VISIBLE COMMUNITIES' USE AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE NORTH YORK MOORS AND PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARKS.

A policy guidance document for National Park Authorities.

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PREFACE

Terminology:

Any report regarding ethnicity must be sensitive to debates around terminology. The term 'minority' is problematic, as it sets up a contrast between 'minority' beliefs and practices and those of 'majority' society, in which the latter are understood as being the 'norm' and 'minority', therefore, somehow lacking (Donald & Rattansi, 1999). The term 'black' is claimed by some, rejected by others (Modood, 1992); 'black and minority ethnic' is an attempted catch-all that retains the minority; 'ethnic' alone singles out non-white people as having ethnicity, hiding the multiple ethnicities of the white population (Ware & Back, 2002); and 'people of colour' was rejected among participants in this study.

This research focused on people from Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds, and the term 'visible communities' (employed by Alibhai-Brown, 2001), has been adopted to highlight how people are identified – particularly in rural places such as National Parks – by their skin colour. The term is *not* intended to suggest that all people from non-white backgrounds are the same as each other, but to recognise that such individuals are likely to have experienced particular reactions and exclusions in society based on the colour of their skin. Unfortunately, the term 'white' is used in a generalised way because of the research focus, but it should be noted that there is great diversity within such a category.

'National Park' is used to mean the physical places; 'National Park Authority' denotes the governing Authority bodies.

Acknowledgements:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on the findings of a four-year PhD study undertaken at the University of Durham. The principle aims of the research were to explore visible communities' use and perceptions of the English National Parks. The report concentrates on policy recommendations (section III), constructed from an overarching analysis of the relevant academic literature, review of previous and current initiatives involving visible communities in the National Parks, and empirical fieldwork consisting of quantitative and qualitative research. However, the policy suggestions draw particularly from that part of the research carried out with people from visible community backgrounds.

Two interim reports were produced, which focused on visible community responses to questionnaire and interview surveys. Summaries of the interim reports can be found in section II of this report. This Executive Summary concentrates on policy recommendations, and addresses three aspects of policy:

- the **need** for specific policy shifts regarding visible community visitors;
- overarching **approaches** to such policy suggested by the research; and
- specific **proposals** for action.

POLICY NEED

The report highlights three key relevant drivers for changes to National Park policy.

1. The relative absence of visible communities from the English National Parks

While the visitor survey shows that *visible communities do visit National Parks*, these groups are not represented in visitors numbers commensurate with their population in English society. The lack of awareness about National Parks evident in the questionnaire survey, together with the opinions expressed throughout the qualitative research, clearly demonstrated that visible communities are generally unaware of the Parks and the opportunities they afford.

2. National Park purposes

National Parks have a statutory responsibility "*to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks by the public*" under the 1995 Environment Act. While the enjoyment of the Parks must be sustainable and not at the expense of the natural landscape (the Sandford Principle), lack of knowledge of the Parks was identified as the main barrier to visible community involvement.

The phrase 'by the public' must be interpreted as *all* people in society, and implies *across the country*. It is not acceptable for National Parks in a region with lower populations of visible communities to ignore their responsibility to the wider public. Each National Park must carefully consider the ways in which it can feasibly address promoting itself to visible communities across the country.

3. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000)

The RR(A)A came into force on 2nd April 2001. The Act, section 71(1), states that:

"*Every body or other person specified in Schedule 1A[1] or of a description falling within that Schedule shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need –*
　　(a)　to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and
　　(b)　to ***promote equality of opportunity and good relations*** *between persons of different racial groups.*"

The RR(A)A incorporates both *direct and indirect* discrimination, which means that in carrying out their functions, National Parks must think through the effects that all their policies may have on access for visible communities. By emphasising the *promotion* of equality of opportunity, the RR(A)A goes beyond previous legislation outlawing discrimination by public authorities, making public authorities responsible for good race relations more generally. These are positive duties that require pro-active responses from all National Parks.

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[1] Schedule 1A is an appendix of Local Authority bodies to which the Act applies, and includes National Park Authorities.

POLICY APPROACH

There is a need for a shift in institutional mindset towards working with visible communities: in the research, concerns were raised regarding the *commitment* of National Park Authorities to social inclusion and equal opportunities; the requirement of *long term* approaches to issues regarding ethnic and cultural diversity and the English countryside; and the importance of projects aimed at *empowering* visible communities, rather than patronising or tokenistic measures. Three principle policy approaches are recommended.

1. Social inclusion proofing

It is crucial that policy regarding visible community access *incorporates ethnic and race relations throughout all National Park Authority thinking and processes*. Targeted projects *alone* were not considered to show genuine commitment to inclusion by visible community respondents. Placing ethnic equality centrally within an Authority's approach requires **'visible community proofing'**, in which the potential effects of all policy on the ability of visible communities to understand and enjoy the National Parks are considered.

Under broader Human Rights legislation and policy, 'visible community proofing' cannot take place without extending the focus to socially excluded groups more generally. However, this does not justify *only* engaging with visible communities *through* other social inclusion priorities. Visible communities should certainly be incorporated within such measures, but issues regarding ethnicity must also be addressed in their own right. Targeting youth groups or developing health initiatives do not *necessarily* tackle racism or address specific issues faced by visible communities. If National Parks engage with other disadvantaged groups *because of* their 'minority' status, but *not* visible communities specifically or separately, this further disadvantages people from visible community backgrounds.

Wider social inclusion also involves identifying disadvantaged groups *outside and inside* National Park boundaries. Implementing initiatives for visible communities *without working with local communities* could potentially degrade rather than promote good race relations – negative reaction to visible community involvement in the Parks can only undermine the sustainability of social inclusion endeavours.

This report, therefore, recommends **social inclusion proofing** as a key approach, but stresses that **visible communities must be specifically addressed within this**.

<u>2. Centralising social inclusion policy and funding</u>

A **coherent and centralised effort** to tackle social exclusion issues is vital. Placing such policy centrally entails making core funding available for policy implementation:

- *Government funding* - *central government must show commitment to its social inclusion agenda, and enable National Parks to work on measures for equality by making specific funding available*. This should be new funding and ring-fenced for social inclusion initiatives, with the stipulation that social inclusion work must include projects engaging with visible communities; and
- *National Park funding* - National Parks should commit money from their core budgets to tackling social exclusion. Applying for additional external funding will no doubt remain necessary, but a genuine engagement with visible communities cannot rely on external grant applications alone.

<u>3. Monitoring and change</u>

Policy responses must be alert to differentiation across and within visible communities: there can be no catch-all project that will be appropriate for everyone from a visible community background. Policy approaches need to be flexible – open to an evolving society and changing circumstances in terms of visible community positions, as well as in terms of rural issues and concerns. Careful monitoring of policy effectiveness is crucial, in order to assess strengths and weaknesses and *to incorporate change*.

POLICY PROPOSALS

<u>Outreach</u>

Developing an appropriate outreach strategy is a key recommendation of this report. Without gaining knowledge of the Parks, visible communities are unlikely to explore the countryside for themselves. An important way to break through this self-fulfilling and exclusionary cycle is to take the message to visible communities. This

does not mean that National Parks should alter what they are – but embrace their multicultural heritage and build links with visible communities. Park Authorities should develop outreach initiatives paying particular attention to:

- outreach venues – go to where visible communities are;
- outreach methods – personal contact is crucial;
- outreach personnel – specific skills are needed for this work; and
- community consultation – important to develop sense of ownership and improve the effectiveness and sustainability of any initiative. Also, visible communities are the experts on themselves.

Facilitating visits

The facilitation of visits to the National Parks is important to reduce practical and perceptional barriers to visible communities' involvement with the Parks. Two principle aspects to facilitating visits were identified by the research: the need to be *inclusive of ethnic differences*; and, at the same time, *acknowledge similarities* across different groups of people:

- conserving the heritage of National Parks must entail *re-examining what that heritage is*; and
- visible community cultures overlap as well as differ from majority white traditions.

Interpretation

The interpretation used in the Parks and in outreach **must include multicultural and multi-ethnic representations** of the National Parks and **think carefully about language use.** In particular, interpretation should:

- include visible community faces;
- translate key phrases, more only where need is identified through outreach;
- replace text with visual imagery where possible;
- incorporate inclusive narratives;
- avoid ecological terminology with negative connotations (eg. invasive 'alien' species).

<u>Working in partnership</u>

Working in partnership is critical if policy intentions and initiatives to engage with visible communities are to be effective. This report recommends the facilitation of **multi-agency partnerships** working between National Parks and any combination possible and practical of:

- rural community organisations and visible community groups**;**
- a range of groups targeted as under-represented in national parks; and
- urban organisations/agencies/authorities working with (or intending to work with) visible community groups.

<u>Building social capital</u>

Without developing relationships between residents and regular users of the Parks, the success of policy initiatives targeting visible communities will always be fragile, and there is a need to **engender social capital** across visible communities and other National Park users. **Encounters between visible community and other groups** can be a key catalyst in breaking down stereotypes. Visits organised through outreach work should aim to facilitate encounters between visible community and rural groups, rather than separate visible communities from other visitors/residents - whenever the visible community group is comfortable with this. 'Twinning' initiatives offer the potential for challenging assumptions and improving understanding between groups from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

However, such a policy initiative must be sensitively managed, and involve a careful selection of rural contacts as well as undertaking groundwork with local groups, to ensure that prejudicial stereotypes are dismantled rather than reinforced.

<u>Training</u>

'Diversity awareness' training is important in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people from different ethnic backgrounds. This report recommends that National Park Authorities should implement diversity awareness training for all staff, volunteers and Authority Members. Cost will restrict the expediency of implementation, but a long-term approach is necessary: a rolling

programme of diversity training could be implemented with, for example, such training incorporated into all new staff/volunteer induction periods.

The kind of training delivered is crucial. Diversity training must be based on raising awareness of ethnic and cultural differences, but *with an emphasis on treating people as individuals*. A restrictive model of diversity training – in which people are trained to recognise 'difference' and treat accordingly – can do more harm than good. **Diversity awareness training should equip National Park staff with knowledge regarding ethnic and cultural difference *that is not tied to presumption*.**

Increasing visible community representation in National Park structures

National Parks need to increase the number of visible community staff, volunteers and Authority Members to better reflect society in general. Pro-active steps can be taken:

- advertise all posts in visible community press, national and/or regional;
- develop a volunteer 'mentoring' scheme in partnership with visible community (and other) organisations;
- offer secondment positions to individuals identified in outreach work as interested in National Parks;
- initiate/participate in a 'modern apprenticeship' scheme, targeting visible communities;
- include information regarding employment/volunteer opportunities in the Parks when undertaking outreach work;
- include careers fairs in areas with high visible community populations, and careers evenings in secondary schools, in outreach programmes.

Monitoring

The monitoring of the effectiveness of policy delivery should be **undertaken and shared with the participating visible community individuals and organisations**.

It is also important that National Parks monitor ethnic background across all areas of their work, in particular visitor numbers, in order to ascertain levels and trends of visible community participation in the Parks.

SECTION I: RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

This research was undertaken for an ESRC Case-funded PhD[2], entitled "Multicultural Countryside? Visible communities and the English National Parks." The rationale for the study was that, despite England's multicultural and multi-ethnic population, its core national institutions in rural spaces do not appear to reflect this diversity. Since the research began, the 2001 Census has re-confirmed that England *is* a multi-ethnic society, with 9% of the English population made up of 'minority ethnic groups' (ONS, 2003).

Indeed, there has been much recent debate regarding ethnicity, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and hybrid and multiple identities within academia, amongst policy makers and across the wider public realm in the UK. The Parekh Report (Runnymede Trust, 2000), in particular, addresses the complex political and social issues surrounding identity, citizenship, cohesion and equality (see also Alibhai-Brown, 2001). However, these debates are invariably connected to the urban sphere, and the countryside largely either omitted from discussion or described as not affected by such issues (the 'no problem here, everyone is white' approach).

There is, then, a substantial gap between the growing awareness of the issues caught up in a multi-ethnic society, and the 'traditional' institutional representation of the countryside and social practices in rural public space. The PhD thesis focuses on the role National Parks play in visible communities' identification with Englishness, and the ways in which this role may serve to exclude these groups from the English countryside. As such, this report cannot incorporate issues regarding Welsh/Scottish/ Irish identities. However, some of the issues raised here may resonate with situations experienced in National Parks beyond England.

The report demonstrates policy need and offers policy recommendations to encourage more visible communities to participate in National Parks based on the theoretical and empirical work of the PhD.

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[2] A collaborative award scheme set up and funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), with the North York Moors National Park as collaborative (Case) partners.

1.1 RESEARCH OUTLINE

The research set out to explore the issues outlined above through a study of visible community use of English National Parks as visitors[3]. Constitutionally, National Parks are democratic spaces designated initially under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. They are charged to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of their areas, and promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the parks by all sections of the public, under the 1995 Environment Act. They represent a central symbol of English culture and heritage, evoking such ideals as the rural 'idyll', healthy pursuit, attachment to land, and a natural (as opposed to industrial or urban) pace of life, through their public authority status, interpretation materials and institutional name (Matless, 1998). However, National Parks arguably appear to exemplify the sharp contrast between multi-ethnic cities and a predominantly white countryside.

The absence of people from visible community backgrounds has been discussed in academic, policy and rural/conservation management circles, based on visual estimates and perceptions of the number of non-white visitors to the countryside. Barriers preventing visible communities from accessing rural areas have been described as both physical - eg. a lack of transport/disposable income/leisure time to go to the countryside - and emotional - eg. feeling no sense of belonging in or ownership of rural space, and/or feeling unwelcome there (Agyeman and Spooner, 1997; BEN, 2002). While the Black Environment Network has been working to enable visible communities to access the countryside in Britain for over a decade, there has been a lack of empirical research engaging with people from visible community backgrounds to ascertain their views. This study brings a perspective grounded in empirical data to the debate on ethnicity and social exclusion in the English countryside.

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[3] The research does not address visible community residence in National Parks for method-ological reasons (see 2.).

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The research was designed to address the following:-

Key aims:

- To explore the patterns of use of the English countryside by people from Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds living in England, through an examination of the visitor profiles of two selected National Park case studies, and consideration of projects specifically aimed at enabling these groups to access the National Parks;

- To explain these patterns, by identifying the issues experienced by visible communities as impacting on their cultural, physical and emotional ability to visit the Parks;

- To consider the role National Parks currently play, through institutional policy and practice, within dominant and minority cultural practices; and

- To identify the potential gaps between visible community perceptions and expectations of National Parks, and National Park provision.

Key objectives:

- To contribute to current academic discourse on multiculturalism;

- To inform National Park policy regarding visible community access to rural areas, and enable more diverse user profiles; and

- To feed into the wider policy debate regarding equal opportunities and the use of rural public space in England.

1.3 REPORT OUTLINE

The emphasis of this report is to make policy recommendations based on the PhD study (see Section III).

Two preliminary reports were produced, one each based on the quantitative and qualitative research undertaken with people from visible community backgrounds. The preliminary reports highlighted the main outcomes of the fieldwork, drawing upon statistical results and interview quotes. Summaries of the preliminary reports are included in Section II, to place the policy recommendations in context. Key findings are referred to where appropriate in this document, but statistics and quotes are not repeated in detail[4].

While the policy recommendations in this report are centred on the research findings outlined in the preliminary reports, they also take into account results from surveys with a wide cross-section of individuals and groups with interests in the National Parks (see 2.1 and 2.2). The recommendations also draw upon the theoretical underpinnings of the academic thesis. Neither the results from the different parts of the study nor the academic theory are reproduced here for the sake of brevity.

This report is written for the National Park Authorities, in order to feed the research findings into National Park policy and operational development. It will also have resonance for other countryside, conservation and heritage organisations and is thus intended for a wider audience. The policy guidelines are deliberately generalised to enable incorporation into different organisational structures and situations. Some recommendations draw directly from examples of good practice encountered in the research, and there is inevitably a time lag between fieldwork and report. It should, therefore, be recognised that some recommendations may already be in place in National Park or other organisations' written policy or practical work – it is not the intention here to suggest otherwise.

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[4] Copies of the preliminary reports can be obtained by e-mailing kbzdj@tinyworld.co.uk.

2. METHODOLOGY

To enable investigation into visible community use and experiences in the Parks and the attitudes of visible communities outside the Parks (potentially non-users), the research consisted of two case study areas: the North York Moors National Park and neighbouring city of Middlesbrough, and the Peak District National Park and Sheffield. In order to address the wide-ranging research questions generated by the aims and objectives, a variety of methodologies were employed.

2.1 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

2.1.1 Visible community questionnaire survey

The main emphasis of the quantitative research was a face-to-face questionnaire survey with people from visible community backgrounds, in urban areas. A pilot questionnaire was conducted in a visible community centre in Middlesbrough, with whom links had previously been developed. This resulted in a second pilot survey, completed in the same way. The full survey was undertaken in July and August 2002. **606 questionnaires were completed** (310 in Middlesbrough and 296 in Sheffield), using a random sampling technique in a variety of public spaces across both cities. Everyone approached to take part in the survey were from visible community backgrounds and resident in those cities.

2.1.2 National Park visitor questionnaire survey

A pilot face-to-face survey was undertaken for one day in July, 2001, in the Peak District. Changes were made to the questionnaire but no second pilot considered necessary. Originally planned to be completed in the summer of 2001, the impacts of the foot-and-mouth crisis resulted in the full survey being conducted over the summers of 2001 and 2002. The survey consisted of twenty days: one week day and one weekend day at five different locations in each park, chosen to represent a cross-section of locations. Visitors were approached using a random sampling technique. In total **595 visitors participated in the study** across the two parks.

2.1.3 Resident questionnaire survey

Questionnaires were sent out in autumn/winter 2002 to 800 households randomly selected in each National Park. Postal surveys generally record low response rates (Flowerdew & Martin, 1997), but a total of **988 questionnaires (62%) were returned** across the North York Moors and Peak District, highlighting the depth of concern regarding access to the national parks and social inclusion issues among park residents.

2.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

2.2.1 Visible community focus group interviews

Visible communities were recruited for group interview via a mail shot to organisations who identified themselves as organising around Asian or African Caribbean ethnicities in both cities[5], followed by second letters, phone contact, meetings with key personnel within organisations and general 'networking'. In total, six groups from an original list of ninety-two agreed to take part in focus group interviews - three each in Middlesbrough and Sheffield. The political and social climate while undertaking the fieldwork (Oct. 2001 to Oct. 2002), was particularly sensitive to issues surrounding ethnicity, due to 'disturbances' in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley in the summer of 2001, the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11th and resulting military intervention in Afghanistan. Visible communities' participation in the research was lower than expected - many people declined to take part because of a 'backlash' against non-whites (should they draw any kind of attention to themselves) that they described experiencing at that time.

The **six groups participated in semi-structured interviews**. Each group consisted of between six and ten individuals, all known to each other, and interviews lasted for between one and one-and-a-half hours. Two group interviews required translation. Three groups were women only, one group men only and two groups mixed gender. Interviewees ranged from 15 to over-65 years of age.

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[5] Lists of community organisations were obtained via the internet and from the relevant city council departments.

2.2.2 Individual interviews with visible communities

To complement the focus group interviews outlined above, individual in-depth interviews were undertaken with people recruited through the networking process involved in setting up the focus groups[6]. **Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted** (ten in each city), each lasting between forty-five minutes and one-and-a-half hours, with people from a variety of visible community backgrounds, ages, genders and occupations.

2.2.3 Focus group interviews with National Park staff and Park Authority Committee Members

Opinions among National Park staff and Committee Members, visitors and residents, and relevant individuals from other countryside/heritage organisations, were also canvassed, in order to better understand the background to the reception of visible communities in the National Parks, issues surrounding visitor management, (eg. possible conflict between environmental conservation and visitor numbers and behaviour), and policies or projects aimed at improving social inclusion already in place.

Six semi-structured focus group interviews were completed with staff in the National Parks: one in each Park with a group drawn from senior management, one in each Park with middle management, and one in each Park with staff who regularly deal with the public. All interviewees were randomly selected from a list of staff members. All groups consisted of between six and nine people and lasted between an hour and one-and-a-half hours.

One focus group in each Park was conducted with Park Authority Committee Members. These interviews occurred later in the research process, in order to examine Member reactions to the initial findings of the research, and how these findings may relate to policy. As such, these interviews occurred after the quantitative preliminary report was completed. National Park Authority Members were not randomly selected for interview – the practical difficulties of getting Members together resulted in an open invitation to both Authority Committees with a set date, and the participation of Members who were both available and had an interest in the issues.

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[6] No individual took part in both an individual and a focus group interview.

2.2.4 Individual interviews with 'stakeholder' organisations

In recognition that National Parks do not operate in a vacuum –perceptions of the English countryside are shaped by representations from a variety of sources - relevant members of staff from **six other organisations** with a stake in countryside conservation and/or national heritage were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with individuals from English Heritage, the Council for National Parks, the National Trust, the Ramblers, the Wildlife Trust, and the Black Environment Network. These interviews were also useful in identifying examples of good practice regarding social inclusion and countryside access.

2.2.5 Participant observation

Every visible community group who took part in a focus group interview were offered the opportunity of an organised day visit to their adjacent national park. Transport was arranged (minibuses in each case), as well as a National Park Ranger to accompany the group for the day. The **six visits** were incorporated into the methodology partly to offer both incentive and thanks to the groups who participated in the research, but also to enable observation of the ways in which the issues discussed in interview played out in context. That is, to record people's reactions and opinions during and after direct experience in a National Park. Such 'participant observation' involves being with a group informally, taking part in the group's activities and noting incidents and views. This method of researching enables a broader understanding of issues and the ability to see and hear peoples' experiences and reactions first hand.

In addition, close liaison with the Mosaic project[7] enabled participant observation on **three of the project's organised residential visits** to National Parks in the summer of 2002. All visits were by visible community groups of, on average, twenty people, for a minimum of a three days/two nights' stay. Accompanying these residential trips greatly enriched the research.

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[7] A 3 year project (2001-2004) that aimed "to introduce ethnic minorities to National Parks and National Parks to local ethnic minorities", jointly managed by the Council for National Parks and the Black Environment Network.

SECTION II: SUMMARY OF VISIBLE COMMUNITY RESPONSES

3. SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

The preliminary quantitative report focused on the analysis of the questionnaires conducted with people from Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds in Middlesbrough and Sheffield. The questionnaires were designed to discover the factors that prevent people visiting National Parks, as well as those that would encourage involvement. The results were broken down into different profile groups to enable analysis across a range of factors (eg. generational differences, gender differences, socio-economic differences, as well as ethnic differences).

While results were complex across different profile groups, policy recommendations are necessarily based on general trends, and the preliminary report included a summary offering an overview of responses. The summary shows that the barriers to visiting National Parks identified by the respondents are further consistent with responses regarding what would encourage visits. This gives the results greater validity.

3.1 BARRIERS TO ACCESS

	agree that issue prevents visits (%)[8]	identify as MAIN reason for not visiting (%)
don't know about National Parks	52	**28**
don't know how to get there	58	**8**
don't have transport to get there	25	**9**
not interested in National Parks	33	**22**
no spare time	34	**17**
spend spare time doing other leisure activities	44	**12**
won't feel comfortable there	16	**4**

Table 1: Reasons given by visible community respondents for not visiting National Parks.

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[8] This column adds up to greater than 100% as each respondent could identify more than one factor prevented them visiting National Parks.

3.2 MEASURES TO REMOVE BARRIERS

	agree that would encourage visits (%)[7]	identify as MAIN encouragement to visiting (%)
knowing more about National Parks	65	**29**
having personal transport to get there	20	**8**
better public transport to get there	28	**7**
having more spare time	59	**16**
members of family and/or community also visiting National Parks	40	**12**
special events held there that of interest	72	**28**

Table 2: Factors that would encourage visible community respondents to visit National Parks.

3.3 SUMMARY DISCUSSION

The key barrier to accessing National Parks was identified as **lack of information/ knowledge** about them, both generally and specifically. Other important factors preventing visits were a lack of interest in National Parks - commonly linked to lack of knowledge about them - and lack of spare time for countryside recreation. When broken down into a variety of profiles, there were no significant differences found statistically between Sheffield and Middlesbrough, between different ethnic groups, gender or age. While this cannot be taken to say that all visible communities act and think the same, it does suggest that there *are* similarities between the views of the variety of visible communities consulted on these issues.

However, the questionnaire analysis showed **difference across socio-economic groups**, with people from middle class occupations knowing more about the Parks, having the time and financial resources for countryside recreation and visiting the National Parks far more often than visible community respondents from working class occupations or those who were unemployed. However, among the middle class profile, 'not feeling comfortable' was a greater deterrent to visiting – 43% of those describing themselves as manager/directors stated that feeling 'out of place'

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[7] This column adds up to greater than 100% as each respondent could identify more than one factor prevented them visiting National Parks.

decreased their potential involvement with National Parks. **Class position**, then, **was complicated by ethnicity**.

Correspondingly, greater awareness of the National Parks and holding events of particular interest to visible communities were cited as key factors that would encourage visits.

4. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

The preliminary qualitative report focused on the analysis of the focus group and individual interviews conducted with people from Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds in Middlesbrough and Sheffield. The interviews were designed to augment the questionnaire survey and probe more closely the issues surrounding ethnicity, nationality and having a 'sense of belonging' in the English countryside.

4.1 AWARENESS AND USE OF NATIONAL PARKS

Awareness of National Parks was very low, certainly lower than knowledge of local place names (eg. Derbyshire/the Moors; Bakewell/Helmsley). It was not uncommon that people had visited a national park without being aware that it was a national park, or what National Parks are/do. However, **more people had visited** (knowingly or not) **than was expected** in the research sample. Together with the urban questionnaires, the interviews revealed that visible communities are visiting National Parks, though not in numbers proportionate to their population in society. Furthermore, knowledge of either the term 'National Parks' and/or specific place names correlated with visits: people who had not been to a national park very rarely knew what one was, beyond perhaps a vague recognition of the term.

Being taken to the countryside by family, friends or school was the most common way in which people had first heard of national parks/local areas within National Parks. Word-of-mouth, via work or family/friends, was also mentioned. Importantly, **repeat visiting was key** to people returning to the parks with their own families or friends. People who had been taken once or twice, or on a school visit years ago, were far less likely to have returned.

4.2 PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL PARKS/COUNTRYSIDE

The term 'National Park' was rarely used by interviewees, most of whom talked about 'the countryside'. Generally, people described the countryside as quiet, with lots of open space, very green, hilly, a place where people go on trips, and where there are no loud activities. It was also described as having narrow roads and lots of farms, with fewer cars and less pollution. 'Green' and 'quiet' were the most popular descriptions. There was also a common understanding that such images were how everyone thinks of the countryside – interviewees often stated that they had a limited

knowledge but understood it to be 'correct'. Moreover, the countryside was predominantly thought of as opposite to the city, in terms of both its physical environment and the activities that can be enjoyed there. Interviewees infrequently described National Parks as places of residence, although later discussion regarding 'reception' in National Parks invariably made reference to 'local people' as well as reidents.

A widely held perception was that **people from visible communities[10] rarely visit National Parks**. Irrespective of whether a respondent had visited the countryside themselves, almost all believed that visible communities are greatly under-represented as visitors to national parks/the countryside. There was also an understanding that social groups other than visible communities do not visit the countryside. A clear distinction was made along generational lines, with a majority feeling that the countryside was really only **for older or retired people**. This viewpoint was especially strong amongst, but not restricted to, younger interviewees. Many also stated that only people from **'middle class'** or 'upmarket backgrounds' used the National Parks, and in these discussions socio-economic issues were highlighted as factors influencing who visits national parks, *alongside issues of ethnicity and culture*.

Among those who had visited a National Park, reasons for going were linked with health (physical and emotional well-being) and/or social interaction (family gatherings, group bonding). Taking children was given as a reason to go, but this was highly contested among the sample. Interviewees who had never been to a National Park spoke about reasons for going more generally, and perceptions were again based around the idea of the countryside as the opposite of the city. Values of a visit were discussed as **'getting away from the city'** and the stresses of everyday life. Within this, four main benefits were described: the opposite physical environment (especially clean air); the therapeutic value of 'being in nature'; the opportunity to make connections between the English countryside and countries of origin (or parents' origin) by comparing landscapes; and the possibility of experiencing new/different activities. This last theme, though, was restricted to younger interviewees, and highlights a generational difference regarding the need for a focus on activity in National Parks.

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[10] That is, their 'own community' and those of other non-white groups.

4.3 PRACTICAL BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Financial and time constraints were interlinked for many interviewees, with the need to work long hours being identified as a priority for most visible communities by the interviewees (if not for themselves). These opinions drew heavily on descriptions of visible communities as generally situated within the working classes, and day-to-day economic survival being a priority. Where time constraints were mentioned as separate from financial constraints, the issue was tied up with lifestyle issues (homework, employment responsibilities and/or family commitments were mentioned here). Close analysis of the interviews showed that, rather than lack of time, the fundamental issue was that of habit: National parks are **not places interviewees considered spending their leisure time**. Where leisure time *is* spent was a matter of cultural practice as well as the outcome of physical barriers. In this respect, for many people interviewed, time constraints were implicitly tied in with lack of knowledge and perceptional barriers to visiting the countryside.

Not owning a car was less of a barrier for respondents than the perceived lack of reliable, affordable and regular public transport. Moreover, a **lack of confidence to use public transport** and **safety issues**, in particular among women, were key – even if there were regular, reliable, affordable buses to the countryside, people said, they would not necessarily use them. Negative experiences and/or a lack of experience on public transport were repeatedly discussed as being of greater consequence than lack of access to transport.

Opinions were split on language as a barrier, along generational lines. Those from older age groups who did not grow up in England considered lack of English to be a barrier, and for this group it was not simply the inability to understand English that is the issue. Underlying this is the lack of confidence and fear that can result from not understanding. For a majority of interviewees, though, and certainly all under forty, language was rarely mentioned as being preventative.

Weather was generally identified as preventative in discussions, but inclement weather on visits made to National Parks as part of the research did not appear to decrease enjoyment of the experience!

Accommodation and food requirements were rarely mentioned by visible community participants in the surveys: almost all discussed the National Parks as (potential) day

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visit destinations. This assumption speaks volumes in itself – National Parks were not considered as places to spend more than a day. These issues were encountered in the Mosaic project - since Mosaic undertook substantial feedback from project participants, it is better placed to report on these issues.

However, the greatest practical barrier emerging from the research is **lack of knowledge**. None of the above issues were preventative in themselves, or the key factors preventing visits for the majority of people: in most discussions, these barriers were tied to an underlying lack of confidence or, in some cases, fear of a visit to a National Park based on a complete lack of knowledge regarding **what would be encountered**. In addition, those who *do* know and *do* go to National Parks often stated that most other visible communities *do not go* because they *do not know.* There is then a cyclic situation, in that people do not know *because they do not go.*

Specifically, it was lack of knowledge regarding National Parks' existence, where they are and how to get there, that were clearly outlined as the main factors in preventing visible communities from visiting. Also important was the lack of knowledge regarding what people can do in a National Park, and this was broken down into two key issues: not knowing **what you are allowed to do** (whether there are certain rules and what these may be) and not knowing **what facilities and activities are provided/ available** (parking, toilets and activities for children in particular).

4.4 EMOTIONAL BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Perceptional/emotional barriers must be considered in the context of how visible communities experience day-to-day life in the cities in terms of prejudice and racism, because these experiences partly form the lens through which any perceptions of the countryside, as well as experiences in the countryside, will be viewed. Racism was often described as pervading English society but rarely affecting interviewees on a personal daily level. That is, among all the interviewees, there was mention of **an undertow of racism**, described as a more subtle process, which people felt exists whether or not they experience it explicitly. For others, **racism was encountered directly** and had a very negative impact on their lives. While the contemporary situation was considered as an improvement on previous decades, this was welcomed with caution and mixed experiences, especially post-September 11th.

Furthermore, several interviewees felt that racism is more complex than portrayed, and that they, as 'ethnic minorities' were **not to be stereotyped as a single group**.

Opinions on their 'welcome' in the countryside were split between those who felt that they would encounter negative reactions based on being non-white in a majority white area, and those who spoke about how initial reactions from people in the countryside could be unfriendly, but that often reception became warmer when they interacted on some level. The former group were mostly interviewees who had not visited the countryside (though some visitors had experienced negative reception), while the latter generally spoke from first hand experience. There were also a few individuals who stated that they had always been welcomed positively.

'Cultural' differences were rarely mentioned in the interviews as being a preventative factor for visits to National Parks, although issues were raised regarding how cultural differences might *affect a visit*, most notably the need for halal meat or a place for prayer. Many interviewees were clear that it is important **not to confuse religious beliefs with cultural practices**, and not to sweep all visible communities into one category, either religious or cultural.

However, the key issue was that it is not ethnic difference itself *but cultural practices based on ethnic differences* that underpinned emotional barriers. The terms 'cultural difference' and 'culture' were often used to describe cultural habits based on people's ethnic background, yet respondents discussed preventative factors as *not* being bound up with ethnicity - the more salient point for many was the difference engendered between **rural and urban experiences**. Critical, then, is what can be described as the 'cultural differences' between those who either live in or have been brought up regularly visiting the countryside, and those who have not: regular cultural practice was considered to set patterns of countryside use. Moreover, the **cultural practices based on places of day-to-day experiences**, eg. growing up in the city/countryside, which were highlighted as governing activities.

Only a minority of the interviewees stated that they feel or thought they would feel 'alien' or as if they do not belong in the English countryside. However, it must be noted that this was a very important issue for those respondents, and such a sense of 'not belonging' in National Parks needs to be given serious consideration. Within this, there were issues regarding family ties and heritage. Some people stated that being born in England and living an urban life does not exclude them from feeling any

connection to or belonging in *countryside per se*, but those attachments were often based on parental/grandparental countryside of origin.

About half the in-depth interviewees felt that being seen to be different, or as not belonging in the countryside, was *not* a barrier to visiting National Parks, though this was not straightforward. For some, **feeling comfortable** was an important factor, not necessarily linked to a sense of attachment to or belonging in the countryside – some described feeling 'at ease' and 'comfortable' while still believing that they do not belong[11]. The important factors in this were the welcome received and a sense of confidence to go where you would like to.

Other interviewees felt strongly that **they do belong in the National Parks** as England is their home, and they claim the country as theirs by right. For some who articulated these feelings, this sense of belonging meant that they felt **confident and comfortable** to visit the countryside, but this was not always the case. Others expressed their right to go, while outlining how such a right does **not automatically equate with feeling comfortable.** For yet others, talking about 'Englishness' and 'belonging' was irrelevant, because the core issue was that people from visible communities know nothing about National Parks, and that is why they do not go.

Generally, there was a feeling among interviewees that visible communities would begin to independently visit National Parks when their *knowledge and experience* of the Parks was sufficient that they felt both confident to go and had formed a sense of attachment to the Parks.

4.5 REMOVING BARRIERS

The interviews suggested that the **facilitation of visits** to National Parks has very positive outcomes, with evidence from the Mosaic project also showing that arranging trips is an important part of encouraging visible communities to return to the parks. The key point, though, is that almost all groups stated that they would still need help to return – **long term support/contact** rather than a single introductory visit was emphasised.

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[11] Several interviewees pointed out that white English people often feel comfortable in places where they do not, or are seen to not, belong.

This was partly linked with practical barriers (in particular knowledge and financial issues), but what also emerged from the interviews is that one trip can introduce the parks, but emotional attachment cannot be built up over such a short time. It is this feeling of **attachment to place** that was discussed as being necessary for people to have the motivation to go and visit by themselves, and it could not be gained without building up knowledge of the areas and the subsequent confidence to be there.

Outreach, in terms of **face-to-face contact in urban areas**, was considered crucial to introduce and consolidate National Park profiles. Many saw this as important *before* the parks think about organising visits. For most people it was also very important that the National Parks are **genuinely committed** to encouraging visible communities to visit the parks. They felt that National Parks need to clearly show this commitment and gain the trust of visible communities by starting a process of outreach. Staff training, in terms of 'race awareness' or 'equal opportunity', was mentioned with regard to ensuring that outreach (as well as the reception of visitors in the parks) was successful.

Many felt that translation of leaflets was patronising and/or unnecessary, in particular the younger Asian generations (who spoke other languages in addition to English, but commonly did not read them well), as well as people from African Caribbean backgrounds. One idea that was often mentioned, especially by those who visit National Parks and those who took part in the day trips, was that '**a little translation goes a long way**', namely that the National Park Visitor Centres could have welcome signs in Urdu, Bengali, Arabic, Punjabi, etc. It was generally felt that making this effort would be viewed positively by visible communities.

Overall, the qualitative study suggests that, if visible communities are to be encouraged to become visitors, there needs to be **long term, sustainable, genuine effort** to engage them: *any expectation of a quick fix from focused short term effort or a slow fix through doing nothing is likely to be disappointed*.

SECTION III: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This section addresses three aspects of policy:

- the *need* for specific policy shifts regarding visible community visitors;
- overarching *approaches* to such policy suggested by the research; and
- specific *proposals* for action.

5. POLICY NEED

In making recommendations for policy change based on the theoretical and empirical work of the Phd research, it is also important to demonstrate the need for measures that facilitate access to National Parks for people from visible community backgrounds. There are three key factors that necessitate policy change: the relative absence of visible communities among visitors; the statutory obligations of the National Parks under both the 1995 Environment Act; and the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000).

5.1 RELATIVE ABSENCE OF VISIBLE COMMUNITIES FROM THE ENGLISH NATIONAL PARKS

The rationale for this study itself is one driver highlighting the need to focus attention on visible communities: that the North York Moors National Park identified the need to undertake the research flags it up as an issue. Indeed, visible communities are consistently described as an 'under-represented' group in rural areas (Countryside Agency, 2003).

The majority of countryside professionals and National Park visitors and residents who participated in the study believed that people from Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds do not visit the Parks. While the visitor survey shows that visible communities *are present* as visitors in Park areas, the lack of awareness of National Parks evident in the questionnaire survey (see 3.1), together with the opinions expressed throughout the qualitative research (see 4.3), clearly demonstrated that these groups are not present as National Park visitors in numbers commensurate with the population of visible communities in English society[12].

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[12] The 2001 Census revealed 9% of the English population to be non-white (ONS, 2003).

5.2 NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES

The twin purposes of the National Parks, under the 1995 Environment Act, are:

- *to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Parks;*
- *to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Parks by the public.*

There is a need to primarily ensure the first purpose above, which means that use and enjoyment of the Parks must be sustainable and not at the expense of the natural and cultural landscape (the Sandford Principle). However, the emphasis on 'promote' in the second purpose, rather than simply 'make available', highlights a statutory responsibility to raise awareness of National Parks, and to facilitate access to those who wish to visit. The promotion of 'opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment' of the Parks does not *necessarily mean physical presence* - although for many people it is being in the park that constitutes the pleasure. The point here is that there is an obligation to actively advance National Parks and their ideals. That the majority of visible community respondents identified lack of knowledge of the Parks as a barrier to involvement clearly shows that the Parks have a job to do.

In addition, the phrase 'by the public' is important. This must be interpreted as *all* people in society. A range of measures already initiated at the North York Moors and Peak District - which fall within a 'social inclusion' agenda - suggest that National Parks themselves recognise the need to enable physical enjoyment of the parks for specific groups who are disadvantaged with regard to visiting the countryside. Furthermore, 'by the public' implies across the country: National Parks are **for the nation**. While Parks' own surveys show that a majority of visitors are day visitors from relatively nearby, it is not acceptable for National Parks in a region with lower populations of visible communities to ignore their responsibility to the wider public (see also 5.3). Each National Park must carefully consider the ways in which it can feasibly address promoting itself to visible communities across the country.

5.3 RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2000

The RR(A)A came into force on 2nd April 2001. The Act, section 71(1), states that:

"Every body or other person specified in Schedule 1A[13] or of a description falling within that Schedule shall, in carrying out its functions, have due regard to the need –
> *(a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; and*
> *(b) to **promote equality of opportunity and good relations** between persons of different racial groups."*

The RR(A)A incorporates both *direct and indirect* discrimination, which means that in carrying out their functions, National Parks must think through the effects that all their policies may have on access for visible communities. For example, where and how interpretation material is distributed may exclude certain groups from knowing about and being able to make the choice to visit a National Park. By emphasising the *promotion* of equality of opportunity, the RR(A)A goes beyond previous legislation that made it unlawful for public authorities to themselves discriminate against certain groups. Furthermore, such promotion is extended to make public authorities responsible for good race relations more generally. These are positive duties that require pro-active responses, and place responsibility on National Parks to examine the ways in which they work with regard to visible communities.

The RR(A)A also gives powers to the Commission for Racial Equality to issue *statutory* codes of practice (see www.cre.gov.uk). These outline general and specific duties relevant to different public authority bodies depending on their functions. National parks are included under the 'general' duty category of authority, and therefore have statutory obligations to conform to the Commission for Racial Equality's codes of practice.

The RR(A)A applies to **all National Parks**. Those Parks (or other authority bodies) in areas/regions with lower populations of visible communities have a statutory duty to be proactive regarding the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations.

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[13] Schedule 1A is an appendix of Local Authority bodies to which the Act applies, and includes National Park Authorities.

6. POLICY APPROACHES

This report now outlines specific *approaches* to policy-making and implementation, as the research pointed to the need for a shift in institutional mindset towards working with visible communities. The in-depth focus group and individual interviews, in particular, were dominated by concerns regarding the *commitment* of National Park Authorities to 'real' social inclusion and equal opportunities; the requirement of *long term* approaches to issues regarding racism, ethnic identity, diverse cultural values and the English countryside; and the importance of projects aimed at *empowering* visible communities, rather than patronising or tokenistic measures.

6.1 SOCIAL INCLUSION PROOFING

6.1.1 'Visible community proofing'

It is crucial that policy regarding visible community access incorporates ethnic and race relations throughout all National Park Authority thinking and processes. The RR(A)A clearly demands that equality of opportunity and relations between different racialised and ethnic groups run through an organisation's policies and practices. Moreover, interviewees (visible community and white) bemoaned the lack of co-ordinated and centralised efforts to tackle problems of social exclusion. Targeted projects *alone* were not considered to show genuine commitment to inclusion by visible community respondents - although such projects are highly valued and an important part of encouraging visible community involvement in the Parks (see 7.1).

Numerous experiences of 'being let down' by a series of authority bodies had resulted in suspicion among respondents regarding proclamations to tackle disadvantage or offer benefits to their communities. The National Parks may not have been the offending authorities, and may feel that such anti-establishment feeling toward them is unjustified. There are two issues here. First, people from visible community backgrounds described perceiving majority white organisations as 'all the same': whether public or private, local government or voluntary sector, interviewees felt that organisations have (with few exceptions) 'played at' engaging with visible communities, in order to 'tick boxes'. To gain any level of trust among visible communities, National Parks will have to work hard to overcome such a stereotype. Secondly, in *not* attempting to engage specifically with visible communities in the past, National Parks are thought to have let visible communities down through either

denying the existence of social exclusion or failing to tackle it. To effectively address the relative absence of visible communities in the Parks, the Park Authorities will need to build up genuine relationships with visible communities, and show commitment to the ideal of equality by placing it at the core of National Park policy.

Placing ethnic equality centrally within an Authority's approach requires **'visible community proofing'**, in which the potential effects of policy on the ability of visible communities to understand and enjoy the National Parks are considered. Such proofing may not be *directly* relevant to some policy matters, eg. the conservation of habitats/species, but the *indirect* impacts of the Park's work regarding conservation may need consideration, eg. the language used to describe invasive or unwanted species (see 7.3.5). Furthermore, meeting the RR(A)A targets of promoting equality of opportunity *and* good race relations will necessitate a wide-ranging examination of current policies. For example:

- providing diversity/equal opportunity training to members of staff may address the first obligation, but does not tackle (direct or indirect) discrimination in the Authority's recruitment procedures; or
- encouraging and supporting staff to develop partnerships with visible community organisations would promote good race relations, but does not deal with the reception a non-white person may receive in the Park.

It is not within the remit of this report to list all policy matters that require visible community proofing. Rather, it is highlighted here that such an approach is essential if National Park Authorities are seriously committed to increasing the involvement of visible communities in the Parks.

6.1.2 Wider social inclusion

Under broader Human Right legislation and policy (European and national), 'visible community proofing' cannot take place without extending the focus to socially excluded groups more generally. Indeed, the research recorded general agreement across all participants that a **broad approach** to social inclusion is necessary if initiatives are to be sustainable and successful in the long term. Other groups identified as under-represented in National Parks include young people, people from low socio-economic backgrounds and people with disabilities, and their participation in the Parks must also be addressed. There are complex and contentious arguments

involved in focusing attention on specific groups, and two key issues emerged from the research:

1. A broad social inclusion approach does not justify *only* engaging with visible communities *through* other social inclusion priorities, eg. youth projects, health initiatives. Visible communities should certainly be incorporated within such measures, but issues regarding ethnicity must also be addressed in their own right, in order to break down specific barriers experienced by visible communities. The need for specific engagement with ethnic relations was heavily emphasised throughout the fieldwork with visible communities. In addition, prior research findings point out that exclusionary forces in society may be reinforced by institutional responses to social inclusion (Parekh, 2000). That is, responses can reflect the power imbalances in society and serve to compound social inequality. Targeting youth groups or developing health initiatives do not *necessarily* tackle racism or address specific issues faced by visible communities, and if National Parks were to engage with other disadvantaged groups but *not* visible communities, this further disadvantages people from visible community backgrounds.

It should also be pointed out that targeting visible communities will also benefit a wider range of groups, including:

- overseas visitors from Asian and African Caribbean (and other non-white) backgrounds will feel less isolated as ethnic visitor profiles change;
- simpler wording and visual imagery in National Park interpretation (see 7.3) will benefit a range of non-English speaking visitors as well as people with learning difficulties, children, etc; while
- building social capital through specifically engaging with ethnically diverse groups (see 7.5) is good for everyone.

2. Wider social inclusion also involves identifying disadvantaged groups *outside and inside* National Park boundaries. Park Authorities have a duty to take into account the social and economic welfare of local communities, and targeting one disadvantaged group and not another may create tension based on misconceptions of 'positive discrimination'. Results from the postal survey to residents highlighted a good deal of support for increasing the numbers of visible community visitors, but there were racist and negative opinions expressed towards visible community

presence in the countryside too. Implementing initiatives for visible communities *without working with local communities* in a variety of ways could potentially degrade rather than promote good race relations – negative reaction to visible community involvement in the Parks can only undermine the sustainability of social inclusion endeavours. An holistic overview of the issues is important to avoid creating rather than tackling problems (see 7.5 regarding building social capital).

This report, therefore, recommends **'social inclusion proofing'** as a key approach to effectively tackling non-involvement in the National Parks, but stresses that **visible communities must be specifically addressed within this**.

6.2 CENTRALISING SOCIAL INCLUSION POLICY AND FUNDING

'Social inclusion proofing' new and existing policy is important, but the research also clearly highlighted the need for a **coherent and centralised effort** to tackle social exclusion issues. In order to incorporate ethnic relations as core within authority thinking and processes, measures to address inequality must be made a central part of National Park work, rather than conceived as 'add-on' or peripheral initiatives. Engaging with disadvantaged and under-represented groups should be an integral aspect of Park delivery. Moreover, **cross-cutting policies** unifying conservation and social initiatives are required, since environmental and social issues are mutually interlinked[14] (Agyeman et al., 2001).

Placing such policy centrally entails making core funding available for policy implementation. Funding is always a contentious issue, with many demands placed on National Park budgets. Funding is also where the intentions of an organisation/ body are prioritised. There are two major issues relevant here:

- *Government funding - central government must show commitment to its 'social inclusion agenda' rhetoric, and enable National Parks to work on measures for equality by making specific funding available.* This should be new funding and ring-fenced for social inclusion initiatives, with the stipulation that social inclusion work must include projects engaging with visible communities (see 6.1.2), and it is the role of the Association of

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[14] In particular, long term support for conservation and the national parks is unlikely to come from groups in society who see their social welfare compromised by environmental initiatives.

National Park Authorities and the Council for National Parks to lobby government to this effect; and

- ***National Park funding*** - National Parks should commit money from their core budgets to tackling social exclusion. In some cases this already occurs (eg. within budgets for education or information), but there is scope for this to be increased. Applying for additional external funding will no doubt remain necessary, given levels of funding and the huge demands made on National Park Authorities, but a genuine engagement with visible communities cannot rely on external grant applications alone.

6.3 MONITORING AND CHANGE

The *action* of monitoring National Park users' ethnicity is addressed below (7.8). This section is concerned with an *approach* that incorporates the constant monitoring and change of policy implementation itself, as suggested by the research.

The preliminary reports highlighted the different and contradictory opinions evident in the study (see 3 and 4). Policy responses must be alert to differentiation across and within visible communities, rather than stereotyping people simply as 'ethnic minorities'. **Careful monitoring of policy and initiative effectiveness is vital**, in order to assess strengths and weaknesses and ***to incorporate change***. Visible community research participants' cultural practices and ethnic identities were not always static or singular: people discussed how their attitudes and behaviours change over time, and this was particularly debated with regard to generational differences. This suggests that there can be no catch-all project that will be appropriate for everyone from a visible community background, and, moreover, that successful projects may not necessarily remain effective over the longer term.

Policy approaches need to be flexible – open to an evolving society and changing circumstances in terms of visible community positions, as well as in terms of rural issues and concerns. Such an approach should not be unfamiliar to National Park Authorities. Contemporary external funding requirements demand the monitoring of 'outputs' and project audits. Such a funding climate lends itself to a rolling programme of initiatives, each of which build on the previous ones by incorporating change. This is *not* to say that policy implementation regarding visible community access should be funded through external grants alone (see 6.2), and core funded programmes must also be monitored and open to change.

7. POLICY PROPOSALS

7.1 OUTREACH

Developing an appropriate outreach strategy is a key recommendation of this report, to promote the understanding and enjoyment of National Parks. The majority opinion among visible community respondents was that without gaining knowledge of the Parks, they would not go and explore the countryside for themselves (see 3 and 4), and without visiting the Parks there could be little knowledge gained or sense of ownership developed. An important way to break through this self-fulfilling and exclusionary cycle is to take the message to visible communities: outreach was considered vital to both introduce the National Parks to visible communities in the urban areas *and* begin the trust-building process considered necessary for successful and sustainable policy implementation.

National Parks, then, need to promote themselves to visible communities. This does not, as some staff and Members feared, mean that National Parks should alter what they are – but embrace their multicultural heritage (see 7.2.1) and build links with visible communities (7.2.2). However, Park Authorities should think carefully about the ways in which they promote themselves and several factors were raised in the research. *Interpretation* and *partnership working*, while important concerns within outreach initiatives, are broader issues and, as such, discussed under separate headings below (see 7.3 and 7.4). Issues regarding *where to target*, *the methods to employ*, *outreach personnel* and encouraging *'community champions'* are discussed here.

7.1.1 Outreach venues

Visible community respondents rarely used tourist centres or libraries to discover information, nor did they consider other countryside or heritage organisation visitor centres as places to find out about National Parks. The distribution of leaflets and interpretation materials to these venues does not reach a visible community audience. National Parks need to proactively raise awareness of themselves in places frequently accessed by visible communities. Examples suggested through the study include:

- places of worship;

- community centres in areas with high visible community populations;

- schools, health clinics and other local government-run centres in areas with high visible community populations;

- organisations who work with visible communities;

- organisations run by visible communities;

- national and local visible community media (television, radio and press);

- local shops, food outlets, etc. in appropriate areas.

7.1.2 Outreach methods

Research participants clearly believed that leaving materials and information about National Parks in the places listed above would be relatively ineffective. **Personal contact, above anything else, was considered to be crucial** within outreach initiatives, in order to raise awareness of the Parks. More importantly, developing relationships and links between National Park staff and individuals in the visible community organisations/places. This was described as a difficult task, and respondents suggested that it would take time and effort for trust to be built. The National Parks must also be prepared to be met with indifference, and committed to working hard to 'get their foot in the door' (see 4.5).

The idea of bringing the Parks (ie. information about the landscapes, wildlife, opportunities for recreation, etc) to the cities and to visible communities was often suggested in interviews, and successfully carried out in practice by the Mosaic project.

7.1.3 Outreach personnel

Presenting information and materials, developing relationships and building trust in an outreach scenario necessitate a different set of skills than necessarily required in a countryside ranger role. Slee et al. (2001) discuss in detail the need to ensure that 'the right people' are in outreach roles, and conclude that projects effective in enabling under-represented groups to access the countryside draw on a wide range of skills and knowledge. Critical within these abilities are *'personal attributes'*, including leadership skills, charisma, enthusiasm and the ability to motivate others were most important in determining project success (see also Dahl, 1993). National

Parks should not expect current staff, although experts in the countryside field, to *automatically* be excellent communicators in unfamiliar settings. This is not to say that National Park staff lack the skills needed for outreach work, and *it is important to encourage Park staff to engage with staff/individuals in visible community organisations* to improve relations and break down stereotypes. However, 'adding on' outreach responsibilities to previously defined job roles – especially without training – will not be sufficient for successful outreach or sustainable inclusion initiatives.

In particular, the recruitment of visible community individuals in outreach roles was identified as engendering trust among visible community groups. Increasing visible community presence in National Park structures is a recommendation of this report (7.7). It is important, though, that outreach staff have the ability to communicate across a diverse range of groups, and that National Parks do not *presume* visible community staff to automatically be suited to outreach roles - or pass all matters regarding ethnicity automatically on to visible community staff (Simcox & Hodgson, 1993; Dahl, 1993).

7.1.4 Community consultation

Outreach work, wherever possible, should incorporate community consultation and participation in the development and ongoing implementation of initiatives. This is important to enable a sense of ownership of projects among visible communities, and increases the success and sustainability of initiatives (Warburton, 1997). Community consultation is, although listed under the broader outreach heading, **critical across many of the policy proposals recommended in this report**, and National Parks should endeavour to facilitate community participation at all levels of social inclusion work more generally.

7.2 FACILITATING VISITS

The facilitation of visits to the National Parks was overwhelmingly identified by visible community respondents as crucial to get over the lack of knowledge/experience/ confidence experienced as barriers to involvement with and in the Parks. The success of the Mosaic project, the long-term experience of the Black Environment Network (BEN, 2003), and feedback from the research participants after trips to a National Park leave no doubt that **this is a critical policy action** for National Parks to take. It is important, however, to point out two principle aspects to facilitating visits

were identified by the research - the need to be *inclusive of ethnic differences* and, at the same time, *acknowledge similarities* across different groups of people.

7.2.1 Including ethnic differences

There was some concern among National Park staff and Committee Members that engaging with visible communities entails organising activities considered to be 'traditionally ethnic', eg. a bhangra concert or African drumming workshop. Such activities were either perceived as not culturally appropriate in National Park spaces, or it was feared that they would alienate residents and 'traditional visitors'. The key point here is that conserving the heritage of National Parks must entail *re-examining what that heritage is*. Visible community interviewees often questioned the 'dominant version' of heritage presented in the majority of countryside publications they had come across, highlighting the omission of visible community connections in rural areas. A common opinion was that the presence of visible community slaves and servants in rural estates is ignored. A multicultural and inclusive heritage narrative belongs to all English people (Osler, 2003), and is important for the development of social capital (7.5). A more diverse range activities in the Parks is, therefore, appropriate in terms of recognising the history of visible communities in England and the English countryside, and also to acknowledge the global links inherent in the historical formation of National Parks and their ongoing connections. Such measures would interest visible communities and help to develop a sense of ownership of the Parks.

7.2.2 Acknowledging similarities

It is also crucial to note that visible communities incorporate a diverse range of values and interests, and people from Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds cannot and should not always be presumed to only want to undertake activities 'traditional' to their backgrounds. The Mosaic project and the day visits organised for this study indicated many commonalities across visible communities and majority white society. Young people from visible communities enjoyed outdoor adventure activities such as kayaking, archery and rock climbing, while their parents and grandparents took pleasure in walking and landscape views. In the questionnaire survey, reasons given for visiting national parks by visible communities compared very closely with the reasons offered by white visitors in the national parks: to go walking, for peace and quiet, to get away from city stress, for fresh air, to spend time

with family/friends, etc. Visible communities cannot be stereotyped as only valuing 'their traditional culture'.

Neither should it be presumed that such a traditional culture does not overlap with the traditional values of white ethnic communities in England. A key example is that there was a general perception among National Park staff and white visitors that visible communities do not visit the countryside because it is not part of 'their' culture, but this was refuted in the study: rural recreation was commonly discussed as a cultural practice in countries of (parental) origin, ceasing only on the experience/ perception of barriers in England. *That visible communities are not interested in the countryside because in their 'home' countries rural areas are equated with poverty is a misguided stereotype.*

7.3 INTERPRETATION

The dominant response to National Park literature among visible community interviewees was that an almost complete lack of non-white faces did not encourage interest in visiting the Parks, and it was clear throughout the research that the interpretation used in promotion and outreach **must include multicultural and multi-ethnic representations of the National Parks and think carefully about language use.**

7.3.1 Including visible community faces

Among National Park staff and Members, there were worries that actively going out to look for visible community faces to include in literature would be 'tokenisitic'. Visible community interviewees were more concerned about *intentions behind an action*, rather than the action itself, and the inclusion of non-white faces on National Park literature as part of a genuine attempt to encourage and empower visible communities was not considered tokenistic. However, the use of such images to 'tick boxes' and 'put on' a display of diversity - without following up with proactive initiatives – *was* considered as tokenism and highly insulting. The need to 'stage' images to get around the problem of visible communities' relative absence from National Parks was, similarly, deemed acceptable with the right intention behind it, and an implemented project (eg. organised visits) to back it up.

<u>7.3.2 Translation</u>

For some visible community respondents, the translation of leaflets or sections of leaflets into their first language would be an important step in enabling access to information, and promoting the Parks. For the majority, though, in particular people from African Caribbean backgrounds and second/third generation Asians, language was not an issue preventing access. The research recommends that *translation of interpretive materials is necessary where need is identified through outreach*. For example, within communities where English is not commonly spoken, translation of material and employment of an outreach worker who speaks the relevant language (or at least a translator) will increase initiative effectiveness.

Within general interpretation, 'a little translation goes a long way' (see 4.3): 'Welcome' signs in National Park Centres in a variety of visible community languages (alongside the French, German, Japanese etc. signs for overseas visitors already prevalent) would be viewed positively by visible communities. Key phrases on leaflets, on the website, etc. would also show commitment to engaging with the visible community populations in England.

<u>7.3.3 Visual imagery</u>

There are other measures that can also be adopted to increase the accessibility of Park interpretive materials, and the need to keep ALL literature[15] simple was highlighted throughout the study. Suggestions included less wording, uncomplicated language, and more pictures and symbols. It was also clear during the participant observation part of the research that *tactile materials* were very successful in breaking through communication barriers, and raising interest about the countryside.

<u>7.3.4 Inclusive narratives</u>

Most importantly, the interpretation of **National Park history and heritage needs to be multicultural and multi-ethnic**, and recognise the presence in and links to the English countryside of a wide range of visible communities wherever possible (see 7.2.1). Research participants felt that Asian and African Caribbean narratives should be acknowledged not ignored. For example: African soldiers were present at

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[15] Including materials used across outreach work, within Visitor Centres, in general National Park publications, on websites and audio broadcasts, etc.

Hadrian's Wall during the Roman Empire; whole villages moved from Asia to work in the Lancashire and Yorkshire rural cotton mills (Agyeman, 1995); Indian and Sri Lankan seamen (called lascars), resident in Middlesbrough in the 18th and 19th centuries, visited what is now the North York Moors for recreation (Lawless, 1995). A multicultural, multi-ethnic and inclusive heritage belongs to all English people, and it is crucial that National Park interpretation reflects the diverse histories that interact to make the Parks what they are.

7.3.5 Ecological terminology

The ecological terminology habitually adopted within conservation circles and National Park interpretation was raised less by research participants, but emphasised in relevant reports and literature is. Conservation in general speaks of eradicating 'alien' and 'non-native' species, describing these species as 'invasive'. 'Native' species themselves are implicitly portrayed as benign (Fenton, 1986). Crucially, if a 'native' plant *is* considered invasive, the descriptive 'native' is dropped and the plant known by its name alone, while beneficial 'alien' species not described as 'alien'. Notwithstanding the value judgements involved in determining which species are native, the use of such terminology is considered to have racist connotations for people from visible community backgrounds (Barker, 2003). National Park interpretation should consider this issue when describing ecological habitats.

7.4 WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Working in partnership is critical if policy intentions and initiatives to engage with visible communities are to be effective. Partnership working was commonly mentioned in interviews, and incorporated into all the examples of best practice encountered throughout the study (see also BEN, 1999). Not least because, even given recommended changes to the funding of social inclusion programmes (6.2.2), the National Parks only have a finite amount of money. Partnerships are about far more than accessing resources that would be unavailable to a single organisation, though, and there are two main types of partnership recommended here.

7.4.1 Working with visible community organisations

This is vital in terms of building and strengthening relationships between National Parks and those communities. Such partnership working has key potential benefits:

- builds social capital (7.5) – in particular through linking communities in the National Parks with visible communities in urban areas;
- develops a sense of ownership of initiatives among visible communities;
- empowers visible community groups to access, understand and enjoy the Parks;
- enables access to a greater diversity of resources and skills across organisations; and
- facilitates knowledge sharing.

Importantly, outreach initiatives (7.1) and partnership working go hand-in-hand.

7.4.2 Working with other statutory/voluntary organisations

Partnership working with other organisations who are already involved, or attempting to engage, with visible communities is beneficial in terms of resource and information sharing, and enables 'joined up' working. If, for example, an urban wildlife trust is working with visible communities, it is both practical and will deliver better outcomes to develop a National Park initiative that compliments what is already being achieved. This is common sense, but also important to avoid bombarding visible communities with requests for input into partnerships: many visible communities stated that, as 'minority groups', they are often approached by different organisations wanting to research or work with them - steadily increasing as social inclusion climbs the political agenda[16]. Notwithstanding the long term experience of visible communities of being approached then 'let down' repeatedly (6.1), visible community organisations felt that accommodating the number of requests they receive would over-stretch their resources/capacity.

The research suggests that the best approach is to develop **multi-agency partnerships**. This report recommends the facilitation of partnership working between National Parks and any combination possible and practical of:

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[16] Over-research was commonly given as the reason for not participating in this research.

- rural community organisations and visible community groups**;**

- a range of groups targeted as under-represented in national parks; and

- urban organisations/agencies/authorities working with (or intending to work with) visible community groups.

7.5 BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

The need to build social capital as part of enabling visible communities to access the countryside was emphasised throughout the study. Without a core element of developing relationships between 'rural regulars'[17] and visible communities, any success will always be fragile: it will take time and effort to enable those visible communities apprehensive about the countryside to gain the knowledge and confidence to visit, but only one racist incident to discourage them from visiting again. Additionally, rural regulars may mistake proactive initiatives that target visible communities as discrimination, especially those from disadvantaged rural backgrounds. As has been witnessed in urban areas, ethnic tension is easily fuelled when one group perceives others to be unfairly prioritised (Ouseley, 2001). There is a need, then, to **engender social capital** across visible communities and rural regulars.

In the research, **encounters between visible community and other groups** were a key catalyst in breaking down the stereotypes constructed by both visible communities and white visitors/residents/National Park staff of each other. Time and again, perceptions of people from Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds of the countryside as a place to fear were changed through talking with local people or undertaking activities with Park staff and volunteers. Likewise, staff, volunteers, residents and visitors commented that meeting and engaging with visible community groups (often for the first time) challenged and changed their opinions of visible communities. Visits organised through outreach work should aim to facilitate encounters between visible community and rural groups, rather than separate visible communities from other visitors/residents, whenever the visible community group is comfortable with this. 'Twinning' initiatives (eg. a school in the National Park with an inner city school; a Women's Institute with a visible community women's organisation, etc) offer the potential for challenging assumptions and improving understanding between groups from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

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[17] The term 'rural regulars' is used to describe residents and regular users of the parks.

However, such a policy initiative must be sensitively managed, and involve a careful selection of rural contacts as well as undertaking groundwork with local groups, to ensure that prejudicial stereotypes are dismantled rather than reinforced.

7.6 TRAINING

'Diversity awareness' training was considered important in promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people from different ethnic backgrounds. Visible community respondents overwhelmingly identified a need for National Park staff to learn more about diverse ethnicities and cultural practices: this opinion was shared by those who *had* had contact with National Park staff, and those who perceived Park staff to be 'parochial'. There was some disagreement across National Park interviewees, though: some felt that only face-to-face staff dealing with the public required diversity training; others believed that, in order to change organisational mindset, training was necessary throughout all staffing levels. It was felt, though, that financial and time constraints would make the latter difficult.

However, in line with this report's recommendation that social inclusion policies and funding should be made core, it recommends that National Park Authorities should implement diversity awareness training for all staff – and volunteers and Authority Members. A long-term approach is necessary: a rolling programme of diversity training could be implemented with, for example, such training incorporated into all staff/volunteer induction periods.

The report stresses, though, that **the kind of training delivered is crucial.** The theoretical and empirical research clearly highlighted the need for diversity training that is based on raising awareness of ethnic and cultural differences, but *with an emphasis on treating people as individuals*. That is, promoting multiculturalism in an open way that does not reduce visible communities to stereotypes. *A restrictive model of diversity training – in which National Park staff are trained to recognise 'difference' and treat accordingly – can do more harm than good*: there can be no 'easy guide' to working with visible communities. To give one example among many, a middle-aged British Asian interviewee described how she is constantly treated in 'mainstream' society according to 'a caricature of Asian women'. As a full-time teacher, a wife and mother, middle class, voluntary worker with young offenders who

considers herself a modern woman, she finds many attempts to acknowledge her ethnicity and cultural background patronising at best, and at times offensive. **Diversity awareness training should equip National Park staff with knowledge regarding ethnic and cultural difference *that is not tied to presumption*.**

7.7 INCREASING VISIBLE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION IN NATIONAL PARK STRUCTURES

National Parks need to increase the number of visible community staff, volunteers and Authority Members to better reflect society in general[18]. Alongside equal opportunity concerns, this was identified as a factor that would encourage visible communities to visit Parks, and increase their confidence in the countryside. However, it is difficult to attract under-represented groups for the same reasons that prevent access in the first place, in particular the lack of knowledge about National Parks (see 3.1). While there may be a time lag between implanting social inclusion initiatives targeting visible communities and increasing the representation of visible communities in Park structures, the study suggests pro-active steps that can be taken:

- advertise all posts in visible community press, national and/or regional as appropriate;
- develop a volunteer 'mentoring' scheme in partnership with visible community (and other) organisations, through which interested individuals are supported to shadow Park staff/volunteers;
- offer secondment positions to individuals identified in outreach work as interested in National Parks;
- initiate/participate in a 'modern apprenticeship' scheme, targeting visible communities;
- include information regarding employment/volunteer opportunities in the Parks when undertaking outreach work to raise awareness;
- include careers fairs in urban areas with high visible community populations, and careers evenings in secondary schools, in outreach programmes.

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[18] In the North York Moors, visible communities make up 0% of staff, 1% of Authority Members and 1% of volunteers. In the Peak District, 1 member of staff comes from a visible community background and 1 Member (figures not available for volunteers). Statistics are similar across National Parks and other countryside organisations.

Networking, partnership development and outreach work should incorporate identifying individuals who may be interested in taking up positions in the National Parks.

7.8 MONITORING

7.8.1 Monitoring policy effectiveness

As mentioned in 6.3, the monitoring and evaluation of initiatives is crucial to assess the effectiveness of policy delivery, reassess target audience needs, and remain flexible to changing circumstances. In terms of action, such **evaluation should be undertaken and shared with the participating visible community individuals and organisations** (see 7.1.4 regarding community consultation). Research respondents often described feeling 'like objects', on whom measures were taken - albeit for their benefit - but with whom 'results' were not shared. The evaluation and monitoring process should include targeted communities in order to:

- gain better understanding of why initiatives succeed/fail;
- increase trust with visible community groups;
- enable greater ownership of a project among the targeted audience, further empowering project participants; and
- improve the potential for policy sustainability .

7.8.2 Monitoring ethnicity

While some people from both visible community and National Park backgrounds felt that including an 'ethnic question' on National Park surveys could be insensitive, the majority felt that it was important to ascertain levels and trends of visible community presence in the National Parks. It is now common for ethnicity to be asked on surveys. The omission of 'ethnic background' from National Park monitoring was viewed with suspicion by many visible community interviewees, as possibly an indication that National Parks were not committed to engaging with issues of ethnicity. The National Parks must begin to monitor ethnic background across all areas of their work.

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