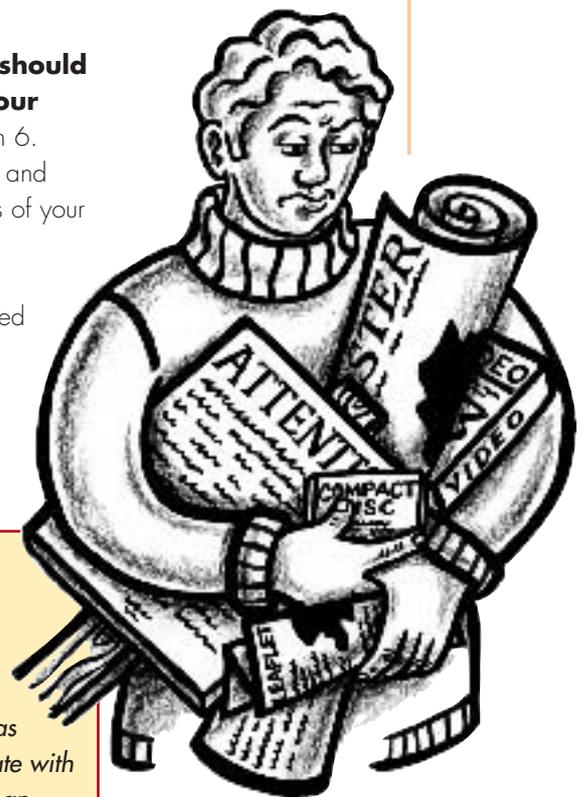
As a general guide, more complex messages are best communicated through talking to people, video, and 'rich media' such as DVD; simpler messages can be effectively communicated in print. However, the way in which your target audience might use the different media is vital in making a choice. This stresses the importance of clarifying the exact nature of your target audience.

It may seem like a good use of resources to develop one communication tool for two different audience groups. This may mean that it is effective for neither of them.

The angling and canoeing project identified a humorous video as a medium through which it would be appropriate to communicate with canoeists: an audience comprising largely younger people with an informal, adventurous approach to their sport. The intention was to appeal to this audience through a light-hearted style, and to produce a resource that could be used as part of canoe instruction courses and at canoe group meetings.

When the programme was eventually made, it covered the perspectives of both anglers and canoeists and was shown to both groups. Some anglers did not welcome the style and felt it did not treat the subject matter seriously enough: a response that may have diminished some of the positive effect of the messages contained in the programme.

As you consider which media to use, make sure you know that you can get the finished materials to your target audience and how you will do this. See the section on distribution in section 6 for more about this.



You should also consider how communication can be linked to other initiatives (such as enabling, advocacy or physical site work) that will help to reinforce it.

5.8 Developing the product

You will probably need to work with professional writers, designers, or film makers to develop the final communication material. Turning ideas about a project's purpose into words and images, and managing production of materials, are skilled jobs.

Using professional contractors also means the material should be seen as objective: if people directly involved in the issue produce it, it may appear biased even if they take great care to be balanced in their approach.

Make sure any contractors have a clear brief about the background, aims, audience and objectives for the project and ask them to develop ideas that will get the messages across effectively to the



audience. In most cases, messages should be communicated in a stimulating way, without appearing regulatory or patronising. Build in time to test ideas and mock ups with your target audience before the final material is produced (see the section on evaluation below).

5.9 Evaluate

Evaluation is one of the most critical elements in delivering a successful project and the surest way of providing evidence that money has been spent wisely. Since you will need to have clear objectives against which you can evaluate your achievement, thinking about how you will evaluate a project also encourages clear thinking about what you want to do.

You will probably need to evaluate what you are doing at two stages:

- Through some form of pilot testing, or *formative evaluation*, through which you can test audience reaction to draft objectives, or draft versions of the final communication product. This enables you to tell whether the material is likely to have the intended effect.
- Once it has been produced, you will need to establish whether the educational material has had the expected impact. This can produce valuable lessons for the future and provide feedback for the next generation of material.

If you want to find out how far people have changed their behaviour in response to a project, or how some other factor has changed, you will need objective, reliable base-line data on the situation before the project starts. This is why it is important to consider what evaluation you want to do right at the start of the project.

The main methodologies for evaluating communication projects are questionnaire sampling, the use of focus groups and direct observation. Each of these has different characteristics and is suited to collecting different types of data.

Section 6. Communication tools



Person to person communication is often the most direct and effective way of getting a message across, but it is not always possible to do. Most communication projects will use one or several types of media, each of which has its own characteristics. A really effective project is likely to use a number of media, planned to reach different groups at different times.

6.1 Talk to people

Talking to someone is the most effective form of communication. It allows you to deliver more complex messages and to respond to questions and concerns. People tend to remember what they have been told longer than they remember something they have read.

A good communication strategy needs to include direct contact between people who use a site for recreation and its owners and managers. Many sites have a formal process for this, such as liaison groups that enable local people or user groups to have an input to management and development decisions. Informal networks are just as effective and are excellent for keeping up to date with users' ideas and concerns. However, these often rely on the enthusiasm and commitment of individual staff. When these individuals leave or move to other duties, it is important that managers try to maintain the communication channels they have established.

An instructor at an outdoor centre on the river Spey organised annual exchange trips for canoeing group representatives and local ghillies responsible for fishing beats. The trips offered a chance of a guided canoe trip down the river, with the offer of a day's fishing in return: an excellent way for both groups to understand each other's sport and to build informal contact networks.

6.2 Leaflets and booklets

Leaflets are probably the commonest form of publication used in communication programmes. They can be reasonably effective, but they must be brief, clear, and carefully designed so they will appeal to the chosen audience. Most importantly, they must reach the audience at the right time and in the right place: see below for more about distribution.

Booklets can offer more detailed information than leaflets and since they are more robust they usually have a longer working life. This can be a disadvantage: if circumstances change, a booklet may become out of date and even misleading. Websites are a better medium for conveying information such as access routes and opening times.

6.3 Posters

Posters are best used to reinforce messages established through other media, rather than to carry the main thrust of a campaign. They must catch attention and convey their message in an instant, so a design that is both eye-catching and credible for the chosen audience is even more important than with leaflets.

6.4 Other publications – ephemera

'Ephemera' are small publications that cannot be classed as leaflets or booklets. Examples include swing tags on items in shops, beer mats, free post cards, the back of cereal packets, and advertisements set into petrol pump handles. Swing tags have been used by **sportscotland** to publicise a mountain bike code of conduct; the 'Leave No Trace' programme in the United States uses them on clothing and camping gear to promote a wilderness code of conduct. Ephemeral media rely on people absorbing messages while they are doing something else. This can be effective, but it is best suited to very brief messages, or reminders about messages established through other media.

6.5 Mass media

Where established publications can be persuaded to support a project by running positive news or feature articles about it, this is probably one of the most effective media available. It is cheap, reaches a wide audience, and has the added advantage of seeming to come from an authoritative and independent source. It may thus help to establish the desired messages as part of the social norms of the activity.

You may be able to work with radio, television, magazines or newspapers. Often these will have a local focus, but specialist magazines dedicated to particular sports are important channels for communication too.

Whatever form of media you work with, remember that any news or features should reinforce other media. Make sure that leaflets are available, or a website is on-line, before briefing journalists about them.

6.6 On-site signs

Signs should be planned to complement and reinforce other media, and should carry a minimum of information, expressed clearly and succinctly. Remember that they will be seen by all visitors to the site. They should be comprehensible by a variety of different audiences, and their design must strike a balance between the sign being visible and any possible intrusion

into the environment. Signs should also include details of how to contact the organisation responsible for them.

Vandalism, not necessarily by the people who are the intended audience, is always a possibility with outdoor signs. Regular checking and maintenance can address this issue, but on sites where signs are very vulnerable they are not an appropriate medium.

6.7 Video and audio

Video has good potential to introduce concepts and issues, show the consequences of behaviour vividly and dramatically, and provide a good starting point for discussion. But it depends on an audience who are prepared to sit and watch it. This makes it suitable for reaching organised groups who meet together on a regular basis. High standards of production are essential, so scripting, shooting and editing are expensive. Material from videos, or still photographs taken at the same time, can be used in other media. Making copies of the finished programme is relatively cheap, but video is still unlikely to be suitable for a local or small-scale programme.

Audio tapes or CDs are another option, but think carefully about how likely people are to listen to the product before you choose this as a medium.

6.8 Rich media

'Rich media' include technologies such as DVD or CD-ROM. These make it possible to produce complex packages that include video, still pictures, documents the user can print, and interactive elements like games and quizzes. These packages can be reproduced cheaply once the initial programming is complete, and can even be attached as free supplements to special interest magazines, but like video they are expensive to create. They must also compete with the many other choices for spending time: few people will bother loading a CD-ROM onto their computer unless it offers something particularly interesting.

Video and rich media can of course only reach people with the equipment to play them. Although they may represent a considerable proportion of any target group, they may not be representative of the group as a whole.



6.9 Websites

The great strengths of websites are that they can be updated easily and at little cost, and that they are available 24 hours a day anywhere in the world. Websites are also capable of offering a similar mixture of elements to rich media.

Many people now use the web as a first port of call for information, and it should form a part of any communication strategy to encourage particular codes of conduct. This does not mean setting up a specific website for each issue: it will probably be more effective to work with the editors of existing sites, especially those already established for the recreations that you work with, to see if they can include the messages you want to get across.

Users expect websites to be up to date, as well as quick and easy to use. If a website has information that is old or irrelevant, it will be ignored and may create a negative response. This means that working with a website requires a real commitment to editing and revising its content, perhaps on a daily basis. If you include a facility for people to contact you by email, you will need to allow time to respond, again on a daily basis if possible.

Because websites rely on a reasonable level of computer literacy among your audience, they may not be suitable for particular groups.

6.10 Distribution

Getting a publication to its audience can be the most difficult part of any project and it is often overlooked. A well planned distribution strategy should be part of the project from the beginning. For a leaflet, it might include inserting copies into specialist magazines, using professional distribution companies, asking hotels and hostels to give copies to guests, or placing them under car windscreen wipers.

It is essential that you know from the start who you want to influence, how you can reach them, that you can get your messages to them effectively, and that you have the resources to do this. Distribution costs money and this should be included in any budgets for the project.

The Hillphones scheme described in section 2 relies on users phoning a recorded message for information about deer stalking in the area where they plan to walk. The phone numbers for different areas are listed in a pocket-sized booklet: a good format for people to carry with them and keep during a season. To complement the booklet and reach a wider audience, the Hillphones website was created (www.hillphones.info). The information in the recorded messages is repeated on posters at the start of popular walks in some areas.

Effective distribution is important not just for paper-based publications, but for videos, DVDs and even web pages: a website is no good unless people know it is there and know they can get useful information if they use it.

Section 7. Key points

Some reminders of key points from the guide.

- Our behaviour is influenced by our personal attitudes and beliefs and by social norms: the attitudes and behaviour considered normal by people we respect and trust. Persuasive communication must target these root causes of behaviour rather than simply present information.
- Different people have different sets of attitudes and social norms. Successful persuasive communication is based on a thorough understanding of your target audience.
- Effective communication must:
 - provoke: catch and hold its audience's attention.
 - relate: by using a style and language meaningful to the audience.
 - reveal: have a clearly defined idea or message, rather than presenting a loose collection of facts.
- Communication projects should be planned so that they:
 - address a clearly defined issue.
 - are designed for a clearly defined and specific audience.
 - involve the people concerned.
 - recognise and take account of everyone's concerns.

Section 8. Further reading

Much of the research on behaviour and inter-recreational issues is published in academic journals, which are difficult to get hold of. Many of the issues relevant to this guide are discussed in *Enjoyment and Understanding of the Natural Heritage*, editor Michael B. Usher, published by the Stationery Office, Edinburgh (2001); we have included references from this book and other sources that should be available through general libraries, bookshops or on the web.

If you are planning communication to address or avoid recreational conflict you can contact Scottish Natural Heritage for further help, to discuss the issues you have to deal with, or get advice on the development of your project.

Section 1

Changes in patterns of recreation:

Butterfield, J. & Long, J. 2001. Changes in lifestyle and the future of countryside recreation. In: M.B.Usher, ed. *Enjoyment and Understanding of the Natural Heritage*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office, pp. 159-169.

Reference for study of attitudes of walkers towards mountain bikers:

Cessford, G.R. 2002. Perception and reality of conflict: walkers and mountain bikes on the Queen Charlotte track in New Zealand. In: A.Arnberger, C.Brandenburg & A.Muhar, eds. *Monitoring and Management of Visitor Flows in Recreational and Protected Areas*. Proceedings of the Conference held at Bodenkultur University Vienna, Austria, January 30 - February 02, 2002. Vienna: Institute for Landscape Architecture and Landscape Management, Bodenkultur University, pp. 102-108.

Section 2

An example of communication in a public health campaign:

Allison, M. 2001. Promoting healthy behaviour. In: M.B.Usher, ed. *Enjoyment and Understanding of the Natural Heritage*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office, pp. 121-130.

Models of how behaviour is determined, and research on the effectiveness of persuasive communication:

Carter, J. 2001. A review of research on changing recreational behaviour through communication. In: M.B.Usher, ed. *Enjoyment and Understanding of the Natural Heritage*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office, pp. 93-103.

Section 3

The role of enabling in encouraging desired behaviour:

Stradling, S.G. 2001. Rights and responsibilities on the road: a case study of influencing driver behaviour. In: M.B.Usher, ed. *Enjoyment and Understanding of the Natural Heritage*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office, pp. 131-139.

Section 5

Interpretation principles:

Scottish Natural Heritage. 2001. *Provoke Relate Reveal: SNH's Policy Framework on Interpretation*. Perth: Scottish Natural Heritage.

Carter, J., ed. 1997. *A Sense of Place: An Interpretive Planning Handbook*. Tourism and Environment Forum 1997. Available as a .pdf file from the Scottish Interpreter's Network website, <http://www.scotinterpnet.org.uk/pdfs/sofp.pdf>

Ham, S.H. 1992. *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets*. Golden, Colorado: North American Press.

Veverka, J.A. 1994. *Interpretive Master Planning: For Parks, Historic Sites, Forests, Zoos, and Related Tourism Sites, for Self-guided Interpretive Services, for Interpretive Exhibits, for Guided Programs/Tours*. Helena, Montana: Falcon Press Publishing.

Scottish Natural Heritage is a government body responsible to Scottish Executive Ministers, and through them to the Scottish Parliament.

Our mission:

Working with Scotland's people to care for our natural heritage.

Our aim:

Scotland's natural heritage is a local, national and global asset. We promote its care and improvement, its responsible enjoyment, its greater understanding and appreciation, and its sustainable use now and for future generations.

Our operating principles:

We work in partnership, by co-operation, negotiation and consensus, where possible, with all relevant interests in Scotland: public, private and voluntary organisations, and individuals.

We operate in a devolved manner, delegating decision-making to the local level within the organisation to encourage and assist SNH to be accessible, sensitive and responsive to local needs and circumstances.

We operate in an open and accountable manner in all our activities.

Further copies available from:

Scottish Natural Heritage
Publications Section
Battleby
Redgorton
Perth PH1 3EW

T: 01738 444177
F: 01738 827411
E: pubs@snh.gov.uk
W: www.snh.org.uk

© Scottish Natural Heritage November 2004
ISBN: 185397 406 4
NPIK1104

Photography by Lorne Gill/SNH
Illustrations by Jaqueline Stevenson